

SŪRAH 44

AD-DUKHĀN (THE SMOKE)

Makkah Period

This sūrah of 59 verses was revealed in Makkah toward the end of the Makkan period. It derives its name from the word *dukhān* (smoke) in verse 10. It warns the obstinate enemies of the Messenger of the punishments that might come upon them and reminds them of how and why the Pharaoh and his army were drowned in the sea. It also concentrates upon the Qur'ān's Divine authorship, on God's being the unique Creator and Lord of the whole universe, and therefore the Only One to be worshipped. It concludes with mention of the final end of the believers and their enemies.

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful,
the All-Compassionate.

1. *Hā. Mīm.*

2. By the Book clear in itself and clearly showing the truth.

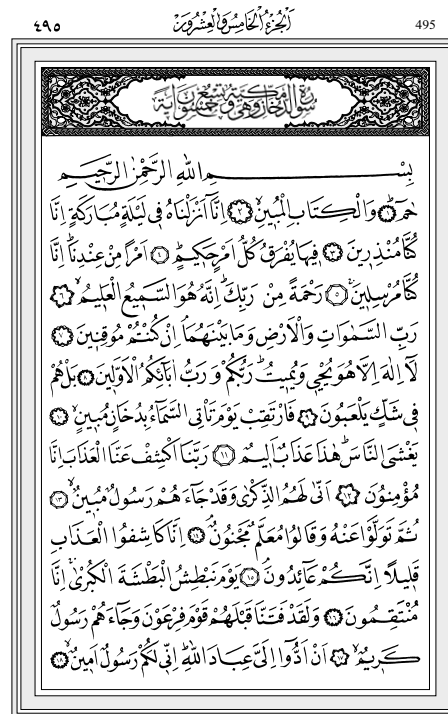
3. We sent it down on a night full of blessings; surely We have ever been warning (humankind since their creation).

4. In that night, every affair is identified and made distinct for wise purposes,

5. As a command issued from Our Presence. Surely We have ever been sending Messengers (from among the angels and human beings to convey Our decrees and guide),

6. As a mercy from your Lord – surely He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing¹ –

7. The Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them, if you would but seek certainty (about the Messenger and the Book he brings).



8. There is no deity but He, giving life and causing to die: your Lord and the Lord of your forefathers.²

9. Yet (they do not desire certainty; instead) they are in an irrecoverable doubt, lost in the playthings of the worldly life.

10. Then watch (O Messenger) for the day when the sky will bring forth a visible smoke,

11. Which will engulf the people, (causing them to exclaim): “This is a painful punishment.”³

12. “Our Lord! Remove this punishment from us, for now we are true believers.”

13. How is a reminder possible for them (such that their profession of faith could be true), seeing that there has come to them a Messenger making the truth clear (and embodying it in every element of his life and character),

14. But they turn away from him and say (of him): “One taught by others, and possessed.”⁴

15. We will hold back the punishment for a little (while); but you will turn back (to your former ways of unbelief, whose outcome is a punishment everlasting),

16. On the day when We will seize with

the mightiest grasp.⁵ We will indeed take retribution.

17. Before them, assuredly We tried the people of the Pharaoh, when there came to them a noble Messenger,

18. Saying: “Deliver to me the servants of God!⁶ I am a trustworthy Messenger sent to you (by God).

1. When we consider these verses together with *Sūrāt al-Qadr* (no. 97), we can conclude that they mention God’s unchanging practice from the beginning of the universe. This practice has two aspects: one for the life of all creatures; and the other for the guidance of humankind and the jinn. Although we do not, and cannot, know their exact nature, all things and affairs or events have, in God’s Knowledge, an eternal existence. This is the existence of things and events in their totality or universality. God wills an individual thing to come into existence or an individual event to take place, and He decrees for it its own particular identity. We can describe this process as each thing and event being identified with its particular nature by the Divine Destiny – as referred to in verse *sūrah* 15: 21: *There is not a thing but the stores (for its life and sustenance) are with Us, and We do not send it down except in due, determined measure*. Destiny transfers this event or thing to the realm of Divine Power, and Divine Power creates it according to the measures determined by Destiny. This creation is called *fatr* – origination according to or on a certain system, and the totality of the attributes given to a particular thing or being is called its *fītrah*.

As we can deduce from the verses discussed, each year has a particular identity and importance in the total history of the universe in general, and that of humankind in particular, and there is a special night during each year in which every thing or being that God

has willed to come into existence and every event to take place during that year is identified or particularized and transferred from Divine Knowledge to the disposal of the Divine Power. As can be understood from other relevant verses, such as *sūrah* 97: 1 and *sūrah* 2: 185, where it is stated that the Qur’ān was sent down on the Night of Destiny (or Power and Measure), and during the holy month of Ramaḍān, this night is the Night of Destiny (or Power and Measure). Since this night is in the Holy Month of Ramaḍān, according to the lunar year, which is 11 days shorter than the solar year, any night of the solar year will be this night once every 354 years. (We should always bear in mind that all of the explanations concerning God are in respect to us, or from our perspective, and according to our measures in our relation with Him. As for God Himself, He is beyond all restrictions and measures of time and space.)

What the verses mean as far as the warning and guidance of human beings is concerned is that throughout history, God sent Messengers and sent down or revealed Scriptures. The Qur’ān was sent down in two ways, one in its totality, and the other in parts. Interpreters of the Qur’ān say that the Qur’ān was sent in its totality from the Supreme Ever-Preserved Ever-Tablet to the heaven of the world, or *Bayt al-Ma’mūr*. We do not know the nature of this *Bayt* (House), and how the Qur’ān was sent down to it or to the heaven of the world. However, in the light of the verses discussed

here (1–6 in this *sūrah*), it can be said that as every Divine Book was identified with its particular nature in its totality, or transferred in its totality from God's Knowledge or the Supreme Ever-Preserved Tablet or the Mother Book (see *sūrah* 43: 4; *sūrah* 6: 59, note 13; *sūrah* 13: 39, note 13; *sūrah* 17: 14, note 10; *sūrah* 85: 22), the Qur'ān was also identified in its totality in, or transferred from, the same original source on the Night of Destiny (or Power and Measure).

As can be understood from verse *sūrah* 97: 4, the Messengers that are mentioned in verse 5 as being sent are both the angels responsible for the events that occur in the universe and those events that occur in the life of all beings, including those angels charged with bringing the Divine Book to the Prophets (namely Gabriel and his aides), and the human Messengers sent for the guidance of humankind.

Verse 6 states that whatever God decrees is a mercy for beings, including humankind. It is a manifestation of His being either *ar-Rahmān* (the All-Merciful) or *ar-Rahīm* (the All-Compassionate). (For the meaning of these titles, and the difference between them, see *sūrah* 1, notes 4–5.)

2. The descriptions of God Almighty in verses 7 and 8 signify that there is nothing else in the universe that creates, maintains, and causes to die, and therefore there is no thing or being that deserves to be worshipped other than God, and there is no thing or being other than God that can give orders by which one should absolutely obey to arrange one's life.

3. When the Makkan polytheists obstinately insisted on their polytheism and cruel treatment of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, and the believers, the Messenger prayed to God to help him by sending something like the drought that had afflicted the Egyptians during the time of the Prophet

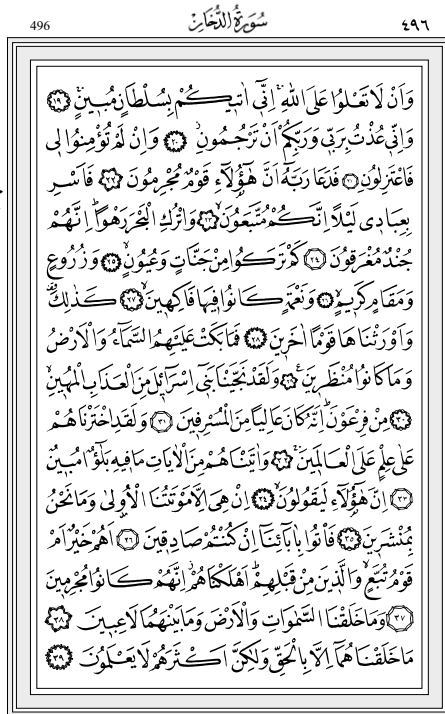
Joseph, upon him be peace, so that they might come to belief. God accepted his prayer, and a severe drought and hunger overtook the Makkans. Because of this, they felt as if the sky was full of smoke or mist.

As stated in certain Prophetic Traditions, the smoke also refers to another punishment of God that will afflict nearly all the unbelieving people and make the believers feel as if they have caught influenza toward the end of time, and this will be a sign of the approach of the Last Hour. So too, it may indicate the "smoke" of philosophical and scientific materialism that has engulfed many people in the world and, to some extent, affected the believers also; or it may signify the "smoke" produced by modern weaponry and the side-effects of world wars, or similar punishments that will manifest themselves in the future.

4. This and similar slanders were uttered against God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, by his severest opponents in Makkah, and they have been repeated by many orientalist and materialists in modern times.

5. The verses flow in such a way that the "smoke" is indicated in all the meanings mentioned above in note 3. So the day mentioned in this verse and the seizure may well be referring to the Battle of Makkah, where almost all the leading enemies of the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, were killed, as well as to the greatest calamities and wars that will occur toward the end of time, and finally to Judgment Day, when the unbelievers will be thrown into Hell.

6. The Prophet Moses, upon him be peace, meant the Children of Israel by, *the servants of God*, and reminded the Pharaoh and his people that they had wrongfully enslaved them, although they were only God's servants, who, as all people are, were sent to the world with freedom by their Creator – God.



19. “And do not exalt yourself in proud defiance against God (by disobeying His order and so rejecting my Messengership). Surely I have come to you with an evident authority.

20. “I have sought refuge in my Lord, Who is surely also your Lord, from your stoning me to death.

21. “If you will not believe in me, then keep away from me (let me go)!”

22. Then he called upon his Lord: “These are indeed a guilty people committed to accumulating sins.”

23. Then (his Lord commanded him): “Set forth with My servants by night. You are sure to be pursued.

24. “And now leave the sea in quiet (as it was when it divided for you), for they are a host destined to be drowned.”

25. How many were the gardens and springs that they left behind;

26. And cornfields, and excellent dwellings, and elevated, honored situations;

27. And other comforts of life, in which they used to take delight!

28. Just so! And We made another people heirs (to the bounties they enjoyed).⁷

29. And neither the heaven nor the earth shed tears over them, nor were they given a respite (when the punishment became due on them).

30. And indeed, We delivered the Children of Israel from the humiliating persecutions

31. Of the Pharaoh. He was indeed a haughty tyrant committing excesses.

32. And with knowledge (deliberately, and for a purpose known to Us) We chose them (the Children of Israel) over all other peoples (in their time).

33. And (as a favor) We granted them many signs (miracles), in which there was a manifest trial.⁸

34. Yet these (Makkan polytheist) people say with emphasis:

35. “There is nothing beyond our first death,⁹ and we will not be raised again.

36. “If you are truthful (in claiming that the dead will be raised to a new life), then bring back our forefathers.”

37. What! are they better (in wealth and power), or were the people of Tubba¹⁰ and the others (that We destroyed) before them? We destroyed them, for they were disbelieving criminals committed to accumulating sins.¹¹

38. We have not created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them in play and fun.

39. We have created them only with truth (for meaningful purposes, and on solid foundations of truth), but most people do not know.

7. For detailed account of Moses' experiences with the Pharaoh and his men, see *sūrah* 20: 43–79; *sūrah* 26: 10–68; *sūrah* 28: 36–40.

8. God's treatment of a people is for their good and is directed toward their education. This sometimes requires rewards and sometimes punishment. Both reward and punishment contain favors and tribulations which require gratitude and patience. The Children of Israel had been oppressed by the dynasty of the Pharaohs for many years, and this had caused them to develop many complexes and an attitude of slavery. So, in order that they should arouse themselves to freedom and evolve the character needed to live as a free people according to God's commandments, God favored them with many miracles both in Egypt and after the Exodus. However, as every favor and extraordinary blessing do, those miracles also contained a trial. Just as every miracle undeniably convinces people of the Divine truths proclaimed by the Prophets, denial of them brings ruinous punishment.

9. For the first death and whether there will be a second one, see Appendix 11, and *sūrah* 40: 11, note 5.

10. Tubba' was the title used for the rulers of Himyar, who lived in Yemen. The people of Himyar were a tribe of the Sheba who ruled in south Arabia for almost 1,000 years from around 1100 BC to around 115 BC. (For the people of Sheba, see *sūrah* 27, note 9; *sūrah* 34, note 10.) The dynasty of Tubba' came to power in 115 BC in Yemen and survived until 300 CE. Their story circulated among the Arabs as a legend.

11. The verse means that it is highly likely that any people who do not believe in the Hereafter will lapse into all kinds of sins. This will happen because they are devoid of any spiritual sanctions that would keep them away from evil. Belief in the Hereafter or the Resurrection is very important for individual and collective life for many reasons, as described below by Said Nursi:

Children are one-fourth of humanity. They cannot comprehend death, which must seem to them an awful tragedy, except via the idea of Paradise, which spiritually strengthens their weak, fragile natures. It gives them the hope to live joyfully, despite the vulnerability of their na-

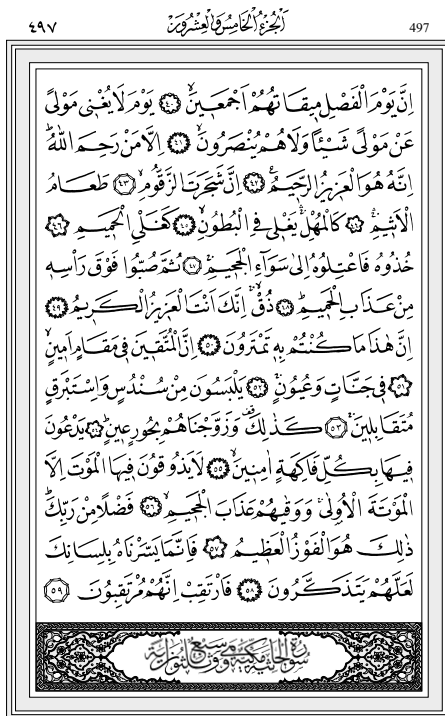
ture, which can so readily burst into tears. Keeping Paradise in mind, they may say: "My little sister or friend has died and has become a bird in Paradise. She is playing there and enjoying a better life."

The elderly make up another one-fourth of humankind. They can endure death only by believing in the afterlife, which consoles them somewhat for the imminent extinction of this life to which they are so attached, for their exclusion from their lovely world. The hope of eternal life allows them to counter the pain and despair arising from the anticipation of death and separation, despite their fragile temperament and spirit.

Young people are the mainspring and foundation of social life. Only the thought of Hell enables them to control the stormy energy of feelings and passions and their tempestuous spirits from destructiveness and oppression by diverting them into serving the collective interest. Without this fear, and drunk on the energy of youth, they would follow the principle of "might makes right" and give free rein to their passions. This would turn the world into a hell for the weak and powerless, and lower human life to the level of beasts.

The family is the inclusive core of our worldly life, our most fundamental resource, and the paradise, home, and castle of our worldly happiness. Every person's home is their own miniature world. The vitality and happiness of our homes and families depend upon sincere and devoted respect, true kindness, and self-denying compassion. All of this, in turn, depends upon eternal friendship and companionship, an immortal bond, as well as the belief that feelings between parents and children, brothers and sisters, and husbands and wives, will be everlasting.

If the Resurrection's reality and truth and all the consequences thereof are removed from the human state, the meaning of being human – so exalted, vital, and important within creation – is lowered to that of a carcass fed upon by microbes. Let those concerned with humanity's orderly life, morals, and society focus on this matter. If the Resurrection is denied, with what will they fill the resulting void and how will they cure the deep wounds? (*The Words*, "The Tenth Word," 109–110)



40. Surely the Day of Judgment and Distinction (between the truth and falsehood and the righteous and the sinful) is the time appointed for them all;

41. The Day when no guardian will be of any avail to one supported and protected, and none will be helped;

42. Save those on whom God will have mercy.¹² Surely He is the All-Glorious with irresistible might (Whose punishment no one can escape), the All-Compassionate (especially toward His believing servants).

43. (Here is) the tree of *Zaqqūm*,¹³

44. The food of him addicted to sinning:

45. (It is) like molten brass; it will boil in their bellies,

46. Like the boiling of hot water.

47. “(O angels of Hell!) Take him (the sinful one) and drag him into the midst of the Blazing Flame!

48. “Then pour over his head boiling water as punishment.

49. “Taste! (Only in your own judgment) were you mighty, honorable, and noble.

50. “And this (what you are suffering now) is that which you used to doubt!”

51. (As against this,) surely the God-revering, pious ones will be in a position absolutely secure (from any evil),

52. Amid gardens and springs (of Paradise).

53. Dressed in fine silk and silk brocade, (seated) face to face.

54. Just so it will be. And We will assign for them maidens pure, most beautiful of eye.

55. There they call for every kind of fruit in security (from any harm).

56. They will not taste death therein, except the first death (of leaving the world); and He has preserved them from the punishment of the Blazing Flame,

57. As a grace from your Lord. That is the supreme triumph.

58. So (to enable you for that triumph) We have made this Qur’ān easy to understand by revealing it in your tongue, so that they may remember and be mindful (and order their lives according to it).

59. Then wait (O Messenger), and watch (how they react and how they fare); they too are waiting (to see how your mission will fare).

12. Such people are the God-revering, pious ones, who believe in all of God’s signs and Revelations, and have submitted to Him wholly (in Islam) (sūrah 43: 67, 69).

13. For the tree of *Zaqqūm*, see sūrah 17: 60, note 27.

SŪRAH 45

AL-JĀTHIYAH
(KNEELING DOWN)

Makkah Period

This sūrah of 37 verses was revealed toward the end of the Makkan period. It takes its name from the word *al-jāthiyah* in verse 28. In its initial verses, the sūrah draws attention to God's signs in the universe for the believers, for those who seek certainty, and for those who use their reason. Then it cites many of God's favors to human-kind so that we may reflect and accept the guidance of the Qur'ān. It continues to recount some events from the history of the Children of Israel. Finally, it presents the end that awaits both believers and unbelievers.

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful,
the All-Compassionate.

1. *Hā. Mīm.*

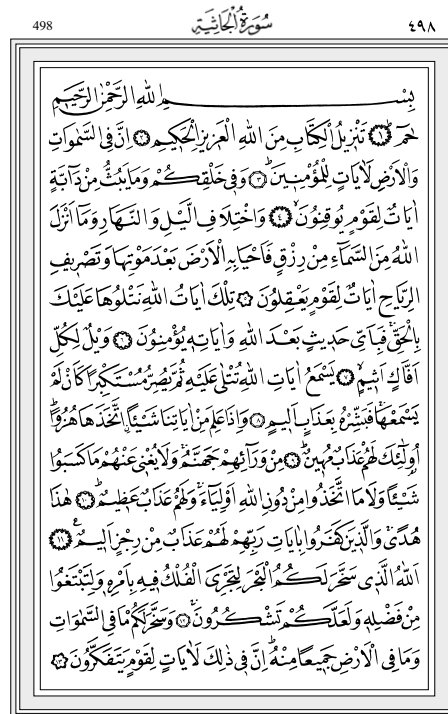
2. (This is) the Book being sent down in parts from God, the All-Glorious with irresistible might, the All-Wise.

3. In the heavens and on the earth there are indeed (clear) signs for the believers (pointing to God's Existence, Oneness, and Lordship);

4. And in your creation and His scattering (innumerable kinds of) living creatures (through the earth), there are (clear) signs for a people who seek certainty of faith (in His existence, Oneness, and Lordship).

5. And in the alternation of night and day (with their periods shortening and lengthening), and in the provision (rain) God sends down from the sky and reviving thereby the earth after its death, and in His turning about of the winds — (in all this) there are (clear) signs for a people who are able to reason and understand.¹

6. Those are the Revelations of God that



We recite to you (through Gabriel) with truth. In what other statement, if not in God and His Revelations, will they, then, believe?²

7. Woe to everyone addicted to inventing falsehoods, addicted to sinning:

8. He hears God's Revelations recited to him, and yet he persists in unbelief haughtily as if he had not heard them. So give him the glad tidings of a painful punishment.³

9. When he has come to some knowledge of Our signs (whether in the universe or in the Qur'ān), he takes them in mockery.⁴ For such there is a humiliating punishment.

10. In front of them there is Hell; and all that they have earned (of this world) will be of no avail whatever to them, and

nor will those whom (apart from God and in defiance of Him) they have taken as guardians (to entrust their affairs to). For them there is a mighty punishment.

11. This (Qur'ān) is the guidance, and for those who disbelieve in the signs and Revelations of their Lord there is a painful punishment of a loathsome kind (brought on by their loathsome deeds).

12. God it is Who has made the sea to be

of service to you by making it subservient (to His command) so that the ships may run through it by His command, and that you may seek of His bounty, and that (in return) you may give thanks.

13. He has also made of service to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth; all is from Him (a gift of His Grace). Surely in this there are (clear) signs for a people who reflect.

1. Verse 3 states that what is manifest to the eye through the universe is enough to enable faith, for believers see the heavens and the earth replete with manifest signs of God's Existence, Oneness, and Lordship. However, verse 4 calls us to study the parts of creation or the universe. When we study our existence and the existence and life of animals on the earth, our faith is strengthened and develops into certainty. Bediüzzaman Said Nursi reminds us that to strengthen our faith we should reflect generally on the outer world (the heavens and the earth), but be more detailed and penetrating when we study our own creation and structure.

The 3rd verse uses the word *believers*; this is different from the usage of the phrase, *those who believe*. This form denotes those who have attained faith and in whose hearts faith has been established. The phrase, *those who believe* refers to those who have acknowledged faith. When the Qur'ān uses the verb *believe* in the simple present tense, which in Arabic denotes actions expressed in English by both the present continuous and simple present tenses, it signifies that one is journeying in faith. This journeying continues until it has been established in the heart. In time, this faith continues to be strengthened and becomes certainty (*yaqīn*). Certainty also has degrees: these are certainty arising from knowledge, certainty coming from observation, and certainty arising from direct experience. According to many, certainty of the truths of faith arising from direct experience can be attained in the Hereafter.

Since journeying or developing in certainty continues throughout life, the Qur'ān usually uses it in the verbal form and in the (Arabic) simple present tense. The 4th verse here also uses the verbal form in this tense. So, the more we study ourselves and other creatures on the earth, the more we become certain of the truths of faith.

As for verse 5, it calls people to approach some important phenomena in the life of the universe with their reason or intellect, and it urges them to reflect on them, reason them out, and try to understand them with their meaning and functions in the complex web of creation and life. Such an approach to and study of these phenomena lead people who can use their reason in the proper way to be able to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and between what is good and to their benefit and what is evil and to their harm. This is a more advanced rank that one can attain through certainty of faith. Without faith and certainty, reason alone cannot raise one to the rank where this distinction can be made. The person who has risen to the rank where reason or intellect enlightened by certainty of faith can be used in the proper way can easily perceive that whatever the Qur'ān says is absolutely true, and they do not see any conflict between the Revelation or the reported knowledge (the Qur'ān and the Sunnah) and reason, or between the Religion and science (not scientism). If there should sometimes seem to be a conflict, this kind of reason or intellect can correctly reconcile it. Said Nursi refers to this fact when he says, "If reported knowledge and

reason conflict, reason is preferred, provided the reason is the kind of reason (fully enlightened by the Revelation)” (*Muhakemat*, 13).

By referring to the believers (believing individuals), the 3rd verse implies that an individual can have a general view of the universe that enables them to attain faith. By contrast, the 4th and 5th verses mention people who seek certainty and people who use their reason respectively, thus suggesting that a detailed study of existence and existential phenomena is important in reaching certainty and using reason properly.

We should point out here that acknowledgment and profession are essential to faith, unless there is an absolute, religiously accepted obstacle. Although certainty is a deeper degree in faith, it cannot be faith (*īmān*) unless acknowledgment and profession accompany it. For there have been many people whose consciences have been convinced of the truths of faith, yet they have knowingly and obstinately refused to believe. The verse, *They rejected them out of mere iniquity and self-exaltation, although their consciences were convinced of their being true* (sūrah 27: 14), refers to this.

2. The original (Qur’ānic) word translated as sign, Revelation, and verse is *āyah*. This means that both the heavens and the earth and all the phenomena they contain are manifest signs for the truths of faith. The Qur’ānic verses or Revelations are verbal expressions of the signs of the universe. In other words, every Qur’ānic word (sūrah, verse, sentence, phrase, word, and letter) has a counterpart in the universe. If the universe is a palace, the Qur’ān is, in addition to its many other aspects, the book that describes it. It is because of this that Muslim scholars say that the universe is the Book Created or the Book of Creation, and the Qur’ān is the Book Revealed or the Book of Revelation. So, the study of the universe

or creation, which has given rise to many sciences, cannot be separated from the study of the Qur’ān. This is why there is no conflict between the Qur’ān and established scientific facts. One who can accurately understand the universe or the principles of sciences can understand the main essentials of the Religion. The same is true for history and historical events and for understanding them correctly. In the future, sciences will make greater and greater advances. So as Muslims, we should be ahead of others in the study of creation, history, and historical events, and thus we can discover the correlation between the Qur’ān and the universe and history, and present the Qur’ān and Islam in the tongue of sciences or the Book of Creation, and history or events.

3. Despite every thing and every phenomenon in the universe being a clear sign of God’s Existence, Oneness, Creativity, Lordship, and of His other Attributes, such as Power, Knowledge, Wisdom, and Will, despite the Qur’ān translating them to us in the most convincing way, and despite God’s Messenger and all other previous Prophets having clearly established this fact through their character and miracles, there are those who claim otherwise and insist on unbelief. This is the greatest of slanders and sins. Moreover, such a person easily falls into sin, and therefore such a person earns a painful punishment.

4. This verse refers both to those who have some knowledge of the creational phenomena in the universe or of some scientific facts, and to those who have some knowledge of the Qur’ān and Islam. Since they are defeated by their arrogance and sinfulness, as a despicable means, they tend to resort to the weapon of mocking the Qur’ān and Islam or some of their principles or tenets, and therefore prepare for themselves a humiliating punishment.

قُلْ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يَغْفِرُوا لِلَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ أَسْمَاءَ اللَّهِ يَجْزِي
قَوْمًا بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿١٤﴾ مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ أَسَاءَ
فَعَلَيْهَا ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿١٥﴾ وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ
الْكِتَابَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَالنُّبُوَّةَ وَزَرَقْنَا لَهُمُ الْفَلَاحَاتِ
وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ عَلَىٰ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٦﴾ وَآتَيْنَاهُمْ بَيِّنَاتٍ مِنَ
الْأَمْرِ فَتَوَقَّاهُمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿١٧﴾ وَمَا جَاءَهُمْ الْعِلْمُ بِنَبِيِّ
يَسْتَرْجِعُونَ ﴿١٨﴾ ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاكَ عَلَىٰ شَرِّ عَمَلِهِمْ لَاقِيًّا ﴿١٩﴾ فَلَا تَتَّبِعِ
أَهْوَاءَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يُنْهَوْنَ عَنِ اللَّهِ سَكِينًا
وَإِنَّا لَنَظُنُّكَ مِنَ الْغَالِبِينَ ﴿٢١﴾ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾ أَمْ
حَسِبَ الَّذِينَ اجْتَرَحُوا السَّيِّئَاتِ أَنْ نَجْعَلَهُمْ كَالَّذِينَ
آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَوَاءً مَحْسَبُهُمْ وَمَسَابِقُهُمْ
سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾ وَخَلَقَ اللَّهُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ
بِالْحَقِّ وَجُزِيَ كُلُّ شَيْءٍ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

14. Tell those who believe that they should pardon those who do not hope for the coming of the Days of God (when He will make them understand what their unbelief means),⁵ seeing that He will recompense people for what they have earned.

15. Whoever does a good, righteous deed, it is for (the good of) his own soul; and whoever does evil, it is against it. Thereafter (in all events) it is to your Lord that you will be brought back.

16. We did for sure grant to the Children of Israel the Book, and the authority to judge (by the Book), and Prophethood; and We provided them with pure, wholesome things, and exalted them above all other peoples (of their time).

17. And We granted them clear proofs concerning the affairs and commands

of the Religion; and it was only after all this knowledge came to them that they differed through envious rivalry and insolence among themselves. Surely your Lord will judge among them on the Day of Resurrection concerning that on which they used to differ.

18. Thereafter, (in this conclusive Revelation) We have set you on a way of life (*Sharī'ah*) based on the Religion,⁶ so follow it and do not follow the lusts and fancies of those who do not know (the Divine Guidance).

19. They surely cannot be of any avail to you as against God. And surely the wrongdoers (who, out of their lusts and fancies, follow ways other than that on which God has set you) are guardians of one another, whereas God is the Guardian of the God-revering, pious.

20. This (Qur'ān, which teaches the way of life God has prescribed,) is perception and insight (into the truth) for humankind, and guidance and mercy for people who seek certainty of faith.

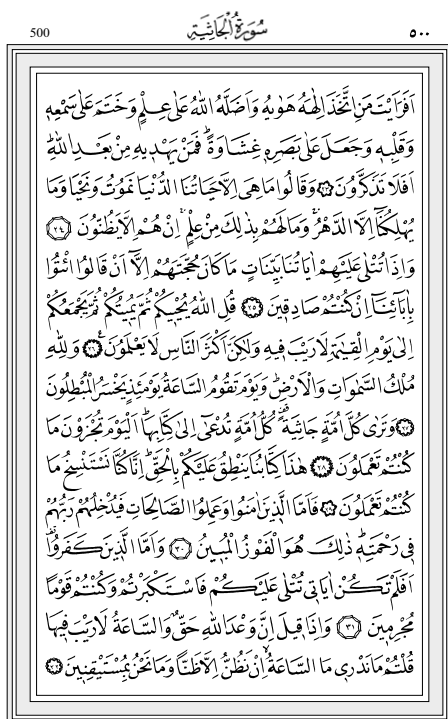
21. What! do those who commit evil deeds think that We hold them equal with those who believe and do good, righteous deeds – equal in respect of their life and their death? How evil is their judgment!

22. God has created the heavens and the earth in truth (for meaningful purpose, on solid foundations of truth and embodying it), and so that every soul may be recompensed for what it has earned (in this world), and they will not be wronged.

5. The believers should not act in the manner of their opponents, lowering themselves to their ranks to respond to their attacks in like manner. Rather, they should preserve their dignity.

6. Some think and claim that the *Sharī'ah* consists in the assembly of the Islamic (social, economic, and political) laws. However,

these laws were laid down in Madīnah, and this *sūrah* was revealed in Makkah. *Sūrah Shūrā* (no. 42), which mentions the *Sharī'ah* in its 13th verse, was also revealed in Makkah. So the *Sharī'ah* is the practical aspect of the Religion of Islam, and also includes the rules of worship.



23. Do you ever consider him who has taken his lusts and fancies for his deity,⁷ and whom God has (consequently) led astray though he has knowledge (of guidance and straying), and sealed his hearing and his heart, and put a cover on his sight? Who, then, can guide him after God (has led him astray)? Will you not then reflect and be mindful?

24. And they say: "There is nothing but only our life in this world. Some of us die while others continue to live; and nothing causes us to perish but Time (the processes of decline and decay)." But they have no (sure and true) knowledge about this (the real nature and meaning of life and death, and the life after it). They merely follow their conjectures.

25. When Our Revelations, clear as evidence and in meaning are recited (and conveyed) to them, they have no argument except to say: "Bring back our forefathers, if you are truthful in your claim."

26. Say: "God gives you life, then causes you to die, then He will gather you together for the Day of Resurrection, about (the coming of) which there is no doubt. But most people do not know (being content with narrow conjectures and ignorant suppositions).

27. To God belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth.⁸ On the Day when the Last Hour stands forth (and the Judgment is established), on that Day, those who invented and followed falsehood will be ruined in loss;

28. And you will see every community gathered together and kneeling down (in fear). Every community will be called to its record of deeds (to account for whatever it did in the world). "This Day you will be recompensed for what you used to do.

29. "This is Our Book (the record of your deeds that We prepared), speaking the truth against you. Assuredly We have had transcribed what you used to do (in the world)."

30. Then, as for those who believed and did good, righteous deeds, their Lord will admit them into (Paradise, which is the embodiment of) His mercy. That is the obvious triumph.

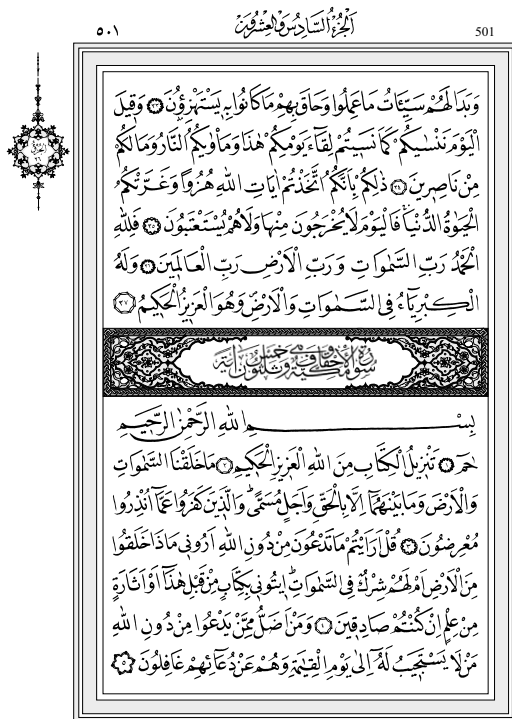
31. As for those who disbelieved (there will be this reproach): “Were My Revelations not recited to you (indeed, recited repeatedly) but you in arrogance scorned them, and proved yourselves a guilty people committed to accumulating sins?”

32. “When it was proclaimed that God’s promise is true, and that there is no doubt about the coming of the Last Hour, you said: ‘We can make no sense of the Last Hour; we think it is only a supposition. We are by no means convinced (of it).’”

7. For an explanation, see *sūrah* 25: 43, note 9.

8. These verses clearly state that belief in God requires believing in the other pillars of faith. Aware of this fact, the materialists, to whom the verses refer, deny God’s Existence. However, although denial is a conclusion and therefore has to be based on evidence, their denial is based on no evidence at all; therefore, it is a mere assertion with no true knowledge.

However, the whole universe, with whatever is in it, clearly proves the Existence of God. Anyone whose heart, eyes, and ears have not been sealed because of prejudices, desires, conceit, wrongdoing, or any other causes of unbelief cannot help but admit this truth. However, as stated in verse 23 above, no one can do anything for one whose senses have been sealed.



37. And to Him belongs grandeur and sovereignty in the heavens and the earth, and He is the All-Glorious with irresistible might, the All-Wise.

SŪRAH 46

AL-AḤQĀF (WIND-SHAPED DUNES)

Makkah Period

Revealed toward the end of the Makkan period, this *sūrah* of 35 verses takes its name from the word *al-ahqāf* in verse 21, which means the sand hills, but is also the name of a place in the south of the Arabian Peninsula. It warns all those who obstinately persist in their evil ways and defiance against the Religion of Truth by reminding them of the tragic end of the people of ‘Ād. It presents some of the concrete proofs of the Messengership of the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings. It also mentions the conversion to Islam of some jinn who listened to some parts from the Qur’ān, and who then went on to try to guide their people.

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful,
the All-Compassionate.

1. *Hā. Mīm.*

2. (This is) the Book being sent down in parts from God, the All-Glorious with irresistible might, the All-Wise.

3. We have not created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them save with truth (meaningfully, for definite purposes, and on solid foundations of truth), and for an appointed term. But those who disbelieve turn away from that (Day of Judgment)¹ about which they are warned.

4. Say: “Do you not consider what those are whom (you deify and) invoke apart from God? Show me what they have created of the earth. Or do they have a share in (the

33. The evil deeds they committed have (now) become obvious to them, and what they used to mock (God’s promised punishment) has overwhelmed them.

34. And it will be said: “We are oblivious of you today (so do not hope for forgiveness and favor), as you were oblivious of the encounter of this day of yours, and your (lasting) refuge will be the Fire, and you have no helpers.

35. “That is because you used to take all the signs and Revelations of God in mockery, and the life of the world deluded you.” And so this Day, they will not be taken out of it (the Fire), and (no plea will be accepted from them to return to the world, and so) they can no longer make amends.

36. And all praise and gratitude are for God, the Lord of the heavens and the Lord of the earth – the Lord of the worlds.

creation and maintenance of) the heavens? Bring me a Book (revealed) before this one (the Qur'ān) or some remnant of knowledge (accurately preserved and transmitted),² if you are truthful (in your claims)."

5. Who is more astray than one who invokes, apart from God, such as will not make any answer to him until the Day of Resurrection, and are (self-evidently) unconscious and heedless of their invocation?

1. This means that Judgment Day is the end of the term God appointed for this (material) universe; one of the truths on which creation is based; and one of the important purposes for the creation of the earth.

2. The Qur'ān never makes it a cause of polemics that true knowledge is what God has revealed or the revealed knowledge. It always challenges its opponents to bring forth accurate or certified knowledge for their denial. Denial has two forms or kinds: one is "acceptance of non-existence" or willful rejection, and the other is mere "non-acceptance." The latter is doubt. It can be removed through evidence, provided it is not a willful attitude; if it is a willful attitude, then it becomes a judgment. As for the former, it is a conclusion, a judgment, which must be based on evidence or knowledge: for example, claiming that: there is no God; or that God has never sent a Prophet or a Book; or that there is no afterlife; or that God has some partners; or that things are formed by themselves, or causes have brought these about, or nature requires these (to be so) – all of such claims are conclusion and judgment, which, therefore, must be based on evidence and knowledge. Any assertion or conclusion that is

not based on evidence and knowledge is to be rejected. However, in whatever form it is, (willful) denial cannot be based on any knowledge and evidence, and is arbitrary negation, repudiation, rejection. Therefore, it has no weight. Muslims must follow the Qur'ān in their response to the trends of denial, and accept the Revelation as the first and certain source of knowledge, without feeling any discomfiture.

Any claim of objectivity on this subject is, in essence, non-objectivity. Objective reasoning means impartial judgment, but "impartial" judgment means siding with the opponents or deniers and following temporary unbelief, because it starts from this proposition: Let us not accept the Existence of God, or of Revelation, or of afterlife, and so on. So it is temporary unbelief and siding with unbelief. Therefore, what a denier should do is to falsify all the evidence upon which the pillars of faith are founded; yet this is impossible. For while a single proof is enough for the establishment of the existence of something, proving its non-existence is not possible at all. In conclusion, there is, and can be, no evidence on which denial can be based; it is, thus, mere conjecture, and a baseless assertion.

وَإِذَا حُشِرَ النَّاسُ كَانُوا بُرْهَانًا لِّغَدَّاءٍ ۖ وَكَانُوا بِعِبَادَتِنَاهُمْ كَافِرِينَ
 وَإِذَا أَنشَأْنِي عَلَىٰ غَدَّتِي ۖ آيَاتِنَا تَتَوَفَّيْتَنِي ۖ قَالِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِمِثْلِ مَا
 جَاءَهُمْ هَٰذَا يَخْرُوبِينَ ﴿٩﴾ أَرَأَيْتُمْ أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ أَن يَأْتِيَهُمْ لِقَاءُ رَبِّهِمْ فَيَقُولُوا
 قَدْ أَتَىٰ النَّاسَ الْكَذِبُ ۖ وَأَن يَكُونَ لِي مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْءٌ ۚ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا تُصْنَعُونَ فِيهِ ۚ
 بِهِ شَهِدْنَا بَنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ وَهُوَ أَلْفُؤُا الرَّحِيمِ ﴿١٠﴾ قُلْ مَا كُنْتُ
 بِدَعَا مَنْ أُرْسِلُ وَمَا أَذْرِي مَا يُفْعَلُ بِي وَلَا بِكُمْ ۖ إِنِّي أَمَّا
 يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ وَمَا أَنَا إِلَّا أَسَدٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١١﴾ قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِن كَانَ مِنْ
 عِندِ اللَّهِ وَكَفَرْتُمْ بِهِ وَشَهِدَ شَاهِدٌ مِنْ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ عَلَىٰ مِثْلِهِ
 قَامَرًا ۖ وَاسْتَكْبَرْتُمْ ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَيَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٢﴾ وَقَالِ
 الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَوْ كَانَ خَيْرًا مَّا سَأَلْتُمُونَا إِلَيْهِ ۖ وَإِذَا
 لُوتِيهِدُوا بِهِ فَيَسْتَفِئُونَ هَٰذَا أَفَأَنْتُمْ قَادِرُونَ ﴿١٣﴾ وَمِنْ قَبْلِهِ
 كَاتَبُ مُوسَىٰ إِمَامًا وَرَحْمَةً ۖ وَهَٰذَا كِتَابٌ مُّصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا تَعَرَّبُوا
 لِيُنذِرَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا وَيُبَشِّرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٤﴾ إِنَّا لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا
 رَبٌّ ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَذَّابٌ مُّذْتَمِرٌ ۖ فَاسْتَقِمْ ۖ فَاخْوَفْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزِنُونَ ﴿١٥﴾
 أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ ۖ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ۖ بَرَاءٌ مِّمَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٦﴾

6. When all people are raised from the dead and gathered together for judgment, they (whom they invoked) will be enemies to them, and will disown their worshipping them.

7. When Our Revelations, clear as evidence and in meaning are recited (and conveyed) to them, those who disbelieve say of the truth when it reaches them: “This is clearly nothing but sorcery.”³

8. Or do they say, “He (the Messenger) has fabricated it (the Qur’ān)?” Say: “If I have fabricated it, you have no power at all to help me against God. He knows best all that you are busy inventing concerning it (the Qur’ān). He suffices for a Witness between me and you. He is the All-For-giving, the All-Compassionate.

9. “I am no novelty (either in my person or in the message I have brought) among the Messengers, and (being human) I do not know (unless God informs me) what (will happen in the future in the world and therefore what will) be done to me and to you. I only follow what is revealed to me, and I am only a plain warner.”

10. Say: “Do you ever consider that if this Qur’ān is from God, and you disbelieve in it while (many) a witness from among the Children of Israel (those who had knowledge of Revelation) had already testified to the like of it and (also) believed, whereas you are too arrogant to believe: (is this not plain deviation and wrong)? Surely God does not guide the wrongdoing people.”⁴

11. Those who disbelieve say of those who believe (as another pretext for their rejection of faith in the Qur’ān): “If it (the Qur’ān) had been something good and useful, those people would not have preceded us in accepting it.” And as they (having refused it) have not found guidance through it, they say: “This is a fabrication from ancient times.”

12. (They say so despite the fact that) before this there was the Book of Moses as a guide and mercy (for the Children of Israel); and this (Qur’ān) is a Book confirming (the truth in the earlier Scriptures) and revealed in Arabic to warn those who commit wrong, and as a good tiding for those devoted to doing good, aware that God is seeing them.

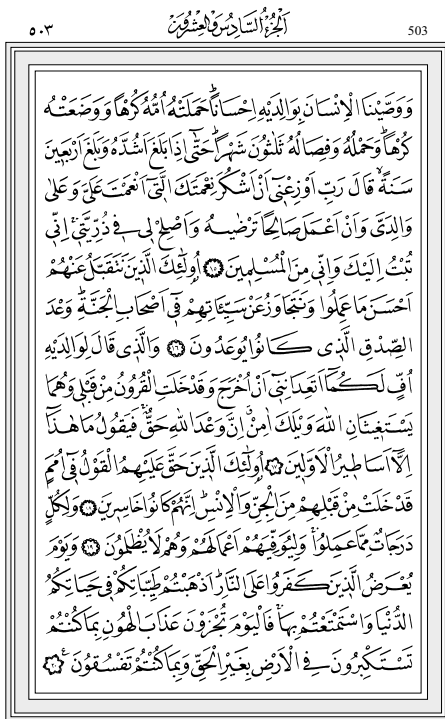
13. Surely those who profess, “Our Lord is God,” and then follow the Straight Path (in their belief, thought, and actions), they will have no fear, nor will they grieve.

14. They are the companions of Paradise, abiding therein as a reward for what they used to do.

3. Their claim that the Qur'ān is sorcery is, in fact, an admission that it is not part of ordinary human speech and is something extraordinary.

4. As a continuation of the argument put forward in the previous verse, this verse means that God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, is saying, in effect: "I am no novelty and different among the Messengers, upon them all be peace. Many

came before me with Books similar to the Qur'ān in the teachings they contained. One of these Books was the Torah, which was granted to the Prophet Moses, upon him be peace. And many knowledgeable ones among the Children of Israel believed in it. But you, having no exact knowledge of Divine Books and Messengership, venture to disbelieve in its like – the Qur'ān. Then is this not plain deviation, wrong, and misjudgment?"



15. Now (among the good deeds), We have enjoined on human is the best treatment towards his parents. His mother bore him in pain, and in pain did she give him birth. The bearing of him and suckling of him (until weaned) is thirty months,⁵ When he has finally reached his full manhood⁶ and reached forty years of age, he says: “My Lord! Arouse me that I may be thankful for all Your favors (life, health, sustenance, faith, and submission, and more) that You have bestowed on me and on my parents, and that I may do good, righteous deeds with which You will be pleased, and grant me righteous offspring (so that they treat me righteously, as I treat my parents). I have turned to You, and I am one of those who have submitted to You.”

16. Those are they from whom We will accept (their good deeds in a manner to reward them in accordance with) the best of what they ever did, and whose evil deeds We will overlook, (and include them) among the companions of Paradise. This is a true promise which they have been given (here in the world).

17. But (there is many a one) who says to his parents (who call him to righteousness and faith): “Uff to you both! (I am fed up with you!) Do you threaten me that I will be brought forth from the dead (to a new life and judgment), while so many generations have passed away before me (and so far not a single person has ever been raised)?” And they both pray to God for help (in the guidance of their child, and say to him): “Woe to you! Believe! God’s promise is certainly true!” But he says: “All this is nothing but fables of the ancients!”

18. Such are they upon whom the word (of God’s punishment) is rightly due (as included) among the (similar) communities of the jinn and humankind before them. Surely they are the ones ruined in loss.

19. For all (individuals and groups) there will be degrees of their own, according to what they have done, and so God will pay them fully for their deeds, and they will not be wronged.

20. On that Day, those who disbelieve will be brought to the Fire (and they will be told): “You consumed in your worldly life your (share of) pure, wholesome things, and enjoyed them fully (without considering the due of the Hereafter, and so have taken in the world the reward of all your good deeds).⁷ So this Day, you are recompensed with the punishment of abasement because of your scornful arrogance on the earth against all right, and because of your transgressing (the bounds set by God).”

5. Verse *sūrah* 2: 233 says that, (if they wish) mothers can suckle their children for two whole years; and verse *sūrah* 31: 14 expresses the same, that weaning was in two years. So when the statement that the pregnancy and nursing of a child consists of 30 months is considered together with these verses, it is understood that the shortest period of bearing a child is 6 months. That is, a mother can give birth to a healthy baby in 6 months. So if a woman gives birth at the end of the sixth month of her pregnancy, she cannot be regarded as having committed the crime of adultery.

6. The age of full manhood or full (physical) maturity is, in the first stage, 15-20 or so years. The middle stage is 30-33 years, and the age when one is supposed to reach full intellectual and spiritual maturity is 40 years. It is

rare for people to change their belief and way of life after forty.

7. As stated in a Prophetic Tradition, there is a place pre-assigned for everyone in both Paradise and Hell. If one dies and enters Hell, the people of Paradise inherit one's place in Paradise. So God has pre-assigned for everyone pure, wholesome things to consume. If one does not believe in the Hereafter and chooses to consume all one's share of pure, wholesome things in the world, God grants them from these in return for their good deeds. Such a one will have no share in the Hereafter. The verse also says that God never allows any good deed to go to waste. He even rewards an unbeliever in this world for his or her good deeds. But a believer should aim at the Hereafter, without neglecting working for livelihood in the world.

وَإِذْ كُنَّا خَاغِدًا إِذَا نَذَرْنَاهُمْ بِالْأَحْقَافِ وَقَدْ خَلَّتِ
النُّذُرُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا اللَّهَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ
عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ ۝ قَالُوا اجْعَلْ لَنَا فِكَرًا مِمَّا جَاءَنَا فَأَنَّا بِنَا
يَعِدُنَا إِن كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ ۝ قَالَ إِنَّمَا الْعِلْمُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَأُبَلِّغُكُمْ
مَا أُرْسِلْتُ بِهِ وَلَكِنِّي أَرِيتُكُمْ قَوْمًا يَجْهَلُونَ ۝ فَلَمَّا رَأَوْهُ عَارِضًا
مُسْتَقْبِلًا أُوذِيَ بِهِمْ قَالُوا هَذَا عَارِضُ مَطَرٍ أَمْ هُوَ مَا اسْتَجَلْتُمْ
بِهِ بَطْحًا فِيهَا عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ۝ تَدْرِكُ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ بِأَمْرِ رَبِّهَا فَأَصْبَحُوا
لَا يُرَى إِلَّا مَسَاكُتُهُمْ كَذَلِكَ يَجْزِي الْقَوْمَ الْجَارِمِينَ ۝
وَلَقَدْ مَكَّنَّا لَهُمْ أَنْ يَكْفُرُوا بِهِ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ سَمْعًا
وَأَبْصَارًا وَفُؤَادًا لَّعَنَّا عَنْهُمْ سَمْعَهُمْ وَلَا أَبْصَارَهُمْ
وَلَا فُؤَادَهُمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِذْ كَانُوا يَجْحَدُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَحَاقَ بِهِمْ
مُاسِكَاؤُهُمْ بِسَبْرٍ زُنُودًا ۝ وَلَقَدْ أَهْلَكْنَا مَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ
مِنْ الْفَرَى وَصَرَّفْنَا الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ ۝ قُلْ لَا
تَصْرَهُمُ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ قَوْمًا تَالِهَةً
بَلْ ضَلُّوا عَنْهُمْ وَذَلِكَ أَفْضَلُ لَهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوا يَنْفَرُونَ ۝

ing towards their valleys, and they said: “This is a cloud bringing us rain.” No; it is what you have (derisively) asked to be hastened: a wind bearing a painful punishment,

25. Bound to devastate everything by the command of its Lord. And so they became such that nothing was to be seen except their dwellings. Thus do We recompense the guilty people committed to accumulating sins.

26. We had, assuredly, given them such power and prosperity (on the earth) that We have not given to you (O Quraysh), and We had appointed for them (the faculty of) hearing, and eyes, and hearts (all the means of perception, outward and inward). But neither their ears, nor their eyes, nor their hearts, availed them anything, as they obstinately rejected God’s signs and Revelations, and what they used to mock overwhelmed them.

27. We have, assuredly, destroyed many townships that are around you, and (before that) We had set out the signs and Revelations in diverse ways, so that they might turn back (from their wrong ways).

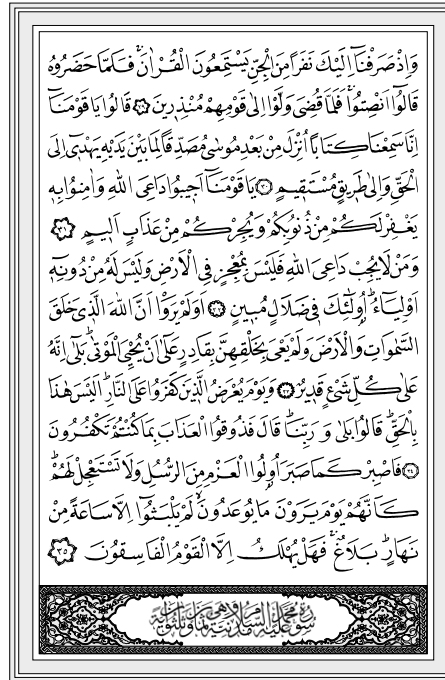
28. So, why did those whom they took for deities apart from God as a means of nearness (to God) not help them (against God’s punishment)? Rather, they failed them. That was (the end result of) their falsehood and all that they used to fabricate (of slanders against God).

21. Make mention of (Hūd) the brother of Ād: he warned his people in al-Aḥqāf – as indeed warners came and went before and after him (to warn their peoples) – saying: “Worship none but God alone. I surely fear for you the punishment of an awesome day.”

22. They said: “Have you come to us to turn us away from our deities? If you are truthful in your claims, then bring us what you are threatening us with.”

23. He said: “The knowledge (of when it will come) is only with God. I convey to you that with which I have been sent as a Messenger, but I see you are a people acting ignorantly.”

24. Then (as the events unfolded), they saw that (which they were threatened with) as a dense cloud in the sky advanc-



29. We directed a company of the jinn towards you in order that they might listen to the Qur'ān (while you were reciting of it). When they were present for it, they said (to one another): "Be silent and listen!" When the recitation finished, they returned to their community as warners.

30. They said: "O our people! We have listened to a Book which has been sent after Moses, confirming (the Divine origin of and the truths that are still contained by) the Revelations prior to it:⁹ it guides towards the truth and towards a straight road (in all matters).

31. "O our people! Respond (affirmatively) to him who calls to God, and believe in him. God will forgive you your sins (which you have committed so far), and save you from a painful punishment.

32. "Whoever does not respond (affirmatively) to him who calls to God, he cannot frustrate (God's will) on the earth, and no guardian will he have apart from God (once God has disowned him);¹⁰ those (who seek to do so) are in obvious error."

33. Have they (the unbelievers) not considered that surely God, Who has created the heavens and the earth, and never wearied with their creation, is able to bring the dead to life? Certainly He is; He has full power over everything.

34. On the Day when those who disbelieve are brought to the Fire (they will be asked): "Is this not true?" They will say: "Yes, most certainly, by our Lord!" He (God) will say: "Taste the punishment in which you used to disbelieve!"

35. So, be patient (O Messenger), (with their rejection of faith and with whatever they do), just as those of greatest steadfastness and resolution among the Messengers¹¹ were patient, and do not seek to hasten (the judgment on) them. The Day when they see what they are threatened with, (they will feel) as if they had not stayed (in the world) save a short while of the day only. The message has been conveyed. Will, then, any be destroyed save the people who transgress the bounds (in belief and action)?

8. This happened in Batn an-Nakhlah, outside Makkah, while God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, was doing Prayer on his return to Makkah from his journey to Ṭā'if.

9. As can be understood from the frame of the reference of the jinn that the Qur'an was revealed after Moses, upon him be peace, with no mention of Jesus, upon him be peace, and the Gospel, the jinn were among the followers of the faith of Moses and the Torah.

10. After this event, the jinn came to the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, in groups one after the other.

The word jinn literally means something hidden or veiled from sight. The jinn are a species of invisible beings. A short Qur'anic chapter (72) is named after them. The Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, was sent to them too, and many among them believed in him.

The jinn are conscious beings charged with Divine obligations. Recent discoveries in biology make it clear that God created beings

particular to each realm in the universe (See 2: 30, note 31). The jinn were created before Adam, upon him be peace, and Eve, and were responsible for cultivating and improving the world. Although God later superseded them with us, He did not exempt them from religious obligations.

Like angels, the jinn move extremely fast and are not bound by the time and space constraints within which we normally move. However, since the spirit is more active and faster than the jinn, a person who lives at the level of the spirit's life, and who can transcend what we know as the limits of matter and the confines of time and space, can be quicker and more active than them (see *sūrah* 27: 38–40). (For detailed information about the jinn and their relation with humankind, see *Essentials of the Islamic Faith*, 69–73.)

11. According to many scholars, basing their conclusions on verse 42: 13, those Messengers are Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and finally, the Prophet Muḥammad, upon them be peace and blessings.

SŪRAH 47

MUḤAMMAD

Madinah Period

One of the earliest Revelations in Madinah, this *sūrah* of 38 verses is named after Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, who is mentioned in the second verse. It deals with such matters as fighting, the treatment of prisoners of war, the distribution of the spoils of war, and the final end that awaits the believers and unbelievers.

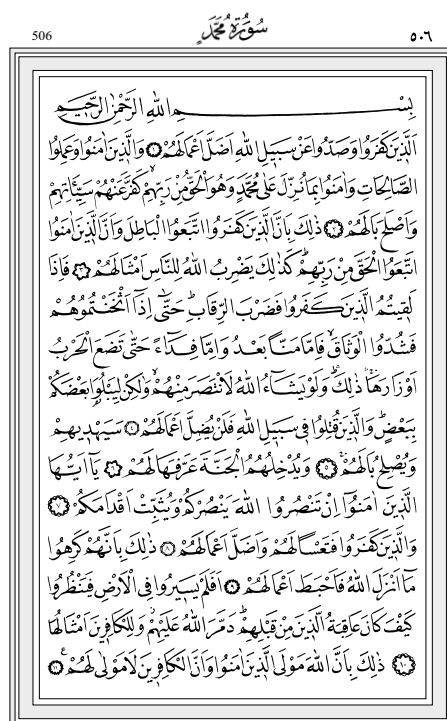
In the Name of God, the All-Merciful,
the All-Compassionate.

1. Those who disbelieve and bar (people) from God's way – God will render all their deeds vain.¹

2. While those who believe and do good, righteous deeds, who believe in what has been sent on Muḥammad – and it is the truth from their Lord – He will blot out from them their evil deeds (which will otherwise prevent their achievement of their goals in both worlds), and set their hearts fully aright and improve their conditions (both in this world and the next).²

3. That is because those who disbelieve follow falsehood (in their beliefs, thoughts, and actions), while those who believe follow the truth from their Lord.³ Thus, God expounds to people what they are like.

4. So, when you meet those who disbelieve in war, smite at their necks (without giving them the opportunity to defeat you). At length, when you have sufficiently suppressed them, (without continuing fighting) bind a firm bond of captivity on them. Then set them free either as a favor without demanding anything in return, or for ransom (which may consist of a reciprocal



exchange of prisoners of war), so that the war may lay down its burdens (and come to an end). That (is God's command). Had God so willed, He would certainly exact retribution from them (Himself), but (He orders you to fight) in order to try you by means of one another. As for those who are killed in God's cause, He will never render their deeds vain.

5. (Rather,) He will guide them (to the realization of their goal in both worlds) and set their conditions right for them,⁴

6. And He will admit them into Paradise, that He will have made completely known to them.

7. O you who believe! If you help God's cause by striving in His cause), He will help you and make your feet firm (so that you are steadfast in His cause and ultimately victorious).

8. But those who disbelieve: collapse and perdition are their lot, and He will render all their deeds vain.

9. This is because they are averse to that which God has sent down, and so He causes their deeds to go to waste.

10. Have they not traveled about the earth and seen what the outcome was for those who came before them (and persisted in

associating partners with Him, and in all kinds of transgression)? God brought utter devastation upon them; and the unbelievers (now), the like of their fate awaits.

11. This is because God surely is the Guardian of those who believe, but those who disbelieve have no guardian (acceptable in God's sight and who can help them against Him).

1. That is, all their efforts to prevent the spread of Islam will be in vain. Secondly, although their good deeds may bring profit to them in the world, this will signify nothing in the Hereafter because they did not aim at the afterlife and pursued only the goods of the worldly life.

2. Sincere faith and doing good, righteous deeds as required by faith cause one to have a sound, sincere, and satisfied heart. God leads such a person to right decisions, proper thoughts, and good actions, which in turn cause that person to deepen in faith and sincerity. The virtuous circle that is formed in this way will lead the believers to attain their (Islamic) goals in the world and eternal happiness in the Hereafter.

3. The falsehood mentioned here is any system of belief, thought, or action that is based not on the Revelation, but on human desires and fancies that do not conform to, or even contradict, God's ways of acting in the universe, which we improperly call "laws of nature," and the moral laws He has established for life in the world. However, the truth is the system of beliefs, thoughts, and actions that is based on

the Divine Revelation and, therefore, in conformity with the laws God has established for the operation of the universe and human life on the earth. So, as have previously mentioned, God has two collections of laws, one to govern human life and the universe, and the other for religious life. Both require obedience: obedience or disobedience to the former gives its results mainly in this world, while obedience or disobedience to the latter yields its results both in this world and in the Hereafter, but primarily in the Hereafter. Believers must obey both of them.

4. This verse mainly refers to the conditions of those killed in God's cause, though it has some reference to the world also. That is, God never lets the sacrifices made in His cause go to waste. Such actions contribute to the realization of the goal of those who perform them in the world. Martyrdom is among the greatest of sacrifices made in God's cause. Martyrs aim to uplift God's Word and gain God's approval and good pleasure; God enables the uplifting of His Word, becomes pleased with martyrs, saves them from suffering in the worlds of the Hereafter, and forgives them.

12. God will admit those who believe and do good, righteous deeds into Gardens through which rivers flow. As for those who disbelieve, they take their enjoyment and consume (God's bounties) just as cattle consume, (without considering Who has given them to them, and what they are expected to do in return, and with no sense of the life to come); and the Fire will be their dwelling (fitting for them).

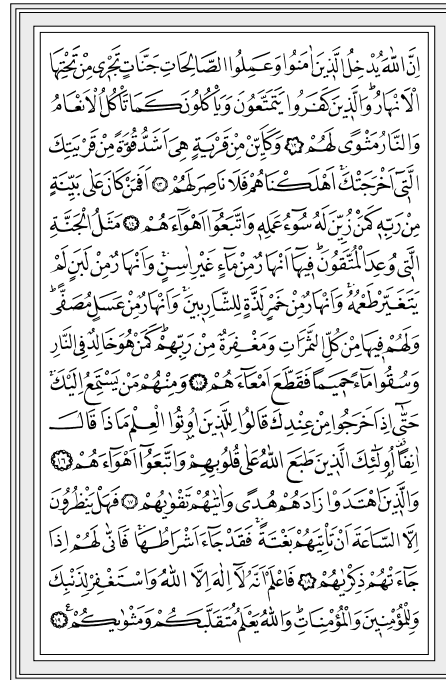
13. How many a township there has been, greater in power (and more abundant in wealth) than your township, which has driven you out, (O Messenger). We destroyed them and they had no helper (against Us).

14. Is, then, the one who is (standing) upon a clear evidence from his Lord like him whose evil deeds are decked out to be appealing to him, and (those who) follow their lusts and fancies?

15. A likeness of Paradise which the God-revering, pious are promised is this: in it are rivers of water incorruptible (in taste, smell, and color); and rivers of milk whose taste never changes; and rivers of wine⁵ delicious for the drinkers; and rivers of pure, clear honey. And in it, there are also fruits of every kind for them, as well as forgiveness from their Lord (to bring unforeseen blessings).⁶ (Are those who will enjoy all this) like those who will abide in the Fire and be given boiling water to drink, so that it rends their bowels?

16. Among them (the people of Madīnah) are some who give ear to you, but when they go out from your presence, they ask (with arrogance and derision) those who have been given (some) knowledge (of the truths of the Religion): "What has he said just now?" Those are they whose hearts God has sealed, and who follow their lusts and fancies.

17. As for those who have accepted God's



guidance, He strengthens them in guidance (through deeper knowledge and submission), and gives them piety and protection from sinning.

18. Do they (who persist in unbelief and evil deeds) wait but for the Last Hour – (waiting) that it come upon them all of a sudden? Now indeed its portents have already come.⁷ But how can it benefit them to take admonition when the Last Hour has (already) come upon them?

19. Then, know (bear in mind) that there is no deity but God, and ask forgiveness for your lapses,⁸ and for the believing men and believing women. God knows from which (inner) state and (social) condition to which state and condition you do and will move, and in which state and condition you will be steady.

5. Wine as one of the blessings of Paradise is not of the kind which causes intoxication, and denotes the perfection of the pleasure that the drinks of Paradise will give.

6. Everything in the Hereafter will be particular to the conditions of that world. But as stated in verse *sūrah* 2: 25, everything will resemble in name, shape, and color its counterparts in this world, though this resemblance will be only in name, shape, and color so that its inhabitants will not lose their appetite because of being presented with an unknown food. Their taste and smell or the pleasure they will give will be completely particular to that world, and every

time these bounties will be presented to the people of Paradise, they will be renewed.

7. Only God knows the exact time of the Last Hour, but it has many portents which show that its coming is certain and near. The advent of God's Messenger as the Last and universal Messenger or the Seal of the Prophets, upon him be peace and blessings, was the first and greatest portent of its coming.

8. For the sinlessness of the Prophets and the Messenger's asking forgiveness for his "faults," see *sūrah* 48: 2, and the corresponding note 2.

وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَوْلَا نَزَّلَتْ سُورَةٌ فَإِذَا نَزَّلَتْ سُورَةٌ مَعَكُمْ
وَذُكِرَ فِيهَا الْقِتَالُ رَأَيْتَ الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ يُظَرُّونَ إِلَيْكَ
نَظَرَ الْغَيْثِ عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْمَوْتِ فَأُولَئِكَ طَاعَةُ وَقَوْمٌ
مَعْرُوفٌ فَإِذَا عَزَمَ الْأَمْرُ فَلَوْ صَدَقُوا اللَّهَ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ
﴿١٠﴾ فَهَلْ عَسَيْتُمْ إِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ أَنْ تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَتُضْطَعُوا
أَرْحَامَكُمْ ﴿١١﴾ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ كَتَبَهُ اللَّهُ فَاحْشَهُمْ وَأَعْمَى
أَبْصَارَهُمْ ﴿١٢﴾ أَفَلَا يَتَذَكَّرُونَ الْفَرَانَ أَمْعَى قُلُوبٍ أَفْأَلْهَا
﴿١٣﴾ إِنْ الَّذِينَ ارْتَدُّوا عَلَى أَدْبَارِهِمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ
لَهُمُ الْهُدَى السَّيِّئِينَ سَوَّلَ لَهُمْ وَأَمَلَى لَهُمْ ﴿١٤﴾
ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا لِلَّذِينَ كَرِهُوا مَا نَزَّلَ اللَّهُ
سَطِطُوعُهُمْ فِي بَعْضِ الْأُمْرِ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ إِسْرَارَهُمْ
﴿١٥﴾ فَكَيْفَ إِذَا تَوَفَّيْنَاهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَضْرِبُونَ وُجُوهَهُمْ
وَأَذْبَارَهُمْ ﴿١٦﴾ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ اتَّبَعُوا مَا اسْتَحْضَرَهُ اللَّهُ
وَكَرِهُوا رُضْوَانَهُ فَأَحْبَطَ أَعْمَالَهُمْ ﴿١٧﴾ أَمَحْسَبَ الَّذِينَ
فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ أَنْ لَنْ يُخْرِجَ اللَّهُ أَضْغَانَهُمْ ﴿١٨﴾



20. Those who believe (look forward to a new *sūrah* conveying knowledge of Divine truths and God's new commandments being sent down, and) say: "If only a new *sūrah* were sent down!" But when a decisive *sūrah* has been sent down in which fighting is mentioned (clearly as a commanded duty), you see those in whose hearts there is a disease looking at you with a look of one swooning to death. That is, in fact, what is expected of them!

21. (Yet, what true believers are expected to do in response to any Divine order is to render) obedience and a proper word. So, if they were true to God when the command has been resolved (and it calls them to do what their pledge to God requires of them), it would certainly be good for them.

22. But is it to be expected of you (O hypocritical ones), that you break your promise and turn away (from God's commandments), and cause disorder and corruption in the land, and sever the ties of kinship?

23. Such are they whom God has cursed (excluded from His mercy), and so He has made them deaf and blinded their eyes (to the truth).

24. Do they not meditate earnestly on the Qur'ān, or are there locks on the hearts (that are particular to them, so that they are as if deaf and blind, and incapable of understanding the truth)?⁹

25. Surely those who have turned back as apostates after (God's) guidance has

become clear to them, Satan has seduced them; he has implanted in them long-term worldly ambitions.

26. This is because they have said to those who are averse to what God has sent down: "We will follow you in some issues." God knows their secrets.¹⁰

27. So, how (will it be) when the angels take their souls at death, striking their faces and their backs?

28. This is because they have followed what incurs God's wrath (condemnation), and are averse to what pleases Him, and so He has caused all their (previous good) deeds to go to waste.

29. Or do those in whose hearts is a disease think that God will not bring to light their spite (against the Divine Religion and its followers)?

9. The persons mentioned are the hypocritical ones among the believers. Hypocrisy arises from a sickness in the center of the heart which dries up the source of spiritual life, extinguishing the power of understanding, and corrupting character (See *sūrah* 2: 10). The main reason for the “spiritual” sense of hearing being lost in deafness, or the “spiritual” sense of seeing being lost in blindness is this sickness in the heart: *For indeed it is not the eyes that have become blind, it is rather the hearts in the breasts that are blind* (*sūrah* 22: 46). So verse 24 in this *sūrah* also interprets the verse before it, explaining why God makes the ears deaf and the eyes blind. The locks on the heart must be those put on the senses or faculties of the heart, such as hearing, seeing, thinking,

and understanding, etc. (Also see the verse 26 and the corresponding note 10 below.)

10. Obedience to the carnal soul in its desires, and nursing long-term worldly ambitions cause one to fear death, and thus to falter in carrying out God’s commandments, particularly those related to fighting. And this, in turn, causes the death of the heart (spiritual intellect), the blindness of the eye of the heart, and the deafness of the ear of the heart. This verse explains the true reason for the spiritual death mentioned in the previous verses. It also gives information about the secret agreements against the believers that were made between the hypocrites in Madinah and the unbelievers (of Makkah), who are also described in verse 9 above as being averse to what God sends down.

11. That is, God will distinguish between and judge His servants' deeds, whether they are right or wrong and recompense each type of deed.

12. Letting one's deeds go to waste occurs through ostentation, hypocrisy, apostatizing, opposing God and His Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, and through doing something that will annul a good deed, such as speaking during Prayer.

13. God has implanted in humankind numerous urges, some of which are apparently evil. However, a proper education causes these to be channeled into virtues. For example, enmity is channeled into enmity towards one's own carnal soul in order to train it, and jealousy into emulating others in their virtues. In fact, these urges have been given to humankind for this end, that is, to channel them into virtues that will cause one to grow spiritually and morally.

SŪRAH 48

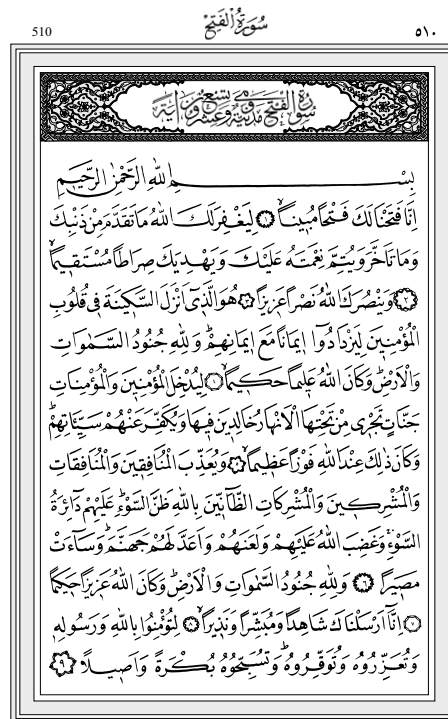
AL-FATH (VICTORY)

Madīnah Period

This sūrah was revealed in Madīnah in the sixth year after the *Hijrah*, on the occasion of the Treaty of Hudaibiyah between the Muslim city-state of Madīnah and the Makkan polytheists. It has 29 verses and is named after the word *al-fath* (victory) in the first verse. It mentions this victory, then criticizes the attitudes of the hypocrites, continues with further promises to the Muslims, and ends by mentioning certain important virtues of the Muslim Community.

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful,
the All-Compassionate.

1. We have surely granted you a manifest victory (which is a door to further victories),¹
2. That God may forgive you (O Messenger) your lapses of the past and those to follow,² and complete His favor on you,³ and guide you (to steadfastness) on a straight path (leading to God's being pleased with You and eternal happiness);⁴
3. And that God may help you to a glorious, mighty achievement –
4. He it is Who sent down His (gift of) inner peace and reassurance into the hearts of the believers, so that they might add faith to their faith. To God belong the hosts of the heavens and the earth;⁵ and God is All-Knowing, All-Wise –
5. And that He may admit the believing men and believing women into Gardens through which rivers flow, therein to abide; and may blot out from them their evil deeds – that is a supreme triumph in God's sight –
6. And that He may punish the hypocritical men and the hypocritical women, and the men and the women who associate partners with God, who always entertain evil thoughts about God.⁶ Theirs will be the evil



turn of fate. God has destined them to a severe punishment, eternally excluded them from His Mercy, and prepared Hell for them. How evil a destination to arrive at!

7. To God belong the hosts of the heavens and the earth. God is All-Glorious with irresistible might, All-Wise.
8. Surely We have sent you as Messenger as a witness (to the truth of Islam and the falsehood of other ways, and as a witness in both worlds to people's deeds), and as a bearer of glad tidings (of prosperity in return for faith and righteousness), and a warner (against the consequences of misguidance);
9. And in order that you (O humankind and jinn) believe in God and His Messenger (and support His cause), and hold God in the highest regard, and glorify Him in the early morning and in the evening (i.e., day and night).

1. This verse is about the Treaty of Hudaibiyah. After the Battle of the Trench (sūrah 33: 9–25; notes 7–12), the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, told his Companions that he had had a vision (dream) that they would shortly enter the Holy Mosque in Makkah in security. His Companions, especially the Emigrants, were delighted. During that year, 627 CE, the Prophet set out for Makkah with 1,400–1,500 people in pilgrim dress.

Informed of this event, the Quraysh armed themselves and the neighboring tribes to keep the Muslims out of Makkah. The Muslims halted at Hudaibiyah, 12 miles away from Makkah. Exchanges of envoys took place.

Finally, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, sent 'Uthmān ibn al-'Affān to the Quraysh, a man who had powerful relatives among the Quraysh. Although 'Uthmān came to negotiate, the Makkans imprisoned him. When he did not return at the expected time, rumors circulated that he had been killed. At this point, the Messenger, sitting under a tree, took an oath from his Companions that they would hold together and fight to the death.

In that moment of tension, a cloud of dust appeared in the distance. This turned out to be a Makkan delegation, led by Suhayl ibn 'Amr. After negotiations, a treaty was concluded.

Under this treaty, the Messenger and his followers could not make the pilgrimage in that year but could do so the following year, at which time the Makkans would vacate the city for 3 days. The treaty also stipulated a 10-year truce, that people or tribes could join or ally themselves with either side they wished, and that Qurayshī subjects or dependents who had defected to Madīnah would be returned. This last condition was not reciprocal, and thus was opposed in the Muslim camp. However, it really was of little importance. The Muslims sent back to Makkah were not likely to renounce Islam; on the contrary, they would be agents of change within Makkah.

The Qur'an called the Treaty of Hudaibiyah "a manifest victory." This proved true for several reasons, among them the following:

- By signing this treaty after years of conflict, the Quraysh admitted that the state of Madīnah was their equal. Seeing the Makkans deal with the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, as an equal and a president, a rising tide of converts flowed toward Madīnah from all over Arabia.
- Many Qurayshīs would benefit from the resulting peace by finally reflecting on what was really happening. Such leading Qurayshīs as Khālīd ibn Walīd, 'Amr ibn al-'Ās, and 'Uthmān ibn Talhah, all famous for their military and political skills, came to accept Islam.
- The Quraysh used to regard the Ka'bah as their exclusive property, and made its visitors pay them a tribute. By not subjecting the Muslims' deferred pilgrimage to this condition, the Quraysh unwittingly ended their monopoly. The Bedouin tribes now realized that the Quraysh had no right to claim exclusive ownership.
- At the time, there were Muslim men and women living in Makkah. Not everyone in Madīnah knew who they were. Had a fight taken place in Makkah, the victorious Muslim army might have unintentionally taken the lives of some Muslims. This would have caused great personal anguish, as well as the martyrdom or identification of the Muslims who had been keeping their faith secret. The treaty prevented such a disaster.
- The Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, performed the minor pilgrimage the following year. The declaration, *There is no deity but God, and Muḥammad is God's Messenger*, rang throughout Makkah. The Quraysh, camped on the hill of Abū Qubays, heard this portent of Islam's coming triumph. This was, in fact, God's fulfilling the vision He had given to His Messenger.
- The treaty allowed the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, to enter into diplomatic relations with others. Their neighbors, as well as other Arab tribes, were impressed with the Islamic state's growing strength. The Messenger also sent letters to neighbor-

ing kings and chiefs, calling them to accept Islam.

- The Muslims spread across Arabia and communicated Islam's Message. While during the first 19 years, from the beginning of the Messenger's mission to the Treaty of Hudaibiyah, only a few thousand people had accepted Islam, within two years after the Treaty more than 5,000 people had converted.
- During the period of armistice, the Muslims won new victories, such as the conquest of al-Khaybar.
- The Muslims faithfully observed the terms of the treaty. However, a tribe allied to the Makkans did not. The Banū Bakr attacked the Banū Khudā'ah, who were allied with the Prophet. So in December 629 CE, the Messenger marched a 10,000-man army against Makkah, and captured it with almost no resistance on the first day of January. The Ka'bah was purified of idols and, over the next couple of days, the Makkans accepted Islam.

So, this verse proved to be another manifest miracle of the Qur'ān.

2. Before proceeding to explain the sinlessness of the Prophets, we should point out that, as will be stated in the last verse, the sins mentioned here are the sins committed by the believers, not the Messenger himself. As in many other verses, God addresses the believers through the person of the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. However, the Messenger also has a share in this address. It should be understood in the light of the following explanation:

Infallibility in the sense of sinlessness is a necessary attribute of the Prophets. Their infallibility is an established fact, based on reason and tradition. This quality is required for several reasons.

- First, the Prophets came to convey the Message of God. If we liken this Message to pure water or light (*sūrah* 13: 17; *sūrah* 24: 35), the Archangel Gabriel (who brought it) and the Prophet (who conveyed it) also must be absolutely pure. If this were not so,

their impurity would pollute the Message. Every falling off is an impurity, a dark spot, in the heart. The hearts or souls of Gabriel and the Prophet are like polished mirrors that reflect the Divine Revelation to people, a cup from which people quench their thirst for the pure Divine water.

Any black spot on the mirror would absorb a ray of that light; a single drop of mud would make the water unclear. As a result, the Prophets would not be able to deliver the complete Message. But they delivered the Message perfectly, as stated in *sūrah* 5: 3 and 67.

- Second, the Prophets taught their people all the commands and principles of faith and conduct. In order for people to learn their Religion in its pristine purity and truth, and as perfectly as possible so that they can secure their happiness and prosperity in both worlds, the Prophets must present and also represent the Revelation without fault or defect. This is their function as guides and good examples to be followed (*sūrah* 33: 21; *sūrah* 60: 4, 6). A Prophet can do or say only that which has been sanctioned by God. If he could not, he would have to repent even beyond his current lifetime.
- Third, the Qur'ān commands believers to obey the Prophet's orders and prohibitions, without exception, and emphasizes that it is not fitting for a believer, man or woman, to have any doubts about a judgment on a matter when it has been decided by God and His Messenger (33: 36). It also warns believers that what falls to them when God and His Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, have given a judgment is only to say: "We have heard and obeyed" (*sūrah* 24: 51). Absolute obedience to a Prophet means that all of his commands and prohibitions are correct and beyond reproach.

Then, how should we evaluate some verses that mention the forgiveness of a Prophet?

Prophethood is such a great favor that all Prophets bore extreme hardship while fulfilling the duty of thanksgiving, and always wor-

ried about not worshipping God sufficiently. The Prophet Muḥammad often implored God as follows: “Glory be to You, We have not been able to know You as Your knowledge requires, O Known One. Glory be to You, We have not been able to worship You as Your worship requires, O Worshipped One.”

The Qur’ānic verses that are sometimes understood (mistakenly) to reprimand certain Prophets for some faults or to show that they have sought God’s forgiveness for some sin should be considered in this light. Moreover, God’s forgiveness does not always mean that a sin has been committed. The Qur’ānic words *ʿafw* (pardon) and *maghfirah* (forgiveness) also signify a special favor and kindness, as well as Divine dispensation, in respect to lightening or overlooking a religious duty, as in the following verses:

Whoever is constrained by dire necessity (and driven to what is forbidden), without purposely inclining to sin – surely God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate. (5: 3)

If you ... can find no water, then betake yourselves to pure earth, passing with it lightly over your face and hands (and forearms up to and including the elbows). Assuredly God is One Who grants remission, All-Forgiving. (4: 43)

In addition, sins (lapses in respect with the Prophets) and pardoning have different types and degrees. These are: disobeying religious commandments, and forgiveness thereof; disobeying God’s laws of creation and life, and

forgiveness thereof; and disobeying the rules of good manners or courtesy, and forgiveness thereof. A fourth type, which is not a sin, involves not doing something as perfectly as possible, as required by the love of and nearness to God. Some Prophets may have done this, but such acts cannot be considered sins according to the common definition.

3. See *sūrah* 5: 3, note 1.

4. As with the address in the first part of the verse concerning the forgiveness of sins, this address also is, as will be seen in the verse 20, to the believers through the person of the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, though the Messenger also has a share in it with respect to his rank as Messenger and being one who is nearest to God, and therefore with respect to his relation with God.

5. Some of the hosts of the heavens and the earth are angels and all the forces and laws in the universe which modern science improperly calls “natural forces and laws.”

6. The verse mentions hypocrites before polytheists. This is because the harm the former cause to the Muslims is worse than that of the latter, and therefore they will be in the lowest level of the Fire (*sūrah* 4: 145). Entertaining evil thoughts about God means having any evil thought that is unbecoming about God. Here, it particularly means the thought that God will not help the believers and make Islam triumphant, and that, therefore, whatever He has promised is a lie, God forbid!.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْفُرُونَ إِنَّمَا يَكْفُرُونَ بِاللَّهِ يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ
فَمَنْ نَكَتْ فَاثْمًا نَكَتْ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ أَوْفَى بِمَا عَاهَدَ عَلَيْهِ اللَّهُ
فَسُيُوفُهُ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا سَيَقُولُ لَكَ الْمُخَلَّفُونَ مِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ
شَغَلْنَا أَزْوَاجَنَا وَأَهْلُونَا فَاسْتَغْفِرْنَا يَتَقُولُونَ بِاللَّهِ يَهْمُهُمَا
لَيْسَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ قَوْلٌ مِّنْ يَمُنُكَ لَكُمِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْعًا إِنْ أَرَادَكُمْ ضَرْجًا
أَوْ آرَادَكُمْ نَفْعًا بَلَّ كَأَنَّا اللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا ﴿١٠﴾
بَلْ ظَنَنْتُمْ أَن لَّنْ يَنْقِلِبَ الرُّسُولُ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِلَى أَهْلِيهِمْ أَبَدًا
وَرَبَّنَّ ذَلِكَ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَظَنَنْتُمْ ظَنًّا السَّوْءَ وَكُنْتُمْ
قَوْمًا بُورًا ﴿١١﴾ وَمَنْ لَّهٗ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ فَإِنَّا أَعْتَدْنَا
لِلْكَافِرِينَ سَعِيرًا ﴿١٢﴾ وَلِلَّهِ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ
يَغْفِرُ لِمَن يَشَاءُ وَيُعَذِّبُ مَن يَشَاءُ وَكَأَنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٣﴾
سَيَقُولُ الْمُخَلَّفُونَ إِذَا انطأقتهم إِلَىٰ غَارِهِمْ لَمَّا خُذُوا هَا
ذَرُونَا نَتَّبِعْكُمْ يُبَشِّرُونَا أَن يَسْجُدُوا لِلَّهِ الْكَامِلِ
قُلْ لَّنْ تَتَّبِعُونَا كَذٰلِكَ قَالَكُمُ اللَّهُ مِن قَبْلُ قَسِيحٌ مِّنَ الْكَلِمَاتِ
يَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿١٤﴾ بَلَّ كَأَنَّا لَا يَفْقَهُونَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿١٥﴾



10. Those who swear allegiance to you (O Messenger), swear allegiance to God only. God's "Hand" is over their hands.⁷ Whoever then breaks his oath, breaks his oath only to his own harm; and whoever fulfills what he has covenanted with God, He will grant him a tremendous reward.

11. Those of the Bedouins (dwellers of the desert) who (did not respond to your call to participate in the Minor Pilgrimage Campaign and) stayed behind will say to you (by way of excuse): "Our possessions and families kept us busy, so ask God for our forgiveness." They speak with their tongues that which is not in their hearts. Say (to them): "Who is there that can intervene on your behalf with God if He wills harm for you or if He wills a benefit for you? (Whatever excuse you offer, bear in mind that) God is fully aware of all that you do."⁸

12. Indeed, you thought that the Messenger and the believers would never return to their families (from the Campaign), and this thought was decked out to be appealing in your hearts, and you entertained an evil thought (that God would not help the believers and they would be defeated). You (in thinking so have proved yourselves to be and you) are a people useless and doomed to perish.

13. Whoever does not believe (and trust)

in God and His Messenger: then We have surely prepared a Blaze for the unbelievers.

14. To God belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth; He forgives whom He wills and punishes whom He wills. God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.⁹

15. When you (O believers) set forth for (the campaign during which they think that you are sure) to take gains of war, those who stayed behind (aforetime) will say: "Let us go with you." They desire to alter God's decree. Say (to them): "You will by no means come with us. That (decision) regarding you is what God declared before." Then they will say: "Rather, you are jealous of us." But the fact is that they are lacking in discernment and understanding, except a very little.¹⁰

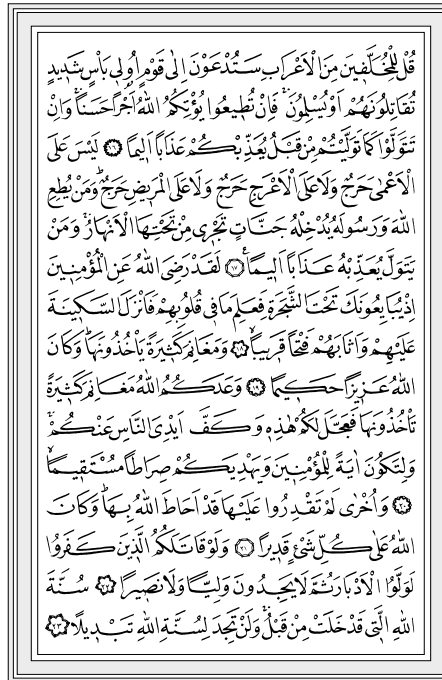
7. This statement has two important meanings. As obedience to the Messenger means the same as obedience to God (*sūrah* 4: 80), and his throwing at the enemy means the same as God's throwing (*sūrah* 8: 17), the Messenger's hand being over the hand which he grasps in allegiance represents God's Hand. (For God 'hand' or any other such term is metaphorical.) The other meaning is that God helps those who swear allegiance to the Messenger. So, here 'hand' signifies Power.

8. This and the following verse are concerned with the desert Arabs who did not answer the call of the Messenger to participate in the 'Umrah (Minor Pilgrimage) Campaign they made in the 6th year after the *Hijrah*, thinking that the Quraysh would exterminate the Muslims and they would no longer be able to turn back to Madinah.

9. This verse is significant in understanding God's forgiving and punishing. First of all, He does whatever He wills and so cannot be questioned concerning His will and acts. However,

He never does anything which is unjust; He forgives many of the sins of His servants unless they disbelieve and/or associate partners with Him, and He shows special compassion towards them. So, the conclusion of the verse with the mention of His being the All-Forgiving and All-Compassionate (One Who has particular compassion for His servants) is a great consolation and source of hope for the servants who tremble before His Majesty. This is stressed in the first part of the verse.

10. After the Treaty of Hudaibiyah, the believers took several tribes under control, and conquered Khaybar. Once the hypocritical desert Arabs saw the Muslims conquering all their enemies, they wanted to participate in the Campaign of Khaybar with the hope of gaining spoils. However, God decreed that only those who had taken part in the Campaign of the Minor Pilgrimage could participate in this campaign. So they were left devoid of the war-gains that they had so craved.



16. Say to those of the dwellers of the desert who stayed behind: "Soon you will be called (to fight) against a people of great military power, then either you will fight against them or they will submit to God and become Muslims. If you obey, God will grant you a handsome reward, but if you turn away as you turned away before, He will punish you with a painful punishment."¹¹

17. There is no blame on the blind, nor any blame on the lame, nor any blame on the sick (for staying away from a war in God's cause). Whoever obeys God and His Messenger (in the religious duties he is charged with and can carry out), God will admit him into Gardens through which rivers flow. But whoever turns away, He will punish him with a painful punishment.

18. God was assuredly well-pleased with the believers when they swore allegiance to you under the tree. He knew what was in their hearts (of sincere intention and loyalty to God's cause), and therefore He sent down (the gift of) inner peace and reassurance on them, and rewarded them with a near victory,

19. And much in gains of war that they will take.¹² And God is All-Glorious with irresistible might, All-Wise.

20. God has promised you abundant gains of war that you will take later,¹³ and these He granted you as present reward (for your obedience and purity of intention).¹⁴ And He has restrained the hands of (other hostile) people from you so that it may be a sign for the believers (concerning

the truth of their way and God's promises to them), and that He may guide you to (steadfastness on) a straight path.

21. And there are yet other (gains) which you have not been able to acquire but God has encompassed (in His Knowledge and Power, and will grant you). Surely God has full power over everything.

22. If the unbelievers (of Makkah) had fought against you (instead of signing the treaty with you at Hudaibiyah), they would certainly have turned their backs in flight, then they would have found no protecting guardian or helper (to rescue them).

23. It is God's way that has continued (ever so) from the past;¹⁵ you will never find any change in God's way.

11. There are many predictions in this *sūrah*, such as:

- God would help the believers and favor them with great victories;
- those who stayed behind from the Campaign of Minor Pilgrimage would try to excuse themselves with false pretexts;
- they would desire to participate in the campaign against Khaybar that was to take place following the Treaty of Hudaibiyah with the aim of taking gains of war;
- the Muslims would have to fight against powerful tribes or states in the future;
- the Muslims would take abundant war-gains in battles to come in the future;
- the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, and his Companions, may God pleased with them all, would visit the Ka'bah in safety, thus completing the Minor Pilgrimage the year after they had intended;
- God would complete His favor upon the Messenger;
- Islam would continue to flourish so powerfully and speedily that it would amaze both the Muslims and others.

All of these predictions came true within a very short time.

The people mentioned in this verse must be one of the Arab polytheistic tribes in the Hijāz or neighboring regions; some of these tribes are mentioned in *Sūrat at-Tawbah*. The Muslims had to give them two alternatives, they would either have to be resigned to fighting or become Muslims. Most probably it refers to the Thaqīf and Hawāzīn tribes, against whom God's

Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, had to fight after the Conquest of Makkah in order to stop their attacks.

12. The verse mentions the allegiance which 1,400–1,500 believers swore to the Messenger at Hudaibiyah. When rumors circulated that 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān, who had been sent to Makkah to negotiate the Muslims' intention to make Minor Pilgrimage, had been killed, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, called the believers in his company to swear allegiance to him to defend themselves even if they might be killed. They had come with the intention to visit the Ka'bah and to make a Minor Pilgrimage. However, when they met with the unexpected reaction and felt their cause to be under great threat, they united around the Messenger as if a single body. They had no other intention than to serve God's cause in order to gain His approval and good pleasure. God was well pleased with the purity of intention and faithfulness in their hearts. So He favored them with a victory in the near future; i.e., the conquest of Khaybar and abundant war-gains.

13. The abundant war-gains promised are the gains that the Muslims were to acquire in the battles they had to fight after the Battle of Khaybar.

14. The present reward granted to the Muslims was the war-gains that they acquired at the Battle of Khaybar.

15. This way is what is stated in (*sūrah* 4: 141): *... and never will God allow the unbelievers to find a way (to triumph) over the (true) believers*, and in (*sūrah* 3: 139): *... you are always the superior side if you are (true) believers*.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي كَفَّ أَيْدِيَهُمْ عَنْكُمْ وَأَيْدِيَكُمْ عَنْهُمْ بِطَرْفِ
مَعْكَ مِنْ بَعْدِ أَنْ أُنْفِرَهُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ
بَصِيرًا ۝ هُمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَصَدُّوا عَنْ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ
وَالْهَدْيِ مَعَكُومًا أَنْ يَبْلُغَ حَجَّهُمْ وَلَوْلَا رِجَالٌ مُؤْمِنُونَ وَنِسَاءٌ
مُؤْمِنَاتٌ لَمْ تَعْلَمُوهُمْ أَنْ تَطْلُوهُمْ فَيُضَيِّبَكُمْ مِنْهُمْ مَعَرَّةٌ
بَعِيرٌ لِيَدْخُلَ اللَّهُ فِي رَحْمَتِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ لَوْ تَرَى كُفْرًا لَعَذَّبْنَا
الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا ۝ إِذْ جَعَلَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا
فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الْحِيزَةَ الْغَاصِيَةَ فَاَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ سَكِينَتَهُ
عَلَى رَسُولِهِ وَعَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَأَلْزَمَهُمْ كَلِمَةَ التَّقْوَى
وَكَانُوا أَحَقَّ بِهَا وَأَهْلُهَا وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا
۝ لَقَدْ صَدَّقَ اللَّهُ رَسُولَهُ الْإِثْمَ بِالْحَقِّ لَسْتَ خَلْقُ الْإِنْسَانِ
الْحَرَامِ إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَئِنْ لَمْ يَنْفِرْ فِي سَنَةِ رُؤُوسَكُمْ وَمُتَّصِرِينَ
لَا تَخَافُونَ فَعَلِمَ مَا لَمْ تَعْلَمُوا فَجَعَلَ مِنْ دُونِ ذَلِكَ فَتْحًا
قَرِيبًا ۝ هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَى وَدِينِ
الْحَقِّ لِيُظَاهِرَهُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا ۝



24. And He it is Who restrained their hands from you and your hands from them in the valley of Makkah after He had granted you victory over them.¹⁶ Surely God sees well all that you do.

25. (God defeated them because) they are the ones who have disbelieved and who barred you from (visiting) the Sacred Mosque and (prevented) the offerings from reaching their destination. And had there not been (in Makkah) believing men and believing women whom you did not know and therefore might have trodden down, and thus something undesired might have afflicted you on their account (for what you did) unknowingly, (God would not have restrained your hands from fighting. But He restrained your hands) so that He might admit to His mercy whom He wills (by sparing the believers in Makkah and enabling many among the Makkans to embrace Islam in time). If they (the believers and unbelievers in Makkah) had been clearly separated, We would certainly have punished those among them who disbelieved with a painful punishment.

26. When those who disbelieved harbored in their hearts fierce zealotry (coming from egotism, tribalism, and feuding), the zealotry particular to the Age of Ignorance, God sent down His (gift of) inner peace and reassurance on His Messenger and on the believers, and bound them to the Word of faith, piety, and reverence for God. They were most worthy of it and en-

titled to it. And God has full knowledge of everything.

27. God has assuredly confirmed the vision for His Messenger as true (and will certainly fulfill it) in reality:¹⁷ you will certainly enter the Sacred Mosque, if God wills,¹⁸ in full security, with your heads shaven or your hair cut short,¹⁹ and you will have nothing to fear. But He always knows what you do not know, and (therefore, without allowing you to enter the Mosque this year,) granted you a near victory before this.²⁰

28. He it is Who has sent His Messenger with the Divine guidance and the Religion of truth that He may make it prevail over all religions.²¹ God suffices for a witness (for the truth of His promise and the mission of His Messenger).

16. This victory is that which happened when the Makkans could not do anything to the Muslims who had come for Minor Pilgrimage, and they returned safe and sound to their families, despite the expectations of the hypocrites. In addition, the Makkans had to recognize Madīnah as an equal city-state to them, and the Muslims secured the Minor Pilgrimage for the following year. The truce signed also paved the way for them to communicate Islam in circumstances of peace and, consequently, numerous people converted. All these developments ended two years later in the conquest of Makkah, the decisive bloodless victory of Islam.

17. For this vision, see note 1 in this *sūrah*.

18. *If God wills*, has three meanings here:

- Your entering the Sacred Mosque, like all other events in the universe and in your lives, will take place by God's Will, not by your will or that of the Makkan polytheists. So do not ask the Messenger why you have not been able to enter this year.

- The verse teaches us that whatever we intend or have decided to do in the future, we must always refer it to God's Will and say, "We will do or intend to do that if it is God's will." (See *sūrah* 18: 23.)

- Some may die before it is time for them to enter the Mosque or will not be able to join the Muslims who will go to visit it.

19. During the Pilgrimage, men either have their heads totally shaven or their hair cut short as a mark of the completion of the Pilgrimage, whether it be major or minor. Having heads shaven is more rewarding. Women only have some of their hair cut short. So this statement means that the Muslims will complete their Minor Pilgrimage in full security and the Messenger's vision will come true.

20. This victory must be the Treaty of Hudaibiyah, which eventually proved to be a manifest victory. (See above, verse 1, note 1.)

21. For an explanation, see *sūrah* 9: 33, note 9.

29. Muḥammad is the Messenger of God; and those who are in his company are firm and unyielding against the unbelievers, and compassionate among themselves. You see them (constant in the Prayer) bowing down and prostrating, seeking favor with God and His approval and good pleasure. Their marks are on their faces, traced by prostration.²² This is their description in the Torah; and their descrip-

tion in the Gospel: like a seed that has sprouted its shoot, then it has strengthened it, and then risen firmly on its stem, delighting the sowers (with joy and wonder), that through them He fills the unbelievers with rage.²³ God has promised all those among them who believe and do good, righteous deeds forgiveness (to bring unforeseen blessings) and a tremendous reward.

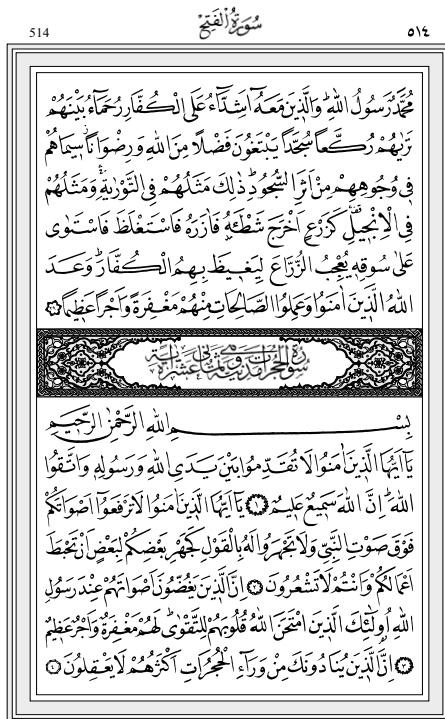
22. That is, the fact that they are believers is discernible in their faces. Their faith is reflected in their manner of life and their outward aspect, including particularly their faces.

23. Although it is difficult to find these descriptions in the present versions of the Torah and Gospel, the following quotations show that they definitely existed in their originals:

The Lord came from Sinai, and dawned on them from Seir; He shone forth from Mount Paran. And he came with ten thousands of saints; from His right hand *came* a fiery law for them. Yes, He loves the people; all His saints *are* in Your hand; they sit down at Your feet; *everyone* receives Your words. (*Deuteronomy*, 33: 2-3)

And he (Jesus) said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on

the ground, and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. For the earth yields crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come. Then he said, "To what shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what parable shall we picture it? *It is like* a mustard seed which, when it is sown on the ground, is smaller than all the seeds on the earth; but when it is sown, it grows up and becomes greater than all herbs, and shoots out large branches, so that the birds of the air may nest under its shade. And with many such parables he spoke the word to them as they were able to hear it. (*Mark*, 4: 26-33)



SŪRAH 49

AL-ḤUJURĀT

(THE PRIVATE APARTMENTS)

Madīnah Period

Revealed in Madīnah and consisting of 18 verses, this sūrah takes its name from the word *ḥujurāt* (private apartments) that occurs in verse 4. It is concerned with how the believers must behave toward the Messenger and among themselves. It lays down important principles concerning how to deal with any report we receive, internal fighting in a Muslim community, assessments of individuals, and the avoidance of racism. It also focuses on the difference between true faith and submitting to a Muslim authority (or being Muslim outwardly or in the sight of law).

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful,
the All-Compassionate.

1. O you who believe! Do not be forward in the Presence of God and His Messenger,¹ and keep from disobedience to God in piety and reverence for Him. Surely God is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.
2. O you who believe! Do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet, nor speak loudly when addressing him, as you would speak loudly to one another, lest your good deeds go in vain without your perceiving it.²
3. Those who lower their voices in the presence of God's Messenger, those are they whose hearts God has tested and proven for piety and reverence for Him. For them there is forgiveness (to bring unforeseen rewards) and a tremendous reward.
4. Those who call out to you from behind the private apartments (which you share with your wives), most of them do not reason and understand (and are therefore lacking in good manners).

1. Whatever God and His Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, will and decree on a matter, believers must accept and obey it. Believers must always take the Qur'ān and the Sunnah as the standard to which they must conform in their thoughts and actions. In addition, they must show utmost respect to God and His Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings.

2. Obedience to the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, in all his verdicts means obedience to God, and faith in and obedience to God require unconditional obedience to the

Messenger. In addition, as any purposeful disrespect to him amounts to unbelief, it may cause one's all good deeds to go in vain. This is so both during the Prophet's life and after his death. There are some acts though, that while they do not amount to unbelief in themselves, they carry the risk of causing unbelief. Raising one's voice or any other action that does not arise from purposeful disrespect does not mean unbelief, yet it can cause the good deed done by way of speech or action to go in vain. (See also *sūrah* 24: 62–63 and the corresponding notes 33 and 34.)

وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ صَبَرُوا حَتَّى تَخْرُجَ إِلَيْهِمْ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ وَاللَّهُ
 غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ
 فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَن تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِمَآلِهِمْ فَتُصْحَبُوا عَلَيْهِمْ فَامْسِكُوا
 وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا مَنَاصِبَهُمْ فَكَبِيرٌ مِّنَ الْأَمْرِ لَيْسَتُمْ وَلَكِنِ اللَّهُ حَبَّبَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْإِيمَانَ وَزَيَّنَهُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ
 وَكَرَّهَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْكُفْرَ وَالْفُسُوقَ وَالْعِصْيَانَ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الرَّاشِدُونَ
 فَضَلَّ اللَّهُ مَنَاصِبَهُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ وَإِن مَّا نَفَقْنَا
 مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فَتَقَاتُلُوا فَأَصْحَابُكُمْ فَانِيتَ إِحْدَهُمْ سَاعَةً عَلَى الْآخَرِ
 فَقَاتِلُوا إِلَى تَبَيعِ حَتَّى تَقَى إِلَى أَمْرِ اللَّهِ فَإِن فَاءَتْ فَأَصْلَحُوا
 بَيْنَهُمَا بِالْعَدْلِ وَأَقْسِطُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ
 إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلَحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ
 لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَسْخَرُوا مِن قَوْمٍ مِّن قَوْمٍ عَسَى
 أَن يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِنْهُمْ وَلَا يَسَاءَ مِن نِّسَاءٍ عَسَى أَن يَكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِنْهُنَّ
 وَلَا تَلْمِزُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ وَلَا تَنَابَزُوا بِالْأَلْقَابِ بُشْرًا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا
 بَعْدَ الْإِيمَانِ وَمَن لَّمْ يَتُبْ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ

5. If (instead of shouting to you to come out to them) they had been patient until you came out to them, it would certainly have been better for them (in respect of the manners due to you from them). However, God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate (especially toward His believing servants, and may forgive ill-manners arising from ignorance).³

6. O you who believe! If some transgressor brings you news (that requires taking action), verify it carefully (before you believe and act upon it), lest you harm a people in ignorance and then become regretful for what you have done.⁴

7. Always bear in mind that God's Messenger is among you (so that you have a duty to refer decisions to him).⁵ If he were to follow you in many affairs of public concern, you would surely be in trouble

(and suffer loss).⁶ But God has endeared the faith to you (O believers) and made it appealing to your hearts, and He has made unbelief, transgression, and rebellion hateful to you. Those are they who are rightly guided (in belief, thought, and action),

8. As a grace from God and a favor. God is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

9. If two parties of believers fall to fighting, make peace between them (and act promptly). But if one of them aggressively encroaches the rights of the other, then fight you all against the aggressive side until they comply with God's decree (concerning the matter). If they comply, then make peace between them with justice and be scrupulously equitable. Surely God loves the scrupulously equitable.

10. The believers are but brothers, so make peace between your brothers and keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety (particularly in your duties toward one another as brothers), so that you may be shown mercy (granted a good, virtuous life in the world as individuals and as a community, and eternal happiness in the Hereafter).⁷

11. O you who believe! Let not some people among you deride another people, it may be that the latter are better than the former; nor let some women deride other women, it may be that the latter are better than the former. Nor defame one another (and provoke the same for yourselves in retaliation), nor insult one another with nicknames (that your brothers and sisters dislike). Evil is using names with vile meaning after (those so addressed have accepted) the faith (doing so is like replacing a mark of faith with a mark of transgression). Whoever (does that and then) does not turn to God in repentance, (giving up doing so), those are indeed wrongdoers.

3. The type of treatment toward God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, which is mentioned in the last two verses is different from the type condemned in the first three verses. The former is concerned with any ill manner arising from ignorance, while the latter is about disrespect to the Messenger and treating oneself as being at par with him and holding one's views as having equal value to his. While the latter may cause one's good deeds to go in vain and to perish, the former is forgivable. However, such actions, so explicitly condemned by this verse, should not be repeated.

4. The principle laid down in this verse after the commands concerning behavior toward the Messenger requires attention in many respects, such as follows:

- In another verse (17: 36), God orders: *Do not follow that of which you have no knowledge (whether it is good or bad), and refrain from groundless assertions and conjectures. Surely the hearing, the sight, and the heart – each of these is subject to questioning about it (you are answerable, and will be called to account, for each of these on the Day of Judgment).* So a Muslim cannot judge anything without confirmed or true knowledge about it. Especially in matters requiring responsibility and concerning social relationships, Muslims must be very careful that they are acting on certain knowledge. This knowledge must be based either on eye-witness reports, or on true, verified reports and never arise from conjecture, individual opinions, or false reports. As will be decreed in verse 12 below, a Muslim cannot have an ill opinion of another Muslim.
- One who, even if a believer, lies, has been proven to be a slanderer, or has been witnessed committing any of the decisively prohibited actions cannot be listened to in a court, and the report of such a person is not acceptable.
- Based on this verse, the scholars of the *Ḥadīth* developed a very important and signifi-

cant science, called the Science of *jarḥ* and *ta'dīl* – the science of establishing whether one who reports any of the Prophetic sayings, actions, and confirmations is reliable or not. This must be true for all matters, especially those concerning social relationships and court trials.

- One is regarded as trustworthy until such a transgression as lying, slander, or the committing of any decisively prohibited action has been established.

5. Also, in particular, see *sūrah* 4: 59, 64-65, 83, note 13.

6. This does not mean that God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, should not consult with his Companions in the matters of government. Rather, consultation is essential to Islamic government and it was enjoined upon the Messenger (*sūrah* 3: 159). If we consider that this command was reiterated just after the Battle of Uhud, and that one of the reasons for the temporary setback in that battle followed from the Messenger's (reluctant) acceptance of the decision to go out to face the enemy, which itself arose from consultation, but which was opposed to his view, then the importance of consultation will become clearer (See *sūrah* 3: 159, note 31). However, if there is something contrary to the basic principles of faith and action, it cannot be put forward for discussion; and if the Messenger has definitely decided on a subject, it should not be debated.

7. The last two verses mean that all the believers are brothers and sisters, who are dutiful to one another in this relationship. It hints that there may be quarrels, even fighting, among brothers, which may sometimes arise from rivalry and jealousy. Even if they quarrel and fight with one another, they are still brothers and sisters, and brotherhood and sisterhood require peace. If, despite the fact that there cannot be enmity among them, two parties of believers dispute or fight with each other, the other believers, who are brothers and sisters to them, must reconcile them immediately and make peace between them as required by

such a relationship. When they are reconciled and have made peace, they must be meticulous in acting according to the precepts of justice. Since quarrels among brothers and sisters usually break out because of rivalry and jealousy; dispensing justice with great care is particularly important.

Brotherhood (and sisterhood) is very important for both the individual and social life of the believers. In particular, their prosperity in the world and superiority against their enemies depend on faith and this relationship. If they clash with one another and divide into rival groups, it is inevitable that they will weaken and be defeated by their enemies. For this reason, both the Qur'ān and God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, have greatly stressed the importance of brotherhood and sisterhood. God's Messenger used to demand the allegiance of the believers on the conditions that they had

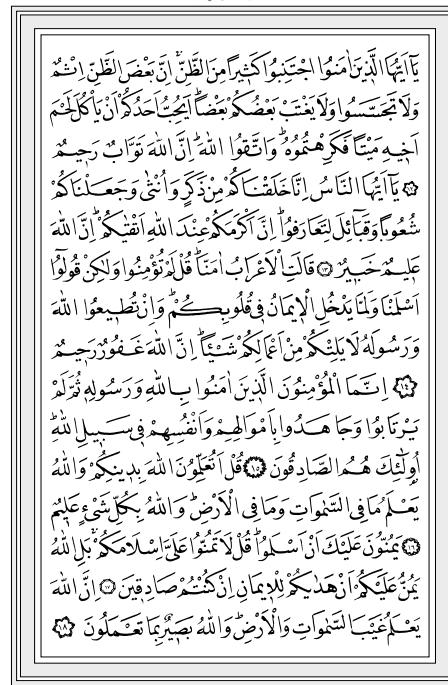
to perform the Prescribed Prayers, paying the Prescribed Purifying Alms, and be well-wishers of the believers. He also said: "Cursing a Muslim is a transgression, and fighting with him amounts to unbelief" (al-Bukhārī, "Īmān," 36). Again, he said: "A Muslim is a brother of another Muslim. He never wrongs him nor makes him devoid of his support. There is no greater offense for a Muslim than despising his Muslim brother" (al-Bukhārī, "Adab," 57-58; Muslim, "Birr," 28-34). He also said: "Believers are like a single body in loving, and showing mercy to one another. (Just as the whole body suffers from any suffering in any part of the body,) so too, will all believers suffer because of the suffering of a believer" (al-Bukhārī, "Adab," 122; Muslim, "Birr," 66). (For the importance of brotherhood and how it can be realized and preserved, see Said Nursi, *Lem'alar*, "20. Lem'a.")

12. O you who believe! Avoid much suspicion, for some suspicion is a grave sin (liable to God's punishment);⁸ and do not spy (on one another),⁹ nor backbite (against one another). Would any of you love to eat the flesh of his dead brother?¹⁰ You would abhor it! Keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety. Surely God is One Who truly returns repentance with liberal forgiveness and additional reward, All-Compassionate (particularly towards His believing servants).

13. O humankind! Surely We have created you from a single (pair of) male and female, and made you into tribes and families so that you may know one another (and so build mutuality and co-operative relationships, not so that you may take pride in your differences of race or social rank, and breed enmities). Surely the noblest, most honorable of you in God's sight is the one best in piety, righteousness, and reverence for God. Surely God is All-Knowing, All-Aware.¹¹

14. (Some of) the dwellers of the desert say: "We believe." Say (to them): "You have not believed. Rather, (you should) say, 'We have submitted (to the rule of Islam),' for faith has not yet entered into your hearts."¹² But, if you obey God and His Messenger, He will not hold back anything of the reward of your (good) deeds.¹³ Surely God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.

15. Only those are the believers who have truly believed in God (as the Unique Deity, Lord, and Sovereign), and (believed in) His Messenger (including all that he has brought from God), then have never since doubted (the truth of what they have tes-



tified to), and who strive hard with their wealth and persons in God's cause – those are they who are truthful and honest (in their profession of faith).

16. (If those desert dwellers still insist on thinking themselves true believers,) say: "What! would you teach God (how truly you are devoted to) your Religion, while God knows all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth?" God has full knowledge of everything.

17. They impress it on you as their favor to you that they have submitted (to the rule of Islam and thereby put you under an obligation to them). Say: "Do not count your being Muslims as a favor to me (nor seek to put me under an obligation. The Religion does not belong to me, but to God only.) It is indeed God Who has conferred

a favor upon you inasmuch as He has shown you the way to faith – if you are truthful (in your profession of being Muslims, those who have submitted to God).”

18. Surely God knows the unseen of the heavens and the earth (all that is beyond human sense-perception and knowledge in them). And God sees well all that you do.

8. The *sūrah*, which has begun and continues with mention of the things injurious to the social relationships in a Muslim community, now mentions the most common ones among them such as derision, defamation, calling others by offensive nicknames, and the ill-opinion or evil suspicion of Muslims. So the suspicion that the verse condemns as a grave sin and prohibits is the evil suspicion of Muslims. If we avoid suspicion as much as possible, we can preserve ourselves from that suspicion which is sinful. Ill-opinion or evil suspicion of a Muslim brother and sister means one's evil suspicion of oneself. Muslims are mirrors to one another, so whoever has an evil suspicion of a Muslim is merely reflecting his or her own inner state. Verse 24: 12 states that a Muslim's opinion of other Muslims is, in fact, their opinion of themselves.

Islam absolutely orders that we cherish the good opinion of God and His Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. God declares: "Toward My servant I am how My servant thinks of Me" (al-Bukhārī, "Tawḥīd", 15; Muslim, "Tawbah," 1).

9. The Qur'ān decisively prohibits spying into and disclosing the secrets and private lives of people, and orders keeping secret any defect and sinful act which one has seen in a Muslim. Neither can a Muslim government spy on people to see whether they are committing a sin or crime, unless a decisive proof has been established that they are committing something against the public peace and others. Likewise, spying into houses, opening and reading letters that belong to others, and listening to the conversations of other people are all wrong.

10. Said Nursi writes on how this statement condemns backbiting and reprimands backbiters, as follows:

This statement reprimands backbiters

with six degrees of reprimand and restrains them from this sin with six degrees of severity:

- The *hamzah*, marking the interrogative (and here translated as *would*) at the beginning of the sentence reaches into all the words of the verse, so that each of them carries an interrogative accent.
- Thus, at the very beginning the *hamzah* in itself asks, "Do you have no intelligence, with which you ask and answer, so that you fail to perceive how abominable this thing is?"
- The second word, *love*, asks through *hamzah*, "Is it that your heart, with which you love or hate, is so spoiled that you love a most repugnant thing like backbiting?"
- Third, the phrase, *any of you*, asks, "What has happened to your sense of the nature and responsibility of society and civilization that you dare to accept something so poisonous to social life?"
- Fourth, the phrase, *to eat the flesh*, asks, "What has happened to your sense of humanity that you are tearing your friend to pieces with your teeth like a wild animal?"
- Fifth, the phrase, *of his brother*, asks, "Do you have no human tenderness, no sense of kinship, that you sink your teeth into some innocent person to whom you are tied by numerous links of brotherhood? Do you have no intelligence that you bite into your own limbs with your teeth, in such a senseless fashion?"
- Sixth, the word, *dead*, asks, "Where is your conscience? Is your nature so corrupt that you commit such a disgusting act as eating the flesh of your dead brother who deserves much respect?"

According, then, to the total meaning of the verse and the indications of each of these

words, slander and backbiting are repugnant to the intelligence, and to the heart, to humanity and conscience, to human nature, the Religion, and social brotherhood/sisterhood. You see, then, that the verse condemns backbiting in six degrees in a very concise and exact manner and restrains people from it in six miraculous ways.

Backbiting is a shameful weapon and most commonly used by people of enmity, envy, and obstinacy; no self-respecting, honorable human being would ever demean themselves by resorting to such a vile weapon.

Backbiting consists in speaking about an absent person in a way that would repel and annoy them if they were present and were to hear. If the words uttered are true, that is backbiting; if they are not, this is both backbiting and slander and, therefore, is a doubly loathsome sin.

Backbiting can be permissible in a very few, particular circumstances:

- A person who has been wronged can present a formal complaint to some officer, so that with their help, a wrong may be righted and justice restored.
- If a person contemplating co-operation or marriage with another comes to hold counsel with you, and you say to them, disinterestedly and purely for the sake of their benefit, and in order to counsel them properly, without any further motive, “Do not do that business with that person; it will be to your disadvantage.”
- If a person says only by way of factual description, not to expose to disgrace or notoriety, “That crippled one went to such and such a place.”
- If the person being criticized is an open and unashamed sinner; that is, far from being ashamed of it, they take pride in the sins they commit – if they take pleasure in their wrongdoing and commit sins openly.

In these particular cases, backbiting may be permissible, provided it is done disinterestedly and purely for the sake of truth and in the collective interest. Otherwise, backbiting is like a fire that consumes

good deeds in the manner of a flame eating up wood.

If one has engaged in backbiting or listened to it willingly, one should seek God’s forgiveness, saying, “O God, forgive me and the one whom I backbit”, and when he meets the person about whom they spoke ill, they should say to them: “Forgive me!” (*The Letters*, “The 22nd Letter,” 2: 76–78).

11. Racism is one of the severest problems of our age. When God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, was raised as a Prophet, the attitudes behind racism were prevalent in Makkah in the guise of tribalism. The Quraysh considered themselves (in particular) and Arabs (in general) as being superior to all other people. God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, came with this Divine message and proclaimed it, explaining: *No Arab is superior to a non-Arab, and no white person is superior to a black person* (Ibn Ḥanbal, 5: 441); and *If a black Abyssinian Muslim is to rule over Muslims, he should be obeyed* (Muslim, “Imārah,” 37).

God’s Messenger eradicated color-based racism and discrimination so successfully that, for example, ‘Umar once said of Bilāl, who was black: “Bilāl is our master, and was emancipated by our master Abū Bakr” (Ibn Ḥajar, 1: 165). Once Abū Dharr got so angry with Bilāl that he insulted him: “You son of a black woman!” Bilāl came to God’s Messenger and reported the incident in tears. The Messenger reproached Abū Dharr: “Do you still have a sign of *Jāhiliyyah*?” Full of repentance, Abū Dharr lay on the ground and said: “I won’t raise my head (meaning he wouldn’t get up) unless Bilāl puts his foot on it to pass over it.” Bilāl forgave him, and they were reconciled (al-Bukhārī, “Imān,” 22). Zayd ibn Hārithah, a black slave emancipated by God’s Messenger, was his adopted son before the Revelation banned adoption as a legal procedure. The Prophet married him to Zaynab bint Jahsh, one of the noblest (and non-black) among the Arab Muslim women. In addition, he chose Zayd as the commander of the Muslim army that was sent against the Byzantine Empire, even though it included such leading Companions as Abū

Bakr, ‘Umar, Ja‘far ibn Abī Ṭālib (the cousin of God’s Messenger), and Khālīd ibn Walīd (even then famed for his genius as a military commander) (Muslim, “Fadā’il aṣ-Ṣahābah,” 63). Further, the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, appointed Zayd’s son Usāmah to command the army he formed just before his death. Included therein were such leading Companions as Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, Khālīd, Abū ‘Ubaydah, Talhah, and Zubayr. This established in the Muslims’ hearts and minds that superiority is not by birth or color or blood, but by righteousness and devotion to God.

During his caliphate, ‘Umar paid Usāmah a higher salary than his own son, ‘Abdullāh. When his son asked why, ‘Umar replied: “My son, I do so because I know God’s Messenger loved Usāmah’s father more than your father, and Usāmah more than you” (Ibn Sa’d, 4: 70).

12. Being a Muslim has three aspects. One is believing in all the essentials of the Islamic faith and submitting to God and His Messenger wholeheartedly by carrying out the commandments of Islam. This is being a sincere Muslim. The second is accepting the sovereignty of the Islamic government or being a Muslim according to the law. This requires a verbal declaration of faith, joining the Muslim congregation in

the Prayer, and paying the Prescribed Purifying Alms (*az-Zakāh*), and not doing openly anything that will invalidate the declaration of faith. Such a person may be a hypocrite, but is treated as a Muslim by law. The third is only submission to the Islamic government. The Bedouins mentioned in the verse were Muslims of the third type.

13. This has three meanings:

- If you truly believe and obey God and His Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, He will not diminish anything in the reward of your deeds both in the world and, especially, in the Hereafter.
- If you continue to obey God and His Messenger in submission to the Muslim state, you will never be left unrewarded for your services in the world.
- If a virtuous non-believer who is not too prejudiced or arrogant to believe does good deeds pleasing to God and does not wrong others, God usually rewards or favors them with faith. A man asked God’s Messenger: “Will our good deeds in *Jāhiliyyah* be rewarded?” The Messenger replied: “God bestowed Islam on you because of those deeds of yours” (al-Bukhārī, “Adab,” 16; Muslim, “Īmān,” 194).

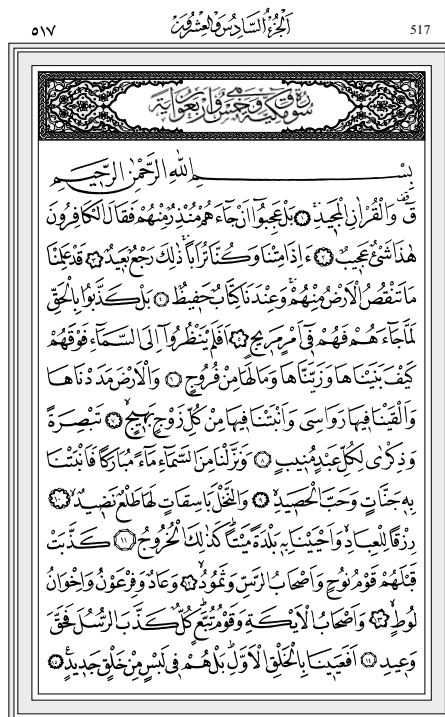
SŪRAH 50

QĀF

Makkah period

Revealed in Makkah, most probably in the fourth or fifth year of the Makkan period, this *sūrah* of 45 verses takes its name after the letter *Qāf* in the first verse. It mentions many phenomena in the universe that indicate God, and then concentrates on the afterlife. It also presents episodes from the lives of peoples who were destroyed in earlier times. God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, frequently read this *sūrah* during the Prayers of the religious festive days and sometimes during the Morning Prayer.

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful,
the All-Compassionate.



1. *Qāf*.¹ By the Qur'ān most sublime. (We have indeed, in spite of what they say, sent it to you to warn people that they will be raised from the dead to account for their lives).
2. But they deem it strange that a warner from among them has come to them, and the unbelievers say: "This is something strange!"
3. "When we have died and become dust (you say, we will be raised from the dead)? That is a far-fetched return!"
4. We know for certain whatever the earth corrodes of them (to the most minute particle); with Us there is a book recording and preserving (incorruptibly).²
5. Rather, they have denied the truth when it has come to them (and done so willfully and persistently), so they are in a dire state (utterly confused about how to explain their rejection, and about how to prevent the acceptance of others).

6. But do they, then, never observe the sky above them (to ponder Our Knowledge and Power; and reflect) how We have constructed it and adorned it, and that there are no rifts in it?
7. And the earth - We have spread it out, and set therein firm mountains, and caused to grow thereon every lovely pair of vegetation.
8. (All this is a means of) insight and reminder for every servant (of God) willing to turn to Him in contrition.
9. And We send down from the sky blessed water with which We cause to grow gardens and grain to harvest,
10. And tall and stately date-palms with ranged clusters,
11. As a provision for the servants. And

We revive with it a dead land: even so will the dead be raised and come forth (from their graves).

12. Before them, the people of Noah denied, and the companions of ar-Rass, and the Thamūd;

13. And the ‘Ād, and the Pharaoh,³ and the people among whom Lot was sent as Messenger;⁴

14. And the companions of al-Aykah, and

the people of Tubba’.⁵ Every one of them denied the Messengers and My threat was duly fulfilled.

15. What! did We show failure and weariness in the first creation (that We will not be able to repeat creation after its destruction)? Rather, (knowing that it could never be so) they are in a tangle (of thought and argument) about a new creation (after the destruction of the old).

1. Information was given in note 1 to the first verse of *Sūrat al-Baqarah* about *Ḥurūf al-Muqatta’āt*, the disjunctive, individual, or abbreviated letters that come at the beginning of some *sūrah*s. *Qāf* is one of them. It can additionally be said here that *Qāf* implies elevation and may be referring to the Qur’ān.

2. The unbelievers claim that the dead bodies are mixed into the dust, and become dust, and that it is therefore inconceivable that it can be known and distinguished to whom which particles (of dust) belong and so it is impossible to reconstruct individual bodies. But the Qur’ān answers that God knows everything down to the particles, and every event in the universe down to the motion of the particles. All is recorded in a book that is recording and preserving and is protected from any interference.

3. The verse mentions the Pharaoh alone,

without any reference to his aristocracy or his people. This is because as a dictator the Pharaoh was responsible for their denial and was almost as sinful as all of them put together.

4. The original of this sentence is *the brothers of Lot*. In many verses, the Qur’ān presents the Messengers as brothers of their people because each was chosen from among his people and therefore was of the same race as them and spoke the same language. Stressing this point here for Lot, upon him be peace, and his people is to remind us that any relationship with a Messenger that is not based on faith can never save one from perishing unless one believes.

5. See, on the companions of al-Aykah, *sūrah* 15: 78, note 15, and on the people of Tubba’, *sūrah* 44: 37, note 10.

16. Assuredly, it is We Who have created human, and We know what suggestions his soul makes to him. We are nearer to him than his jugular vein.

17. Remember that the two recording angels (appointed to record his speech and deeds), seated on the right and on the left, receive and record.

18. Not a word does he utter but there is a watcher by him, ever-present.

19. And the stupor of death comes in truth (being the established decree of God for life). That is, (O human) what you were trying to escape.

20. And (in time) the Trumpet will be blown. That is the Day when God's threat will be fulfilled.

21. And every person will come (before the Supreme Court) with one (angel) driving, and one (angel) bearing witness.

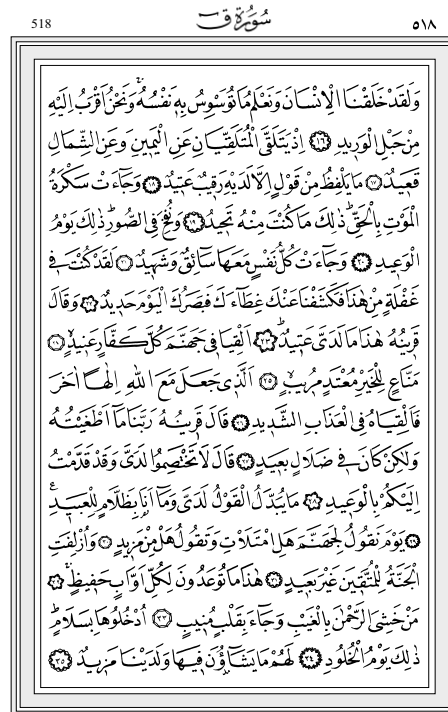
22. "Indeed you were in heedlessness of this, and now We have removed from you your veil, so your sight today is sharp."

23. And the one (the witnessing angel) who accompanies him says: "This is (his record) that I keep ready with me."

24. (The sentence is pronounced): "You two, throw into Hell everyone persistent in unbelief, obstinate (in rejecting the truth);

25. "Who impedes the doing of good (preventing himself and others), and who exceeds all bounds (of right and decency), and who is lost in doubts and implants doubts (in others);

26. "Who sets up another deity beside God – so cast him into the severe punishment."



27. His companion (the devil who accompanied him in the world and seduced him into evil) will say: "Our Lord! I did not cause him to rebel and transgress, but he himself was far astray."

28. God will say: "Do not dispute (with each other) in My Presence. I had warned you (of this Day) before.

29. "And the decree⁶ from Me will not be changed, and I am in no wise one who wrongs (My) servants."

30. On that Day, We will say to Hell, "Are you filled (to the full)?" and it will say, "Are there (yet) more (to come)?"⁷

31. And Paradise will be brought near for the God-revering, pious; not (any longer) is it far.

32. "This is what was promised for you –

for everyone who was penitent, careful in keeping his duties (to God).

33. “Everyone who stood in awe of the All-Merciful though unseen (beyond their perception), and has come with a heart contrite and devout.

34. “Now enter it in peace (secure from any trouble or distress). That is the Day of immortality.”

35. Therein will be for them everything that they desire, and in Our Presence there is yet more.⁸

6. This decree states that God Almighty will put into Hell those who follow Satan and disbelieve or associate partners with God (17: 63; 32: 13). For the disputes which will take place in Hell between Satan or the devils and the people of Hell, and between the disbelieving wrongdoers and those who follow them, see *sūrah* 38: 85; *sūrah* 34: 31–33; *sūrah* 37: 50–57; *sūrah* 40: 47–52.

7. Everything will be alive in the Hereafter (*sūrah* 29: 64), so Hell will speak there (*sūrah*

25: 12, note 4). This question and answer is to emphasize that Hell can comprehend all those who have deserved it. For it will finally be filled to the limit (*sūrah* 32: 13).

8. God Almighty declares: “I have prepared for My righteous servants in Paradise such blessings that neither eyes have seen them, nor ears have heard them, nor minds have ever conceived of them” (al-Bukhārī, “Tawḥīd,” 35; Muslim, “Jannah,” 4–5).

36. How many a generation We have destroyed before them who were mightier than these in prowess, and overran other lands. But was there any place of escape (for them when God's punishment became due – is there ever?)

37. Surely in that is a warning reminder for anyone who has a heart (that is truly alive), and who gives ear (to the one conveying this reminder), with eyes able to see well.

38. We assuredly created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them in six days, and nothing of fatigue touched us.⁹

39. So (with confident reliance on Our promise and Power) bear with patience whatever they say, and glorify your Lord with His praise before the rising of the sun and before its setting;

40. And during (some part of) the night,

too, glorify Him, and after the prostrations.¹⁰

41. And wait with ears able to hear for the Day when the Caller will call out from a place near –¹¹

42. The Day when they will hear the Blast in truth (as a predetermined decree of God that must happen). That is the Day of the coming forth (when the dead will be raised from their graves).

43. Surely it is We Who give life and cause to die, and to Us is the homecoming.

44. That Day, the earth will be rent asunder away from them, and they, hurrying out of it (will come to the gathering). That will be a gathering easy for Us.

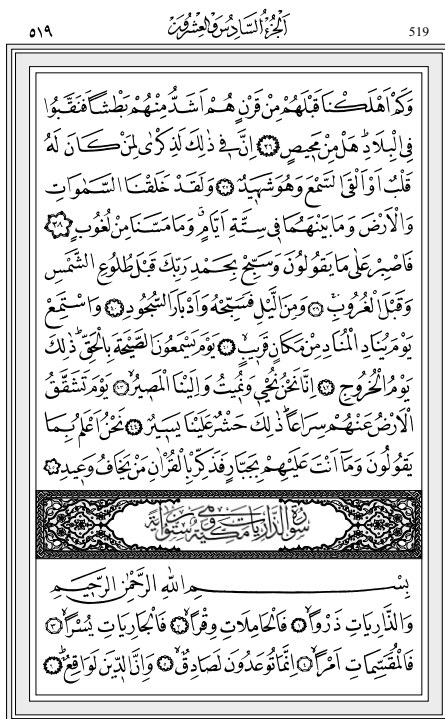
45. We know best whatever they say, and you (O Messenger) are not one to compel them (to faith). So remind and warn by the Qur'ān him who fears My threat.

9. This statement categorically rejects the Biblical assertion that God needed to rest on the seventh day, an assertion that effectively nullifies the idea of an omnipotent God.

10. In verse 39, the Morning Prayer, the Noon and the Afternoon Prayers, and in verse 40, the Evening and Late Evening Prayers are ordered. Glorification after the prostrations refers to the supererogatory Prayers after the prescribed ones (except the Morning and Afternoon

Prayers), and saying words of glorification (*Subḥān Allāh*), praise (*al-ḥamdu li'llāh*), and exaltation (*Allāhu akbar*). The Messenger earnestly advised utterance of these phrases 33 times each after each Prescribed Prayer.

11. The Caller is the Archangel Isrāfīl who will blow the Trumpet. What is meant from a place near is that everyone in the world will hear the sound of the Trumpet as if it were being blown just next to them.



SŪRAH 51

ADH-DHĀRIYĀT
(THE SCATTERERS)

Makkah Period

Revealed in Makkah when the Quraysh's persecutions of the believers began, this *sūrah* of 60 verses derives its name from the word *adh-dhāriyāt* (those that scatter) in the first verse. It concentrates on the afterlife and God's Oneness, and warns the unbelievers, reminding them what happened to many previous peoples who had obstinately persisted in unbelief and wrongdoing.

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful,
the All-Compassionate.

1. By those that (like winds) scatter far and wide;
2. And those that (like clouds) bear heavy burdens;
3. And those (like ships) that run with gentle ease;
4. And those (angels) who distribute by command (of God, His provision of rain and innumerable other blessings):¹
5. What you are promised is most certainly true –
6. The Last Judgment is bound to take place.

1. In these verse, God Almighty draws our attention to all the material causes and/or forces He employs in carrying out His orders on the earth, in the air, and in the sea (i.e., throughout the universe), and therefore swears by the angels responsible for them. As explained in

sūrah 2, note 31, whatever takes place in the universe takes place through the angels that are responsible for that action. The angels are of different classes or ranks. They receive God's commands and by His command they distribute God's provision and other blessings.

7. By the heaven full of braided pathways (for the movement of angels and celestial objects, for the sending down of God's commands, and for the ascent of the diverse supplications of conscious beings by speech or act or need):

8. Surely you are in contradicting views (about the Qur'ān and how to describe it).

9. Whoever has been deluded from it (the Qur'ān) is (first) self-deluded (turning away from the right way in thought, belief, and action).²

10. Be away from God's mercy the liars building on conjecture,

11. Who are quite heedless (of truth) in an abyss of ignorance.

12. They ask: "When is the Day of Judgment?"

13. The Day when they will be tormented over the Fire.

14. "Taste your torment (that you have brought upon yourselves). This is what you (in mockery) would ask to be hastened!"

15. As for the God-revering, pious: they will be in Gardens and springs,

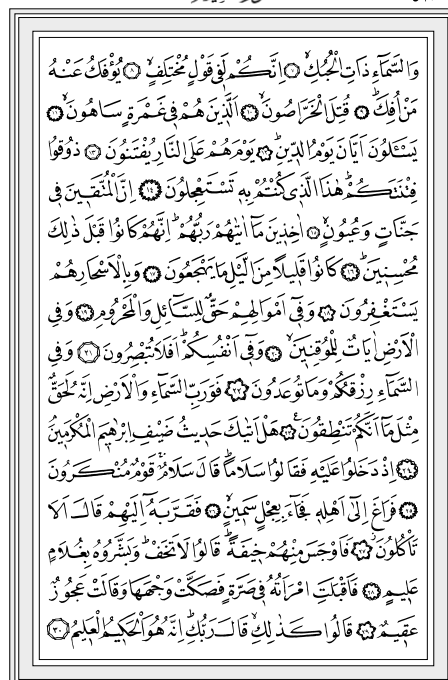
16. Taking whatever their Lord grants them. For they were, before that, devoted to doing God's commands, aware that God was seeing them.

17. They used to sleep but little by night (almost never missing the *Tahajjud* Prayer).

18. And in the hour of early dawn, they would implore God's forgiveness.

19. And in their wealth, the poor (who had to beg) and the destitute (who did not beg out of shame) had due share (a right they gladly honored).

20. On the earth there are (clear) signs (of God's Oneness as Lord and Sovereign) for those who seek certainty;



21. And also in your own selves. Will you then not see (the truth)?

22. And in the heaven there is your provision, and what you are promised.³

23. Then, by the Lord of the heaven and the earth, this (promise) is as much (a fact conveyed to you) as that you speak.

24. Has there come to you report of Abraham's honored guests?

25. They presented themselves before him and bade him peace. He said (in returning their greeting) "Peace!" (and thought:) A people unknown.

26. He withdrew to his household and brought a (roast of) fatted calf.

27. He placed it before them, and said: "Will you not eat?"

28. (When he saw that they did not eat)

he became apprehensive of them.⁴ They said: “Do not be apprehensive!” They gave him the glad tidings of (the birth of) a son to be endowed with profound knowledge.

29. Then his wife came forward, groaning,

and struck her forehead, saying: “(How shall I bear a child, being) a barren old woman?”

30. They said: “Thus has your Lord decreed. Surely He is the All-Wise, the All-Knowing.”

2. There is a unity in the multiplicity in creation. As all other things and beings differ, so do human beings differ from one another in many ways. All other things and beings, despite their infinite multiplicity, obey the One and Single God, Lord, and Sovereign, and this is why there is a magnificent accord in the universe. So the beings (humankind and the jinn) endowed with free will and responsible for their choices must believe in and obey the same One and Single God if they desire accord in their individual and social lives. This does not mean that they must be uniform and standardized in their opinions.

There are many fields in which a difference of views and choices is necessary, but there are some other fields in which they must be unified. For example, they must believe in One God and must be united in belief in the other essentials of faith; and they must worship the same One and Single God, obeying His laws in ordering their lives. Some of these laws are essential to human life, regardless of time

and place, and are therefore immutable, while others are changeable according to time, place, and conditions.

3. That is, whatever we have as provision is God's favor, and because of its sublimity and worth, the Qur'ān states that it has descended from the heaven. In addition, since the earth is revived with rain after its death and everything we obtain from the earth needs rain, the Qur'ān sometimes uses rain to mean provision. As for what is meant by *what you are promised*, it is everything that God will grant as a reward for the good deeds of His servants, including, in particular, Paradise. Since these rewards are also purely God's favors, they are sublime and therefore have their source in the heaven; or since heaven suggests sublimity, the Qur'ān tells us that their source is heaven.

4. If a guest held back from eating the food offered to him, it meant that he had an evil intention.

قَالَ فَمَا خَطْبُكُمْ أَيُّهَا الْمُرْسَلُونَ ۖ قَالُوا إِنَّا أُرْسِلْنَا إِلَىٰ قَوْمٍ مُّجْرِمِينَ ۖ لَنُرْسِلَ عَلَيْهِمْ حِجَارَةً مِن طِينٍ ۖ مُّسَوَّمَةً عِندَ رَبِّكَ لِلْمُسْرِفِينَ ۖ فَخَرَجْنَا مَكَازِيمَ الْكَاذِبِينَ ۖ ثُمَّ جَاءَ مِنَّا الْمُسْلِمُونَ ۖ فَكَانُوا فِيهَا غَرَضَاتٍ مِّنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ۖ وَكَانُوا فِيهَا آيَةً لِلَّذِينَ يَخَافُونَ الْعَذَابَ الْأَلِيمَ ۖ وَفِي مُوسَىٰ إِذْ أَرْسَلْنَاهُ إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ بِسُلْطَانٍ مُّبِينٍ ۖ فَتَوَلَّىٰ مُّسْكِنُهُ وَقَالَ سِحْرٌ وَأُجُوتٌ ۖ فَخَذَّاهُ وَجُودَهُ ۖ فَجَذَّاهُمْ فِي النَّارِ ۖ وَهُوَ مُلِيمٌ ۖ وَفِي عَادٍ إِذْ أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الرِّيحَ الْعَقِيمَ ۖ مَا تَذَرُونَ شَيْئًا عَلَيْهِ إِلَّا جَلَلَةٌ كَالرَّيْسِ ۖ وَفِي نُوحٍ إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ تَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حِينَ ۖ فَتَوَاعَزُوا فِي رِجْلِهِمْ فَخَذَّاهُمُ الصَّاعِقَةُ وَهُمْ يَنْظُرُونَ ۖ فَتَوَاعَزُوا فِي رِجْلِهِمْ وَمَا كَانُوا مُنْصَرِفِينَ ۖ وَقَوْمُ نُوحٍ مِّن قَبْلُ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمًا فَاسِقِينَ ۖ وَالسَّمَاءَ بَنَيْنَاهَا بِأَيْدٍ وَإِنَّا لَمُوسِعُونَ ۖ وَالْأَرْضَ فَشَّطْنَاهَا فَعَنَةً اللَّامِهُدُونَ ۖ وَمِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْنَا رُوحَانًا لِّعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ ۖ فَذَرُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ إِنِّي لَكُم مِّنْهُ نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ ۖ وَلَا تَجْعَلُوا مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ إِنِّي لَكُم مِّنْهُ نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ ۖ



31. He (Abraham) said: “Then (after that), what is your concern, O you (heavenly) envoys?”

32. They said: “Indeed, we have been sent to a people who are all criminals,

33. “So that We may send upon them stones of baked clay,

34. “Marked out in your Lord’s Presence for (the destruction of) the people wasteful (of their God-given faculties and) committing excesses.”

35. We brought out such as were therein of the believers;

36. But We did not find there any but a single house of Muslims (those wholly submitted to God).

37. We left there a clear sign (of the truth of God’s Messages) for those who fear the painful punishment.”⁵

38. And in (the exemplary experience of) Moses too, (there is a clear sign): We sent him as Messenger to the Pharaoh with an evident authority.

39. But the Pharaoh turned away (from Our Message), together with his hosts, and said: “(Moses is either) a sorcerer or one possessed.”

40. So We seized him and his hosts, and hurled them into the sea. And he was self-accused, remorseful (too late, when he was drowning).

41. And also in (the illustrative history of the tribe of) ‘Ād (there is a clear sign), when We sent upon them the devastating wind:

42. It spared nothing that it reached, but made it like ashes.

43. And also in (the illustrative history of the tribe of) Thamūd, (there is a clear sign), when they (were given respite and) it was said to them: “Enjoy life for a little while!”

44. But they rebelled against their Lord’s decree, so the thunderbolt (along with the blast) seized them, even while they were looking on.

45. They were not able to rise up (still less escape the punishment), nor were able to receive help.

46. (And We had destroyed) the people of Noah before. They were a people transgressing (God’s bounds).

47. And the heaven,⁶ We have constructed it mightily; and it is surely We Who have vast power, and keep expanding it.⁷

48. And the earth, We have spread it out like a coach, and how excellent We are in spreading it out.

49. And all things We have created in pairs, so that you may reflect and be mindful.

50. “So, flee to (refuge in) God. I am surely a plain warner to you from Him.

51. “And do not set up another deity besides God. I am surely a plain warner to you from Him.”

5. For further explanations, see *sūrah* 11: 69–83; *sūrah* 15: 51–77 and the corresponding notes.

6. After the accounts of some past, exemplary events, this verse is a continuation of verse 22.

7. The expansion of the universe, of which the

Qur’ān informed us centuries ago, is the most imposing discovery of modern science. Today it is a firmly established concept and the only debate centers around the way in which this is taking place.

52. Similarly, no Messenger came to the peoples who lived before them but they said of him (in like manner): “A sorcerer or one possessed.”

53. Have they bequeathed this to one another (by way of response)? They were indeed a rebellious people.

54. So, turn away from disputing with them, and you are not to be blamed (for doing so).

55. But remind and warn, for reminding and warning are of benefit to the believers.⁸

56. I have not created the jinn and humankind but to (know and) worship Me (exclusively).⁹

57. I demand of them no provision, nor do I demand that they should feed Me.

58. Surely God – it is He Who is the All-Providing, Lord of all might, and the All-Forceful.

59. So surely those who commit the greatest wrong (namely, not believing in and worshipping God, or associating partners with Him in worship), will have their share (of the punishment) like the share of their fellows (of old who were destroyed). Then, let them not ask Me to hasten it.

60. Then, woe to those who disbelieve because of their Day with which they are threatened.

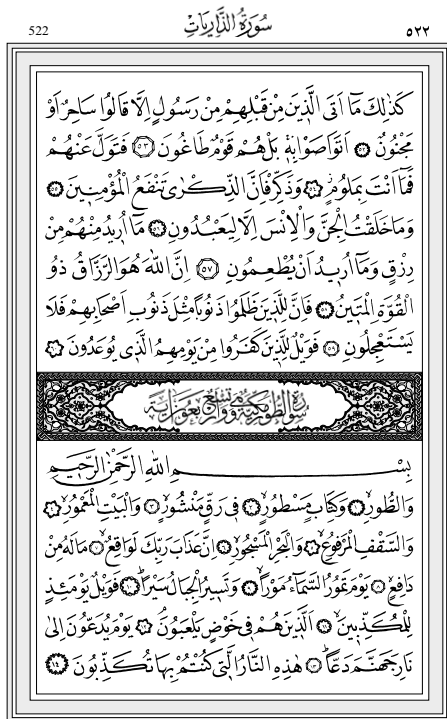
8. Dispute is of no use in communicating the Message. What is important and should be done is to communicate and preach the truth in the proper style. The other thing that should be pointed out here is that in preaching the truth or the Divine Message the believers should not be neglected, thinking that they already believe, and their needs should be taken into consideration. Everyone needs reminding.

9. This verse expresses the Divine purpose for creation. While all other beings and things worship and obey God willy-nilly, only the jinn and humankind, endowed with free will, have the capacity to worship and obey or not to worship and obey Him. Yet, as it is God Who creates and maintains, He alone deserves worship. It is also He Who will ask conscious beings to account for their lives, and this is why God alone must be worshipped. Worshipping and obeying the One God will also secure justice and accord in the lives of the jinn and humankind. Worshipping God entails knowledge and love of Him. Bediüzzaman Said Nursi writes:

Belief in God is creation's highest aim and most sublime result, and humanity's most exalted rank is knowledge of Him that is

contained in this belief. The most radiant happiness and sweetest bounty for the jinn and humanity is love of God contained within knowledge of God. The purest joy of the human spirit and the sheerest delight of the human heart is spiritual ecstasy contained within the love of God. All true happiness, pure joy, sweet bounties, and unclouded pleasures are contained within knowledge and love of God. Those who truly know and love God can receive infinite happiness, bounties, enlightenment, and understand infinite mysteries. Those who do not are afflicted with infinite spiritual and material misery, pain, and fear. If any person were allowed to rule this world, despite his or her being powerless, miserable, and unprotected amid other purposeless people in this world, what would the true worth of this be?

People who do not recognize their Owner and discover their Master are miserable and bewildered. But those who do, taking refuge in His Mercy and relying on His Power, see this desolate world transformed into a place of rest and felicity, a place of exchange for the Hereafter. (*The Letters*, “The 20th Letter,” 2: 2)



In the Name of God, the All-Merciful,
the All-Compassionate.

1. By the Mount (Sinai),
2. And by a Book inscribed,
3. In parchments outstretched,
4. And by *Bayt al-Ma'mūr* (the House continuously frequented),
5. And by the canopy (of heaven) raised high,
6. And by the sea kept filled (and ready to overflow),
7. The punishment of your Lord will certainly take place.¹
8. There is none that can avert it.
9. On that Day, the heaven will be convulsed violently;
10. And the mountains will move away with an awesome movement.
11. Woe, then, on that Day to those who deny (God's Message and the Messengers) –
12. Those who are habitually playing, absorbed (in vanities):
13. On that Day, they will be forcefully thrust into the fire of Hell.
14. "This is the Fire which you used to deny.

SŪRAH 52

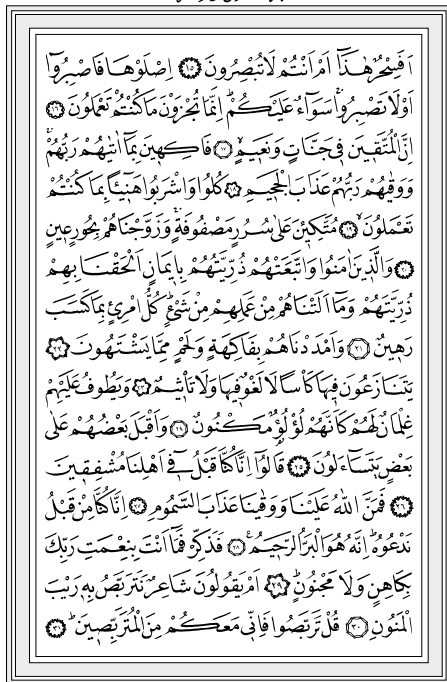
AT-TŪR (MOUNT (SINAI))

Makkah Period

Revealed in Makkah, this *sūrah* of 49 verses derives its name from the word *at-Tūr* (the Mount) in the first verse. It deals with the confused reactions of the Makkan polytheists to the revelation of the Qur'ān and how they made themselves look ridiculous. It emphasizes the truth of Judgment Day in that the unbelievers will be punished while the believers will be rewarded with Paradise. It also draws attention to the destruction that may come upon those who obstinately resist the truth.

1. The Qur'ân draws attention to many important phenomena in the universe, human life, and history in order to emphasize the inevitable advent of the Last Day. In the same way as the creation of the universe, the changes and convulsions it has experienced, and the changes of the days, months, seasons, years, and centuries all bear witness to the coming of the Last Day, so too do the revealed Books throughout human history inform us of its decisive occurrence. Science also testifies to this (see Ali Ünal, *The Resurrection and the Afterlife*, 57-94). Therefore, by the Mount, the Qur'ân refers to both Mount Sinai, where the Prophet Moses, upon him be peace, received the Torah, and another mount, Mount an-Nûr, where the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, began to receive the Qur'ân. By the Books inscribed, it refers to the revealed Books of God, like the

Torah and the Qur'ân. The Books inscribed may also signify the records of deeds where the deeds of human beings are recorded and which will be unrolled on Judgment Day. *Bayt al-Ma'mûr* refers both to the Ka'bah, which has continuously been visited by human beings and angels, and also its counterpart in the heavenly realm that is continuously visited and circumambulated by angels. It also refers to the revelation of the Qur'ân, in that according to some, the Qur'ân was first sent down on it in its entirety (See *sûrah* 44, note 1). The heaven will be rent asunder on the Last Day and all the seas or the mass of water on the earth will be made to boil over. So, all the phenomena referred to in these six verses allude to the Last Day; and because of this, the oaths sworn in them conclude with the declaration of its inevitable and already destined advent.



and We have assigned for them maidens pure, beautiful of eye.

21. Those who have believed and their offspring have followed them in faith, We will unite them with their offspring (even though the faith of the latter may not be of the same degree as that of the former), and We will not decrease the reward of their deeds in anything (because of their being united with their offspring). Every person will enjoy according to what he has earned.²

22. And We will provide them with fruit and meat, one meal after the other, such as they desire.

23. There they will pass among one another a cup wherein is (a drink inciting) neither false, foolish talk nor sin.

24. And there will go round them boy-servants attending upon them, (so pure) as hidden pearls.

25. Some of them will move closer to others, asking (about their affairs in the world, and how they were admitted to Paradise).

26. They say: "We used to be, when amongst our families, indeed most apprehensive before (most careful and alert for the guidance and eternal life of our family members).

27. "Then God bestowed His favor upon us, and protected us from the punishment of the scorching fire penetrating through the skin.

28. "We used to worship and invoke Him alone before. Surely He is the All-Benign, the All-Compassionate (especially to His believing servants)."

29. So (O Messenger, continue to) preach and remind; by God's grace, you are not a soothsayer, nor one possessed.

15. "Is this sorcery (for you used to deride the Revelation as sorcery), or is it that you do not see (so that, for you, it is something illusory)?

16. "Suffer the heat of it now! Bear it patiently, or do not bear it patiently, it is all the same to you. You are only being recompensed for all that you used to do (in the world)."

17. The God-revering, pious ones will surely be in Gardens and bliss,

18. Enjoying all that their Lord will grant them (by His grace and in recompense for their good deeds); and their Lord has protected them from the punishment of the Blazing Flame.

19. "Eat and drink to your hearts' content for all that you used to do (in the world)."

20. They will recline on thrones arranged;

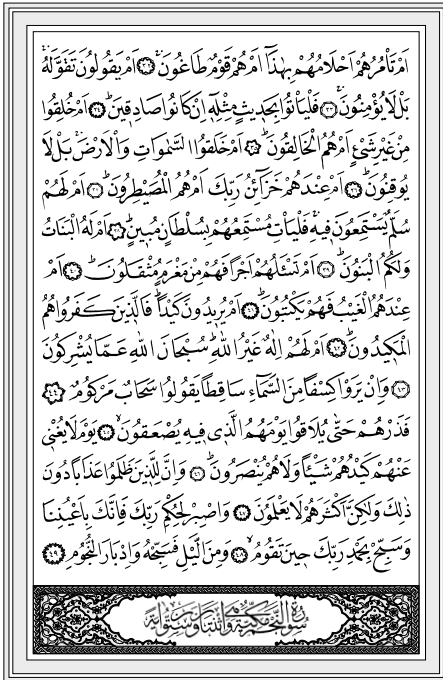
30. Or do they say (of him): “A poet (jinn-possessed). We await for him some calamity ahead”?

31. Say: “Wait on, for I am waiting with you (though I hope for a different outcome).”

2. God will unite the parents with their believing offspring in Paradise, even though the faith and deeds of their offspring may not be of the same rank as them. This will be another blessing for the believers. However, everyone will not enjoy Paradise to the same degree, even though they will be together in the same place. Each person will enjoy it according to the degree of their own faith and deeds.

The verse also hints that, as pointed out

in *sûrah* 56: 10–14, particularly at the beginning of a new movement of faith, those who attain the faith first are generally more valued in God’s sight and will be the foremost in enjoying Paradise. They have outstripped others in believing and supported God’s cause at a time when supporting it was the most difficult, without considering any worldly advantage, and therefore suffered greater hardships than those who followed.



32. Do their minds urge them to such (absurd falsehoods), or are they a people (in the habit of being) rebellious and outrageous?

33. Or do they say: "He forges it (and then attributes the Qur'ān to God)?" No, indeed. Rather, (they make such claims because) they have no will to believe.

34. (If they really believe such a Book can be forged) then, let them produce a Discourse like it, if they are truthful (in their claims).

35. Or were they created without anything being before them (or out of something different than the basic material of all creation, so that they know things others do not); or are they the creators (of themselves, so that they can maintain themselves and are free in their acts)?

36. Or did they create the heavens and the earth (so that their sovereignty belongs to them)? No, indeed. Rather, they have no certain knowledge (about creation, humankind, and the basic facts concerning them).

37. Or are the treasures of your Lord at their disposal (so that they provide for creation however they will, and choose whom-ever they will as Messenger, and send down to him whatever Book they will)? Or have they been given authority over them (so that they can prevail upon God to send them a Message and Messenger that suits their interests)?

38. Or do they have a ladder by which (having climbed to heaven) they overhear (the secrets of heaven, confirming their stand against the Messenger and the Qur'ān)? Then let their eavesdropper produce some clear authority (to prove what he claims to have heard).

39. Or (do you, in your absurdity, attribute to Him children, so that) for Him there are daughters (whom you yourselves foolishly disdain), while for you there are sons?

40. Or is it that you (O Messenger) ask them for a wage (for conveying God's Religion to them) so that they are crushed under debt?

41. Or do they have the knowledge of the Unseen (and the Supreme Ever-Preserved Tablet), so that they write down the decrees (determining all events, and stipulating a way of life for others to follow)?

42. Or do they intend a plot (to entrap you so as to defeat your mission)? Yet it is those who disbelieve who are entrapped (in so plotting, because they deny themselves God's blessings in both worlds).

43. Or do you have a deity other than God (to whom, in vain, you look to sustain, and

help, and protect you)? All-Glorified is He (in that He is absolutely exalted) above what they associate as partners with Him.

44. (So obstinate are they in rejecting the truth that) if they saw a piece of the sky falling down (on them), they would say, "This is (only) a heap of clouds!" (For they cannot conceive that it may be a punishment for their obstinate denial).

45. So, leave them until they meet their Day when they will be struck dead.

46. The Day when their scheming will avail them nothing, nor will they be helped.

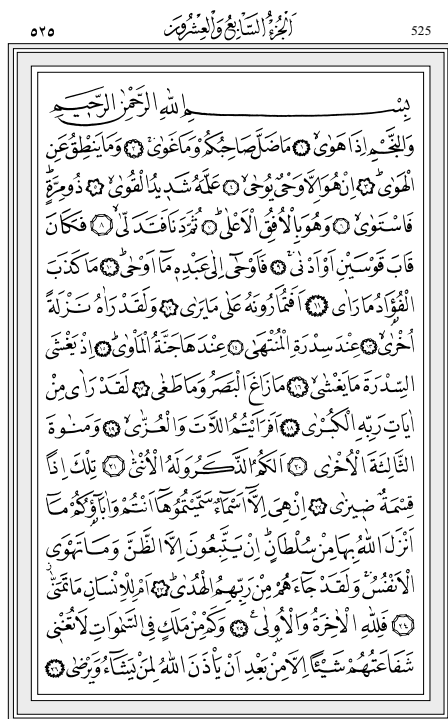
47. And surely for those who commit the greatest wrong (through unbelief or associating partners with God, and resisting the conveying of His Religion), there is another punishment besides that; but most of them do not know.³

48. So wait patiently for your Lord's judgment, for you are under Our Eyes (under Our care and protection); and glorify your Lord with His praise when you rise up (to pray);

49. And in the night-time also glorify Him, and at the retreat of the stars.

3. The Day mentioned in verse 45 may be referring either to the day when the leaders of unbelief will be struck dead in the world in a war (as the leaders of the Quraysh were killed in the Battle of Badr) or in another catastrophe, or to the overall destruction of the world.

So *another punishment* mentioned in verse 47 is both the kind of punishment they will be made to suffer in the world so that they may repent, and the punishment in the grave that they will suffer until the Day of Resurrection.



SŪRAH 53

AN-NAJM (THE STAR)

Makkah Period

Revealed in Makkah, this *sūrah* of 62 verses derives its name from the word *an-Najm* (the star) in the first verse. God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, recited it in its entirety to both the believers and the Makkan polytheists at the Ka'bah. It warns the polytheists about their attitude towards the Qur'ān. It reminds them that all their beliefs are based on mere surmises, while those who follow the Straight Path are those who believe in and worship the One God, Who is the Owner of the whole universe. It also stresses that the Religion God's Messenger communicates is not a new, invented one in human history; and it threatens the polytheists with Judgment Day, which is bound to come.

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful,
the All-Compassionate.

1. By the star when it goes down,
2. Your Companion (the Messenger) has neither gone astray nor adopted a wrong way (in belief and action).
3. He does not speak on his own, out of his own desire;
4. That (which he conveys to you) is but a Revelation that is revealed to him.¹
5. One of forceful might (Gabriel) has taught it;
6. One firm, with the ability to penetrate and perfect in spirit, rose with all his splendor,²
7. When he was in the highest part of the horizon.³
8. Then, he drew near and came close,
9. So he was (so near that there was left only the distance between) the strings of two bows (put adjacent to each other), or even nearer (than that).
10. And He revealed to His servant what He revealed.⁴
11. The heart did not contradict what he saw (with his eyes).⁵
12. Will you then dispute with him concerning what he saw?
13. Assuredly he saw him during a second descent,
14. By the Lote-tree of the utmost boundary,⁶
15. Near it is the Garden of Refuge and Dwelling.
16. Meanwhile, that was covering the Lote-tree which was covering it.⁷
17. The sight (of the Messenger) did not swerve (so that he looked elsewhere and saw something different), nor did it go wrong (so that he might have seen an illusion).

18. Indeed, he saw one among the greatest signs of His Lord.⁸

19. (As compared to that) have you considered al-Lāt and al-‘Uzzā?

20. And the other, the third (idol), al-Manāt: (what things are these that you concoct)?

21. What! for you the males and for Him the females?

22. That is an unfair division indeed!⁹

23. They (your false deities) are nothing but made-up names that you and your forefathers have invented; God sent no authority for them. They follow only conjecture and that which they themselves lust after. But now there has certainly come to

them guidance from their Lord (Who has created them, and sustains them).

24. Or will human attain whatever he craves?¹⁰

25. But (whatever human desires, be it to serve his higher good, or to serve his carnal appetites) to God belong the after(life) and the former (life).¹¹

26. How many an angel there is in the heavens (even supposing they would intercede for a human) whose intercession does not avail at all except after God has given permission to whomever He wills (to intercede on behalf of whomever He wills) and is pleased with.

1. As mentioned in the introductory words about this *sūrah* above, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, recited it in its entirety to both the believers and the polytheists at the Ka'bah. The polytheists were trying to find excuses for their rejection of the Qur'ān and the Messenger, and discussing how they should brand them. So the verses remove all the doubts and confusion that they were trying to form around the Divine origin of the Qur'ān and the Messengership of the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings.

In many verses God swears by objects in the universe. This *sūrah* begins with an oath by the star. This has many implications. By *the star*, it refers to all celestial objects and, by swearing by it when it goes down, it implies that no celestial object can be a deity to worship (See *sūrah* 6: 76, note 16). As is known, the Makkan polytheists also worshipped some celestial objects, including, in particular, the star of Sirius (verse 49 in this *sūrah*). It also implies that, since the time when the star goes down is the time when day breaks, the day or sun of truth (Islam) is about to rise. The Ascension of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, some aspects of which are mentioned in this *sūrah*, may also be symbolized by this.

The word translated as star also means passage, and according to some, it also refers to the Qur'ān's being revealed in passages. So the verse means, *By the passage(of the Qur'ān) when it goes down (is sent down)*.

2. The verses possibly refer to important phenomena that are connected to one another. The one described in the verse may be referring to both the Archangel Gabriel and the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings. The meaning given in the interpretation is referring to Gabriel. In its reference to the Messenger, the meaning of the verse is: *And by receiving the Qur'ān, the Messenger has attained full perfection and the greatest position*.

3. Gabriel used to come to God's Messenger in different forms. The Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, saw him in his original form twice, first when he descended from Mount Nūr after receiving the first Revelation, and then, as mentioned in verse 13, during the Messenger's return from the Ascension. So this verse refers to his first sight of him. When it is taken to refer to the Messenger, it implies his greatness.

4. These verses, like the verses above, are

about both Gabriel's bringing the Revelation to the Messenger, and the Messenger's meeting with God during the Ascension, an event that happened beyond all concepts of modality. In the former case, verse 8 means that Gabriel "went down" from his position in the heaven and came close to the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, who was on the earth. In the latter case, it means that God manifested His nearness to the Messenger and attracted him toward Him, and the Messenger ascended toward Him, high enough to meet with Him. This meeting, which signifies the Messenger's unparalleled nearness to God, is expressed in verse 9 as the "nearness between the strings of two bows put adjacent to each other." This comparison points to the insurmountable boundary between the realm of contingency (creation) and the infinite "realm" of Absolute Necessity (the Creator). God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, reached the highest point that a created being can. During the Ascension, God prescribed the five daily Prayers, so these verses also suggest the importance of the Prescribed Prayer. For this reason, the Prayer contains the meaning of the Ascension and is regarded as the ascension of every believer who performs it. A believer can realize ascension according to their capacity in the Prayer, an occasion on which a believer is nearest to God.

5. The original of the word translated as "the heart" is *fu'ād*. It is the center or central sense of the (spiritual) heart. The heart has senses of hearing and seeing, and what perceives or comprehends any perception received by the heart through its senses of hearing and seeing is *fu'ād*.

6. This tree signifies the insurmountable infinite boundary between the "realm" of Absolute Necessity (Divinity), and the realm of contingency (the created).

7. What covered the Lote-tree was God's Light and His overflowing radiance.

8. It is not certain what this greatest sign was. God had His Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, travel in the highest dimensions

of creation during the Ascension so that he could see some of His signs (17: 1). It is understood that these signs are of the kind that they can only be perceived through seeing, and the greatest of creation, upon him be peace and blessings, was favored with their sight. Human language is simply inadequate to express these signs in such a way that we would be able to visualize them exactly.

9. Al-Lāt, al-'Uzzā, and al-Manāt were three of the "greatest" idols of the Makkan polytheists. It is very interesting that these three idols were regarded as females and had female names. Since they were images or representations of some angels or angelic powers in the sight of the polytheists, and since the polytheists regarded the angels as females or daughters of God, they called them by female names. Yet they despised females and did not desire to have daughters, and they attributed females to God. As explained in note 25 to 4: 117, the reason why they chose their deities from among the females was because they did not want these to have any authority over them; moreover, they tended to seek to dominate even their deities and to use them for the realization of their worldly ambitions.

10. For example, will humans choose whom-ever or whatever they desire as deities? Would they want God to accept angels as intermediaries with Him on their part, and is this something that God would accede to?

11. It is God Who has created the universe and humankind. No one has any choice about whether they come to the world or not, when and where they are born, in what family they will come to the world, when they will depart from the world, nor in the determination of their color, race, physical body, or sex. So, it is also God Who has established the conditions of life in the world and the law of causality (what happens to humans as a result of their actions); and it is also He Who has established what deed will bring reward or punishment in the Hereafter. In sum, human beings have been given neither absolute freedom nor absolute autonomy.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ لَيَسْمَعُونَ الْمَلَائِكَةَ تَسْمِيَةَ الْأُنثَى
 وَمَا لَهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِنْ يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَإِنَّ الظَّنَّ لَا يُغْنِي مِنَ
 الْحَقِّ شَيْئًا ۖ فَاعْرِضْ عَنْ مَنْ تَوَلَّى عَنْ ذِكْرِنَا وَلَهُ يُرَدُّ إِلَّا
 الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا ۚ ذَٰلِكَ مَتْلُوحُهُمْ ۚ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ
 بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنِ اهْتَدَى ۚ وَلِلَّهِ
 مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ۚ يَخْتَارُ الَّذِينَ اسْتَوٰا سَمَآءَ
 عِلٰلًا وَيَخْتَارُ الَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا بِالْحُسْنٰى ۚ الَّذِينَ يَجْتَنِبُونَ
 كِبَآءَ الْإِثْمِ وَالْفَوَاحِشِ إِلَّا اللَّغَمَ ۚ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ وَاسِعُ الْمَقْعَرِ
 ۚ هُوَ أَفْهَمُ كَمَا إِذَا أَنْشَأَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ وَإِذَا أَنْتُمْ أَجْتَعُ ۚ فِي ضُلُوفِ
 أُمِّكَ ۚ فَلَا تُرْكُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنِ انْتَفَى ۚ أَفَوَآيَتِ
 الْبَدَىٰ تَوَلَّى ۚ وَاعْطُوا قَالِدًا وَكَذٰى ۚ عِنْدَهُ عِلْمُ الْغَيْبِ هُوَ يُرَىٰ
 ۚ أَفَلَمْ يَكُنْ بِمَا فِي صُفْحِ مَوْصًى ۚ وَابْتَغِمْ الَّذِي وَفَّى ۚ أَلَا
 تَرَىٰ وَارِدًا رُّؤُوسًا ۚ وَأَنْ لَّيْسَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ إِلَّا مَا سَأَىٰ ۚ وَأَنْ
 سَعْيُهُ سَوْفَ رَءًى ۚ تَنْجِيزُهُ الْغَمْرَ الْأَوْفَى ۚ وَأَنْ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ
 الْإِنْتَهَىٰ ۚ وَأَنَّهُ هُوَ أَضْحَكَ وَأَبْكَىٰ ۚ وَأَنَّهُ هُوَ أَمَاتَ وَأَحْيَا ۚ

27. It is those who do not believe in the Hereafter who name the angels (whom they regard as God's daughters) with feminine names.

28. They have no knowledge of this. They follow nothing other than conjecture, and conjecture can never substitute for anything of the truth.

29. So withdraw from those who turn away from Our Book and remembrance, and desire nothing but the life of this world.

30. Such is their sum of knowledge (limited by desires of the moment, and the falsehoods they have inherited unthinkingly and become used to, limited to the outer surface of things). Surely your Lord knows best him who has gone astray, and He knows best him who goes right (following the Straight Path of his Lord).

31. To God belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth, and (since He knows best him who has gone astray and him who follows the right path) He will recompense those who do evil with what they have done, and recompense those who do good with the best reward.

32. Those who avoid the major sins and indecent, shameful deeds (which are in fact included in the major sins), only falling into small faults,¹² – surely your Lord is of extensive forgiveness. He knows you well when He originates you from (the particles of) earth, and when you are hidden (fetuses) in the wombs of your mothers. So do not hold yourselves pure (sinless; it

is vain self-justification). He knows best him who keeps from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety.

33. Have you considered him who turns away (from your call)?

34. He has given (the needy) a little, then he is stern (in not giving).

35. Does he have knowledge of the Unseen, and so he sees (what is to happen in the future)?

36. Or has he not been informed of all (that is to follow and) was in the Scrolls of Moses,

37. And of Abraham, who discharged his due (fulfilling all his duties to perfection)?

38. That no soul, as bearer of burden, bears (and is made to bear) the burden of another.

39. And that human has only that for which he labors,

40. And his labor will be brought forth to be seen.¹³

41. And afterward he will be repaid for it with fullest payment.

42. And in your Lord everything ends.

43. And He it is Who (by His Will, Power, and creation) enables to laugh and to weep.

44. And He it is Who causes to die and gives life.

12. For the major sins, see *sūrah* 2: 194, note 140; *sūrah* 4: 31, note 11; and for the indecent, shameful deeds, see *sūrah* *sūrah* 4: 25, note 9. Indecent acts, such as illegal sexual intercourse and homosexuality are in fact included in the major sins. They are mentioned separately because God especially warns us against them. In order to better understand this verse and the meaning of *small faults*, it should be considered together or in the light of the verse: *They are also the ones who, when they have*

committed a shameful deed or wronged themselves (through any kind of sinful act to bring harm to themselves), immediately remember God and implore Him to forgive their sins –for who will forgive sins save God? –and do not persist knowingly in whatever (evil) they have committed (sūrah 3: 135).

13. *The day when every soul will find whatever good it has done brought forward, and whatever evil it has done.... (sūrah 3: 30).*

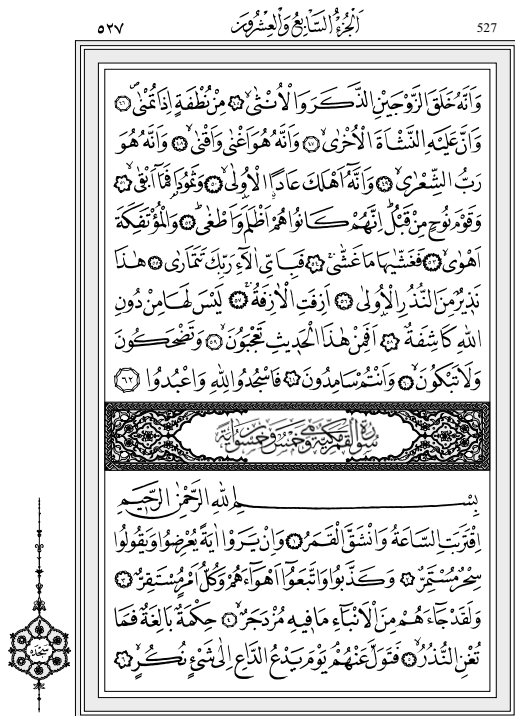
45. And He creates the pairs, the male and the female,
46. From a drop of (seminal) fluid when it is emitted.
47. And He has taken on Himself the other bringing forth;
48. And He it is Who grants abundant wealth and suffices (all need by His providing).
49. And surely He it is Who is the Lord of Sirius.¹⁴
50. And He destroyed the former (tribe of) 'Ād,¹⁵
51. And the (tribe of) Thamūd; He spared no (disbelieving criminal) among them.
52. And the people of Noah before – surely they were further in wrongdoing and further in rebellion.
53. (He also destroyed) the overthrown cities (of Lot's people);
54. So that there covered them that which covered.
55. Then which of the gifts of your Lord do you dispute about?¹⁶
56. And this (Messenger) is a warner like the warners of old.
57. That (the Last Hour) which is bound to draw near has drawn near.
58. None besides God can disclose it (or remove the dread and suffering it entails).
59. Do you then deem this Discourse (which enables your eternal salvation) strange?
60. And do you laugh and not weep (in consideration of your recalcitrance and sinfulness),
61. Moreover entertain yourselves (with fun and games)?
62. Rather: prostrate before God (in submission) and worship Him (so that He may protect you from the dread and suffering of the Last Hour).

14. Sirius is the brightest star in the sky. Many Arabs worshipped it during the Time of Ignorance and attributed to it celestial events, such as rain. The Qur'ān categorically rejects this and states that it is God Who has created Sirius, Who makes it last, and gives it its light.

15. The former tribe of 'Ād were the people of

the Prophet Hūd, upon him be peace. The latter 'Ād were those descending from the believers who had survived the destruction.

16. Justice is indisputably good in itself and absolutely necessary for human life. So the destruction of several peoples who were obstinate in wrongdoing was their just due; it is a gift or bounty of God to humankind.



SŪRAH 54

AL-QAMAR (THE MOON)

Makkah Period

This sūrah of 55 verses, revealed five years before the *Hijrah*, derives its name from the word *al-Qamar* (the moon) in the first verse. It mentions the splitting of the moon by a gesture of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, and contains, in order to both warn the unbelievers and console the believers, the brief accounts of the people of Noah and of 'Ād and Thamūd and that of the peoples of Lot, upon him be peace, and the Pharaoh. The splitting of the moon by a gesture of God's Messenger alludes to God's absolute authority over the universe, as well as to the fact that it is God Who really controls and maintains the universe behind all apparent causes, and it points to the inevitable end of the world.

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful,
the All-Compassionate.

1. The Last Hour has drawn near, and the moon has split.¹
2. Whenever they see a miracle, they turn from it in aversion and say: "This is sorcery like many others, one after the other."
3. And they have denied (Prophethood and whatever sign the Prophet has shown them), and followed their lusts and fancies. Yet every matter has its appointed time (and so they will come to know the truth).
4. And, for certain, there have already come to them reports (of the Hereafter and former peoples) wherein there is ample warning to deter (them from their ways).
5. All this (which is included in the Qur'ān) is consummate wisdom, but warnings do not avail (such people).
6. (Seeing that they reject your call) withdraw from them. The Day will come when the caller will call² (all the people) to something exceptionally terrible.

1. The amazing and wonderful phenomenon of the splitting of the Moon, which took place at Minā five years before the *Hijrah*, caused by a gesture of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, was a manifest miracle of his, and a clear sign of the truth that the Resurrection, of which the Messenger was giving the news, would take place. The great sphere of the moon had split into two distinct parts in front of the very eyes of the people present. The two parts had separated and receded so far apart from one another that, to the onlookers, one part had appeared on one side of the mountain and the other on the other side of it. Then, in an instant, the two had rejoined. The unbelievers described it as a magical illusion and persisted in their denial. Such people will not believe as a result of admonition, nor learn lessons from history, nor affirm faith even after witnessing manifest signs with their eyes.

The verse states that the moon split when the Last Hour approached. This is because the time from the advent of the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, to the destruction of the world is known as the End of Time. The Messenger himself says that his time in the life of the world is as the late afternoon in a day (al-Bukhārī, "Ijārah," 8).

Said Nursi writes about this manifest miracle of the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, as follows:

Some ask why this miracle was not recorded and transmitted in the history of other peoples. Although there are serious studies showing that it was seen by some in such countries as India, and that it was recorded, we deem it useful to mention the following points concerning the event as an answer to the question.

- Such objections arise from considering the splitting of the moon as if it were a natural event, whereas it was a miracle. A miracle is created by God to decisively prove the Prophethood of His Messengers to his opponents, so it is not necessary that others should see it. So this miracle was primarily shown to the Makkan polytheists and occurred before a group of people to convince them of Muḥammad's Prophethood. It happened momentarily at a time of night when people were sleeping; such obstacles as mist, clouds, and time differences may have prevented others from seeing it.
- The obstinacy of the Prophet Muḥammad's disbelieving contemporaries is well-known and recorded. When the Qur'ān announced this incident of the moon splitting, not one unbeliever dared contradict it. If they had not seen this event, they would have used this verse as a pretext to attack the Prophet more formidably. However, neither the biographies of the Prophet nor history books report anything that even suggests that they denied the occurrence of this event. Their reaction was only to say that it was sorcery of the Prophet's doing. They declared the event to be sorcery, and further added that if the Makkan caravans in other places had seen it, then it had truly happened; otherwise, the Prophet had bewitched them. When the caravans arrived the following morning from Yemen and other places and announced that they had seen this miracle, the unbelievers replied: "The sorcery of Abu Ṭālib's orphan has affected even the heavens!" (Since the miracle was created for the Makkan polytheists, the Almighty allowed their caravans to see it as well.)
- The majority of the foremost scholars, after carrying out meticulous research, such as Sa'du'd-Dīn at-Taftazānī, concluded that the splitting of the Moon is *mutawātir*. That is, it has been transmitted down the generations by one truthful group after another, and that the transmitters form such a vast community that they would be unable to agree on a lie. It is as certain as Haley's comet, which appeared 1,000 years before (its last appearance in 1986), or the existence of an island we have not seen.
- Prophets work miracles to prove their claim of Prophethood and to convince deniers, not to compel belief. Thus, every miracle is shown to convince those who heard the claim of Prophethood. If

they somehow forced everyone to see or believe in them, the Wisdom of the All-Wise One, the Divine purpose for creating us with free will and sending religion, which entails that the ground be prepared for willing acceptance, would be violated.

Thus, for instance, if the All-Wise Creator had left the moon in two pieces for several hours, so that everyone could see it and record it in their historical records, it would have been regarded as only another astronomical event instead of a miracle unique to Muḥammad's Messengership or an evidence of his Prophethood.

- Some argue that if this event had really occurred, it would have been mentioned in Chinese, Japanese, and Native American historical accounts. But how could they have seen it for, in addition to other obstacles, it was barely sunset in such European countries as Spain, France, and England (all enveloped in mists of ignorance), daytime in America, and morning in China and Japan.
- This miracle is not an ordinary incident that happened due to particular causes or randomly, enabling us to criticize it based on the law of cause and effect. Rather, the All-Wise Creator of the sun and the moon made it an extraordinary event to confirm His Messenger's Prophethood and support his claim.

Out of all the evidence of the occurrence of this miracle, we will mention only six, as these six have the strength of a six-fold consensus:

- The Companions of the Prophet, all people of justice and truthfulness, agreed that it took place.
- All exacting Qur'ānic interpreters agreed that the moon split upon a gesture of the Prophet Muḥammad's finger.
- All truthful narrators and scholars of *Hadīth* narrated this incident through

various authentic channels of transmission.

- All people of truth and sainthood, as well as of inspiration and spiritual discovery, testify that this event took place.
- All foremost theologians and learned scholars confirm this event, despite other differences of opinions.
- Muḥammad's community, which an authentic Prophetic Tradition states can never agree on an error, accepts its occurrence.

These six proofs clearly establish the splitting of the moon (*The Letters*, "The 19th Letter," 1: 265–272).

Some modern commentators claim that the verse refers to the fact that the moon will split before the destruction of the world. However, the second verse rejects this assertion. The signs to appear before the destruction of the world will decisively prove that the Last Hour has come and this is the time when the world will be destroyed. But the second verse clearly says that the unbelievers reacted to the splitting of the moon by claiming that it was sorcery, and they showed the same reaction to many similar signs. Hasan al-Baṣrī and 'Aṭa' ibn ar-Rabāh, who asserted that the moon would split before the destruction of the world, did not deny the occurrence of this miracle as evidence of the Prophethood of Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, in Makkah.

It is stated in some verses (e.g. 17: 59) that God did not allow His Messenger to work a miracle because the former peoples had denied the miracles they had asked their own Messengers to show them, and so deserved their destruction. However, the splitting of the moon was not a miracle that the unbelievers had asked the Messenger to work so that they would believe in him. The Messenger showed them this miracle to prove his Prophethood.

2. The caller and the call signify the Trumpet Call for the revival of the dead and gathering them on the Plain of the Supreme Gathering.

7. With eyes downcast, they will come forth from their graves as if they were locusts scattered abroad (in confusion),

8. Hastening (in obedience) toward the caller. The unbelievers will say: "This is a hard day."

9. Before them, the people of Noah denied: they denied Our servant, and said: "This is a man possessed!" and he was rebuked (with insolence and prevented from preaching).

10. So he prayed to his Lord, saying: "I have been overcome, so help me!"

11. So We opened the gates of the sky, with water outpouring;

12. And We caused the earth to gush forth with springs, so the waters (of the sky and the earth) combined for (the fulfillment of) a matter already ordained.

13. And We carried him on a (construction of) wooden planks and nails,

14. Running (through the water) under Our Eyes as a reward for one who had (wrongfully) been rejected with ingratitude.

15. And indeed We left it (the Ark) as a sign (of the truth),³ then is there any that remembers and takes heed?

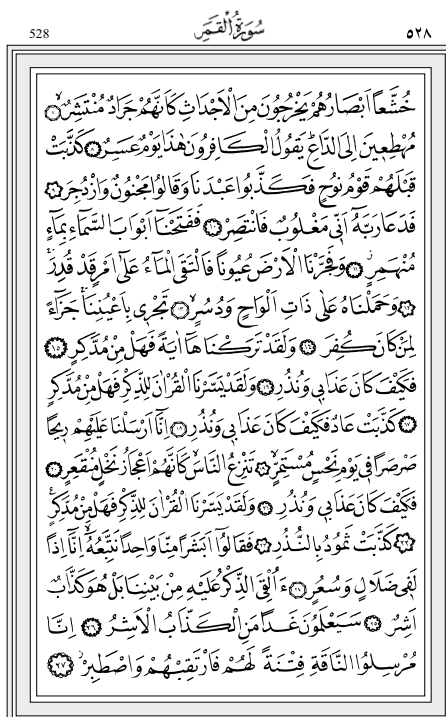
16. But see how (severe) was My punishment and (how true) My warnings!

17. And indeed, (by revealing it through human language) We have made the Qur'ān easy for remembrance (of God, and taking heed), then is there any that remembers and takes heed?⁴

18. The (tribe of) 'Ād also denied (their Messenger), then see how (severe) was My punishment and (how true) My warnings:

19. We sent upon them a furious wind-storm through certain time of enduring disaster;

20. Tearing people away as if they were trunks of uprooted palm-trees.



21. So see how (severe) was My punishment and (how true) My warnings!

22. And indeed, (by revealing it through human language) We have made the Qur'ān easy for remembrance (of God and for taking heed). Then, is there any that remembers and takes heed?

23. The (tribe of) Thamūd also denied all the warnings (given to them).

24. They said: "What! a mortal from among us, all alone – shall we follow him? Then indeed we would be lost in a strange error and madness!"

25. "Is the Remembrance and Reminder (sent down) upon him from among us? No. Rather, he is a presumptuous liar (one claiming superiority over us)."

26. (We told their Messenger): "Soon they will know who is the presumptuous liar."

27. “We will surely send the she-camel as a trial for them (in response to their insistently asking you to show a miracle). So watch them (and observe what they do), and bear patiently (with their misconduct toward you).

3. This shows that the remains of Noah’s Ark were still present and could be seen when this *sūrah* was revealed. Imam al-Bukhārī, Ibn Jarīr aṭ-Ṭabarī, Ibn Abī Hātem and ‘Abdu’r-Razzāq report from Qatādah that the Muslims who conquered Iraq saw it on *al-Jūdī* (for Mount Jūdī, see note 14 to *sūrah* 11: 48). It may also suggest that it will continue to remain so that people will be able to find it as a lesson.

4. That is, God revealed the Qur’ān through human language so that people could understand it. Although the Qur’ān has unfathom-

able depths of meaning, it has such styles that it satisfies everyone, from the most ordinary to the most advanced in sciences. What is necessary for everybody is to recognize the essentials of faith and a good life, so even the most ordinary people can derive from the Qur’ān what they must believe in and what they must do in order to gain eternal happiness, and can take from it the necessary lessons. However, this in no way means that everybody can understand all of the Qur’ān perfectly only by reading it or by studying a translation of it.

28. "And inform them that the water is to be shared between her and them; each sharer will be present by the water when it is their turn to drink."⁵

29. But (without observing the turn) they (schemed to slaughter the she-camel and) called their comrade (one of the nine ring-leaders); and so he ventured (upon the evil deed), and slaughtered her cruelly.

30. And see how (severe) was My punishment and (how true) My warnings:

31. We sent upon them a single Blast, and they became like dried chippings of shrubs used as cattle-fodder.

32. And indeed, (by revealing it through human language) We have made the Qur'an easy for remembrance (of God and for taking heed). Then, is there any that remembers and takes heed?

33. And the people of Lot also denied all the warnings (given to them).

34. We sent a hurricane of stones upon them, save the family of Lot: We saved them by early dawn,

35. As a grace from Us. Thus do We reward those who give thanks.

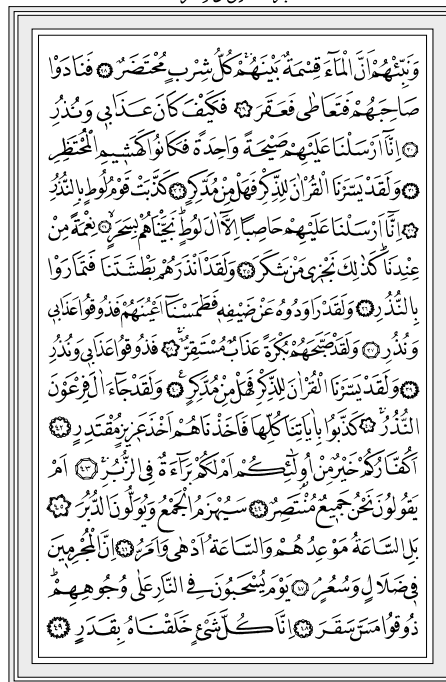
36. Lot had indeed forewarned them of Our striking down, but they disputed the warnings.

37. They had harassed him (with frequent coming-and-going) to abuse his guests,⁶ and so We blotted out their eyes: taste My punishment and (the consequences of) My warnings!

38. The punishment decreed assuredly overtook them early in the morning.

39. So taste My punishment and (the consequences of) My warnings!

40. And indeed, (by revealing it through



human language) We have made the Qur'an easy for remembrance (of God and for taking heed). Then, is there any that remembers and takes heed?

41. And warnings certainly came also to the clan of the Pharaoh,

42. Who denied all Our messages and signs (including the miracles showed to them); and in the end, We seized them after the manner of One All-Glorious with irresistible might, All-Omnipotent.

43. Now are the unbelievers of yours (O Makkans) better and more powerful than those (whose histories We have recounted)? Or is there an exemption (from punishment written) for you in the Scriptures?

44. Or do they say, "We are a host united and invincible"?

45. (But let them know that) the hosts

will all be routed, and they will turn their backs and flee.⁷

46. Indeed, the Last Hour is their appointed time (for their complete recompense), and the Last Hour will be more grievous and more bitter.

47. The disbelieving criminals will be in

utter loss away (from Paradise) and burning in the Blazes.

48. On that Day, they will be dragged in the Fire on their faces: “Taste the touch of Hell!”

49. Surely We have created each and every thing by (precise) measure.

5. For the she-camel and the water to be shared, see *sūrah* 7: 73–77, note 17; *sūrah* 11: 64–65; and *sūrah* 26: 155–157.

6. For the guests of the Prophet Lot, upon him be peace, and the destruction of his people, see *sūrah* 11: 69–83; *sūrah* 15: 51–77; and *sūrah* 26: 160–175, and the corresponding notes. The Old Testament also records that the eyes of the people who rushed to Lot’s house to abuse his guests – guests who were, in fact, angels in the

appearance of human beings – were blinded (*Genesis*, 19: 9–11).

7. When this verse was revealed, the Muslims were few in number and weak in Makkah. Some of them had had to migrate to Abyssinia to escape the persecutions. But it was no more than 10 years before their powerful enemies were utterly defeated in the Battle of Badr. Seventy of their leaders were killed and the others fled the battlefield, leaving many prisoners of war.

50. And Our commanding is not other than a single (command), like the twinkling of an eye.⁸

51. We have destroyed many peoples like you (in wrongdoing, some of whose stories We have recounted, and some not). Then, is there any that will remember and take heed (and so believe in God and follow His Religion)?

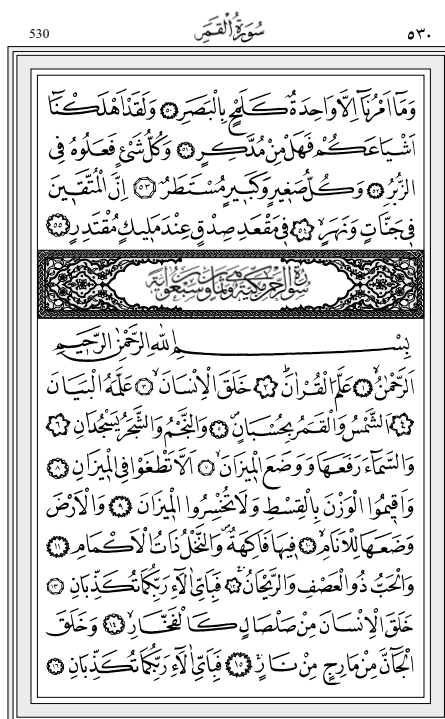
52. And everything that they did exists (recorded) in (their) notebooks (of deeds).

53. Everything small or great is written down.

54. And the God-revering, pious ones will be in Gardens and by rivers,

55. In the assembly of honor composed of the loyal and truthful, in the Presence of the One All-Omnipotent Sovereign.

8. For a similar Qur'ānic statement and explanation, see *sūrah* 36: 82-83, note 26.



SŪRAH 55

AR-RAḤMĀN (THE ALL-MERCIFUL)

Makkah Period

Revealed in Makkah, this *sūrah* of 78 verses derives its name from *ar-Raḥman* (the All-Merciful), which constitutes the first verse. Throughout it is mentioned that the manifestations of God are a result of His being the All-Merciful. As explained in note 4 on *Sūrat al-Fātiḥah*, the term the All-Merciful designates the Divine Being as the One with infinite mercy Who embraces all of creation with mercy, grace, and favor, including humankind, without any discrimination between believers and unbelievers, and as the One Who gives life, maintains, provides, and equips all with the capacities necessary for each. God has created the universe out of, and as the manifestation of, the mercy embodied by His Name the All-Merciful.

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful,
the All-Compassionate.

1. The All-Merciful.
2. He has taught the Qur'ān (to human-kind and, through them, the jinn);¹
3. He has created human;
4. He has taught him speech.²
5. The sun and the moon are by an exact calculation (of the All-Merciful).³
6. And the stars and the trees both prostrate (before God in perfect submission to His laws).
7. And the heaven – He has made it high (above the earth), and He has set up the balance,
8. So you must not go beyond (the limits with respect to) the balance;

9. And observe the balance with full equity, and do not fall short in it.⁴
10. And the earth – He has laid it down and furnished for living beings.
11. Therein are fruits (of various kinds), and date-palms with sheathed clusters;
12. And also corn, with leaves and stalk (for use as fodder), and scented herbs.
13. Then (O humankind and jinn), which of the favors of your Lord will you deny?⁵
14. He has created human from sounding clay like the potter's;
15. And He has created the jinn from a smokeless (fusing flame of) fire.⁶
16. Then (O humankind and jinn), which of the favors of your Lord will you deny?

1. The Qur'ān, as the greatest manifestation of God's Mercy, is the embodiment of the Straight Path that leads to happiness in both the world and the Hereafter. It is by means of the Qur'ān that we have knowledge about God and what He asks us to do in order that He may be pleased with us. The purpose of the creation of the universe and humankind has been universally disclosed in the Qur'ān. This *sūrah* reminds us of God's favors and asks *Which of the favors of your Lord will you deny?* When God's Messenger recited it to the jinn, they responded: "We do not deny any of Your favors. All praise and gratitude are for You." In appreciation of this, the Messenger narrated this to his Companions (at-Tirmidhī, "Tafsīr ar-Raḥmān," 55).

The fact that the Qur'ān was taught signifies that the Qur'ān consists of knowledge throughout. Like the petals of a rose, knowledge of everything exists in it in degrees and everyone can attain this knowledge from it, according to their capacity, purity of intention, and degree of submission to it.

2. Teaching the Qur'ān, creating us and endowing with the ability to speak, and teaching us how to speak by inspiring language in us – all these are among the greatest blessings of God and manifestations of His being the All-Merciful. Speech is a very complicated process, which takes place at the same instant as

thought. Through speech, people make themselves known. How languages have come into being and been diversified is a mystery. No one knows how this happened, although there are many different theories. However, God declares that He made all things known to Adam and taught him their names (1: 31). Therefore, language is also a direct gift from God.

3. A noted scientist, A. Cressy Morrison, expands on this idea of "exact calculation:"

The earth rotates on its axis in twenty-four hours or at the rate of about one thousand miles an hour. Suppose it turned at the rate of a hundred miles an hour. Why not? Our days and nights would then be ten times as long as now. The hot sun of summer would then burn up over vegetation each long day and every sprout would freeze in such a night. The sun, the source of life (on the earth), has a surface temperature of 12,000 degrees Fahrenheit, and our earth is just far enough away so that this "eternal fire" warms us just enough and not too much. It is marvelously stable, and during millions of years has varied so little that life as we know it has survived... The earth travels around the sun at the rate of eighteen miles each second. If the rate of revolution had been, say, six miles or forty miles each second, we would be too far from or too close to the sun for our form of life to exist.

Stars vary in size, as we all know. One is so large that if it were our sun, the orbit of the earth would be millions of miles inside its surface. Stars vary in the type of radiation. Many of their rays would be deadly to every known form of life. The intensity and volume of this radiation is anywhere from less than that of our sun to ten thousand times as great.... But our sun is about right for our life among millions of others which are not.

The earth is tilted at an angle of twenty-three degrees. This gives us our seasons. If it had not been tilted, the poles would be in eternal twilight. The water vapor from the ocean would move north and south, piling up continents of ice and leaving possibly a desert between the equator and the ice. Glacial rivers would erode and roar through canyons into the salt-covered bed of the ocean to form temporary pools of brine. The weight of the unbelievably vast mass of ice would depress the poles, causing our equator to bulge or erupt or at least show the need of a new waistline belt. The lowering of the ocean would expose vast new land areas and diminish the rainfall in all parts of the world, with fearful results.

The moon is 240,000 miles away, and the tides twice a day are usually a gentle reminder of its presence. Tides of the ocean run as high as sixty feet in some places, and even the crust of the earth is twice a day bent outward several inches by the moon's attraction. All seems so regular that we do not grasp to any degree the vast power that lifts the whole area of the ocean several feet and bends the crust of the earth, seemingly so solid. If our moon was, say, fifty thousand miles away instead of its present respectable distance, our tides would be so enormous that twice a day all the lowland of all the continents would be submerged by a rush of water so enormous that even the mountains would soon be eroded away, and probably no continent could have risen from the depths fast enough to exist today. The earth would crack with the turmoil and the tides in the air would create daily hurricanes.

(In short,) there must be in nature

some form of intelligent direction. If this be true, then there must be a purpose.
(Morrison, 13-18)

4. By mentioning balance in three successive verses, the Qur'ān shows the importance attached to it. It clearly states that there is a very sensitive balance in creation and the relationships among its parts. The wonderful accord observed in the universe and its maintenance is due to this most sensitively computed balance. It is also indispensable to human life, both individually and socially. Its social manifestation is justice. With respect to human education and perfection, this balance requires that everything is given its due importance in life and that the basic faculties or impulses of anger, desire or appetite, and reason be trained, disciplined, and employed in order to develop them into the virtues of chivalrous courage, moderation and chastity, and wisdom (for a detailed explanation, see *sūrah* 2, notes 23, 39, and 113).

5. This verse points out that not only humankind but also the jinn have a share in the benefits in the favors mentioned previously and in those which will be mentioned in the verses to come.

6. The Qur'ān has many references to the creation of humankind from clay, which signifies their lowly material origin and the fact that the body is composed of elements coming from earth, air, and water. This also implies that the real worth of human beings lies in the immaterial dimensions of their existence.

The last two verses may also be referring to the initial origin of humankind and the jinn and the phases the earth passed through during the process of its creation or formation. As stated in note 7 in *sūrah* 15, the process of creation may have followed a gradual, regular accumulation of identities and/or a saltational sequence of abrupt leaps. He spread one existence through another, compounding and interweaving, and created living beings appropriate for each phase of creation. When the earth was in a state of smokeless fire, He created appropriate life

forms, which the Qur'ān calls the jinn. They ruled the earth before humankind. When the soil became suitable for the present, visible forms of life, He created (appropriate) plants and animals, and eventually humans.

Verse 14 also suggests that in the beginning the earth was dry and barren and there-

fore not suitable for life. Then God revived it, stirring it up for life by means of the rain He sent down from the direction of the sky. This is continuously repeated every year. So as with the first human being on the earth, the particles to form each human body also initially come from the dried, lifeless earth.

17. He is the Lord of the two easts and the Lord of the two wests.⁷

18. Then (O humankind and jinn), which of the favors of your Lord will you deny?

19. He has let flow forth the two large bodies of water, they meet together,

20. (But) between them is a barrier, which they do not transgress (and so they do not merge).⁸

21. Then (O humankind and jinn), which of the favors of your Lord will you deny?

22. There come forth from them pearl and coral.

23. Then (O humankind and jinn), which of the favors of your Lord will you deny?

24. His are the ships constructed (by God's inspiration and running) through the sea (with sails unfurled), lofty like mountains.⁹

25. Then (O humankind and jinn), which of the favors of your Lord will you deny?

26. All that is on the earth is perishable;

27. But there remains forever the "Face" of your Lord, the One of Majesty and Munificence.¹⁰

28. Then (O humankind and jinn), which of the favors of your Lord will you deny?

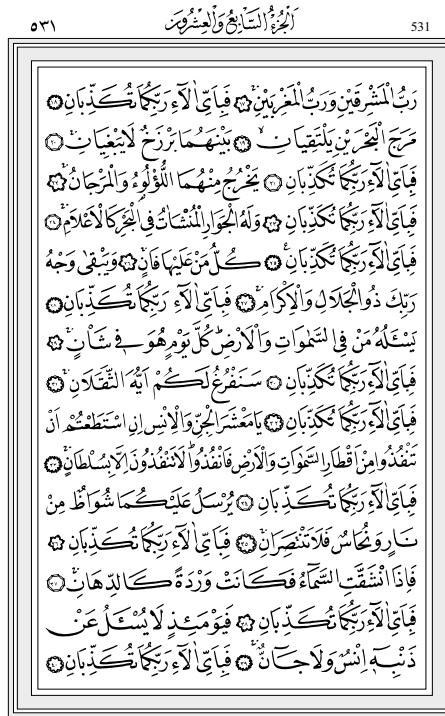
29. All that are in the heavens and on the earth entreat Him (in their needs). Every (moment of every) day He is in a new manifestation (with all His Attributes and Names as the Divine Being).¹¹

30. Then (O humankind and jinn), which of the favors of your Lord will you deny?

31. We will (in time) settle your affairs, O you two most honorable classes of creatures (of the earth endowed with important faculties and therefore having heavy responsibilities)!¹²

32. Then (O humankind and jinn), which of the favors of your Lord will you deny?

33. O you assembly of jinn and humankind! If you are able to pass through and beyond the spherical regions of the heav-



ens and the earth, then pass through. You will not pass through except with an authority (spiritual or scientific).¹³

34. Then (O humankind and jinn), which of the favors of your Lord will you deny?

35. There will be sent on you both, a flame of fire (to burn) and a smoke (to choke); then you will not help each other (to safety or refuge).¹⁴

36. Then (O humankind and jinn), which of the favors of your Lord will you deny?

37. And finally when the heaven is rent asunder, and it becomes rosy like red hide –

38. Then (O humankind and jinn), which of the favors of your Lord will you deny?¹⁵

39. On that Day, neither humans nor jinn will be asked about their sins (to know whether they are sinful or not).

40. Then (O humankind and jinn), which of the favors of your Lord will you deny?

7. This verse, first of all, emphasizes the fact that it is God Almighty Who has absolute authority and control over the whole universe. By *the two easts* and *two wests*, the Qur'ān may be suggesting the rising and setting points of the sun on the longest and shortest days of the year, between which there are 178 such points, which is what verse 37: 5 refers to. It may also suggest that the sun rises in one hemisphere while it sets in another, thus having two points of rising and setting throughout the whole world. Moreover, it also indicates that the sun rises and sets in the same place two days in a year.

8. For an explanation, see 25: 53, note 11.

9. It is God Who has created the seas, equipping water with the power of lifting solid objects, and Who has taught humankind how to construct ships.

10. Said Nursi expands on this verse eloquently:

The sun's images reflected in bubbles floating on a river and the sea, as well as in transparent things on the earth, bear witness to the sun. These images disappear when the sun sets or a river enters a tunnel, and new ones appear when the sun rises or the river emerges from the tunnel. These phenomena testify to the permanence of the light of the sun and demonstrate that these images are the reflection of a single sun. Their existence proves the sun's existence; their disappearance and re-appearance show that there is only one permanent sun.

Similarly, along with the alternation of day and night, seasons and years, beautiful beings are renewed, and fine creatures are replaced as they "set," while their likes "rise." Thus the existence of creatures proves the existence of the Necessarily Existent Being, while their disappearance, along with the causes of their existence and their replacement with new creatures bear witness to His Permanence, Eternity, and Oneness.

The disappearance of causes and their effects, along with the succession of years and centuries and their being followed by similar things, testify that the causes and their effects are created for subtle purposes. All of those fine beings coming in succession are creatures of the All-Majestic, All-Gracious, and Beauti-

ful One, all of Whose Names are beautiful and holy. Such activity testifies that they are His changing works, moving mirrors, and successive stamps and seals. (See *al-Mathnawī an-Nūriyāh*, "The First Treatise," 13-14.)

As nothing can exist by itself, everything's existence depends absolutely on God. Since it exists as a manifestation of the permanent Divine Names, it has a permanent, sublime reality that emanates from its reflection of the Divine Name that caused it to be. So this verse is a sword that liberates people from that which is not God (e.g., the world, the flesh, and life's vanities). Thus, whatever people have or do for God's sake is not included in the meaning of this verse.

If people find God and act only for His sake, there will be nothing left to be included in the meaning of *All that is on the earth is perishable*. So if they want to make (themselves eternal and) to have their deeds rewarded with permanent happiness, they must seek God and live for His sake and good pleasure. (See *The Letters*, "The 15th Letter," 82.)

11. Following classical Newtonian physics, and under the spell of developments in science, physicists of the 19th century claimed that they could explain every phenomenon in the universe. E. Dubois Reymond, at a meeting held in memory of Leibniz, at the Prussian Academy in 1880, was a bit more humble: "There have remained seven enigmas in the universe, three of which we have as yet been unable to solve: The essential nature of matter and force, the essence and origin of movement and the nature of consciousness. Three of the remaining that we can solve, although with great difficulties, are: The origin of life, the order in the universe and the apparent purpose for it, and the origin of thought and language. As for the seventh, we can say nothing about it. It is individual free will" (A. Adivar, 282).

The sub-atomic world threw all scientists into confusion. This world and the "quantum cosmology" which it introduced, rather than being a heap or assemblage of concrete things, is made up of five elements: the mass of the electron in the field where an action occurs (M), the mass of the proton (m), the electrical charge which these two elements carry, the energy quanta (h) – the amount of the energy remain-

ing during the occurrence of the action – and the unchanging speed of light (c). These five elements of the universe can be reduced even further to action or energy waves traveling through space in tiny packets or quanta. Since the quanta required for an action are peculiar to it and exist independently of the quanta required for the previous action, it becomes impossible to predict the exact state of the universe. If the universe is in T_1 state now, it cannot be predicted that it will be the same at time T_2 . Paul Renteln, assistant professor of physics at California State University, writes:

Modern physicists live in two different worlds. In one world we can predict the future position and momentum of a particle if we know its present position and momentum. This is the world of classical physics, including the physics described by Einstein's theory of gravity, the general theory of relativity. In the second world it is impossible to predict the exact position and momentum of a particle. This is the probabilistic, subatomic world of quantum mechanics. General relativity and quantum mechanics are the two great pillars that form the foundation of 20th-century physics, and yet their precepts assume two different kinds of universe. (*American Scientist*, Nov.-Dec., 1991, p. 508)

The real nature of this sub-atomic world and the events taking place in it make it impossible to construct a theory to describe them because they cannot be observed. One reason for their unobservability is that, as Renteln writes, in an attempt to propose a theory which he calls quantum gravity to reconcile the two different worlds of classical and quantum physics, "the events take place at a scale far smaller than any realm yet explored by experimental physics. It is only when particles approach to within about 10^{-35} meters that their gravitational interactions have to be described in the same quantum-mechanical terms that we adopt to understand the other forces of nature. This distance is 1,024 times smaller than the diameter of an atom – which means that the characteristic scale of quantum gravity bears the same relation to the size of an atom as an atom bears to the

size of the solar system. To probe such small distances would require a particle accelerator 1,015 times more powerful than the proposed Superconducting Supercollider."

Later research suggests that the electron is more of an energy field cloud that fluctuates around a nucleus. The nucleus itself seems to be composed of two smaller constituents – protons and neutrons. However, in the 1960s, physicists Murray Gell-Mann and George Zweig confirmed in experiments that protons and neutrons were made up of even more elementary particles, which Gell-Mann called "quarks." Quarks cannot be seen, not just because they are too small, but also because they do not seem to be quite "all there."

Quarks are better described as swirls of dynamic energy, which means that solid matter is not, at its fundamental level, solid at all. Anything you hold in your hand and which seems solid, is really a quivering, shimmering, lacy lattice of energy, pulsating millions of times every second as billions of fundamental particles gyrate and spin in an eternal dance. At its most fundamental level, everything is energy held together by forces of incredible power.

This is not all that makes us unable to predict even the nearest future of the universe. According to Werner Heisenberg's theories, at the time when we can know either where a particle is or how fast it is traveling, we cannot know both. This is because the very act of measuring the particle alters its behavior. Measuring the particle's speed changes its position, and measuring its position changes its speed. However, unpredictability in the sub-atomic world does not change anything in our everyday, predictable world. Everything works according to the basic laws of classical Newtonian physics (*Groping in the Light*, 1990, pp. 11-17).

Why is this so and how should our view of the world and events be? Scientists who believe in the Existence of God and His creation of the universe suggest that creation was not a single event. That is, God did not create the universe as a single act and then leave it to operate according to the laws He established. Rather, creation is a continuous act (*creatio continua*). In other words, roughly like the movement of energy

or electricity and its illuminating our world by means of bulbs, existence continuously comes from God and returns to and perishes in Him. Through the manifestation of all His Names, God continuously creates, annihilates and re-creates the universe. Some medieval Muslim scholarly saints, such as Muhyi'd-Dīn ibn al-'Arabī and Jalālu'd-Dīn ar-Rūmī, called these pairs of acts the continuous cycle of coming into existence and dying. Because of the incredible speed of this movement, the universe appears to be uniform and continuous. Ar-Rūmī likens this to the spinning of a staff on one end of which there is fixed a light. When spun at speed, the light on the end of the staff appears to be a circle of light. Modern researchers liken it to the projection of a film onto the screen. A film-strip is composed of numerous frames, but the film is projected onto the screen, appearing as an undivided, complete frame. So, the universe incessantly undergoes appearance and disappearance, or perishing and re-creation, but we have the impression that it continues to exist without any interruption.

In consequence, all creatures incessantly need God throughout their entire life – when they come into existence and in order to continue to exist. So God Almighty constantly manifests Himself with All His Attributes and Names, which have their source in His Essential Qualities as God. All the creatures exist because He creates; they meet their needs because He is the All-Providing and the All-Munificent; and they continue to exist because He is Self-Subsisting and the All-Maintaining.

(For another important meaning of this verse, see note 12 below.)

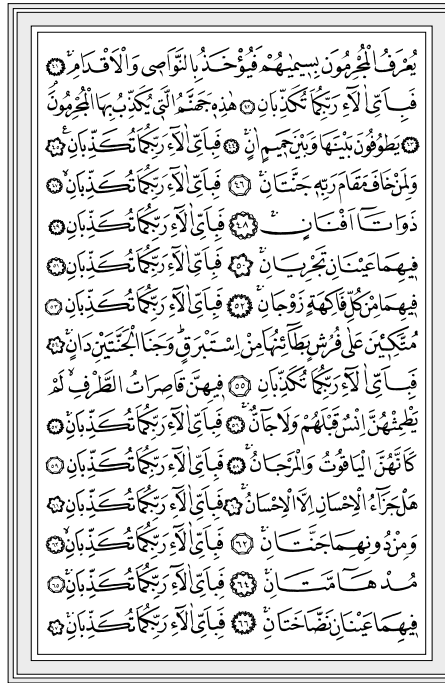
12. The original of the word “moment” in the verse 29 is *yawm*, the first meaning of which is day. So the whole of creation consists of two days, one being the entire lifetime of this visible universe, the other being the Hereafter. So when the word *yawm* is taken to mean a day, the second part of verse 29 suggests that God manifests Himself with all His Attributes and Names in the world in a manner particular to this world, and He will manifest Himself in the other world peculiar to it. In this world, which

is the world of wisdom, creatures live a life according to its conditions, and humankind and the jinn, the responsible beings, sow here to reap in the Hereafter. But in the other world, He will take them to account for their deeds in the world and recompense them accordingly. This world is the world of labor, while the other is the world of remuneration.

13. This verse states that it is possible to travel and even go beyond the regions or layers of the heavens and the earth. God's Messenger achieved this both in his body and spirit, which we call the Ascension, and showed that it is possible for every one to do it in spirit. The verse also suggests that it can be possible to make this journey by means of an authority (scientific knowledge). However, it may not be possible to go beyond the heavens by means of science. However, the verse may also be suggesting that the immaterial dimensions of existence can “scientifically” be discovered and established. The word *aqtār*, which we have translated as spherical regions, means regions or layers with a diameter, and therefore spherical regions.

14. God does not allow any jinn that have ill intentions to ascend to the heavens to take something from the conversation of the angels; rather he destroys them (*sūrah* 15: 16–18, note 5; *sūrah* 26: 212, note 37; *sūrah* 37: 10, note 3; *sūrah* 67: 5, note 4). However, saintly people can ascend the heavens in spirit. The verse may also be predicting modern firearms, bombs, and missiles.

15. Although people do not like death, it is liberation from the sufferings of the world, and a door to the eternal life, where people will receive remuneration for their deeds in the world. Moreover, like God's Justice, His Compassion will also manifest Itself with all Its infinity in the Hereafter. So the advent of the Last Hour will be a blessing or favor in this respect; its announcement is also a blessing for people in that it urges them to self-criticism. The thought of getting what one deserves, with no action being concealed, prevents people from committing evil actions. (For a detailed explanation of the benefits of belief in the afterlife, see *sūrah* 44: 37, note 11.)



41. The disbelieving criminals will be known by their marks (especially on their faces), and seized by the forelocks and the feet.

42. Then (O humankind and jinn), which of the favors of your Lord will you deny?

43. This is Hell, which the disbelieving criminals deny.

44. They will go round between it(s) fire and hot, boiling water.

45. Then (O humankind and jinn), which of the favors of your Lord will you deny?

46. But for him who lives in awe of his Lord, being ever conscious of His seeing Him, and of the standing before his Lord (in the Hereafter), there will be two Gardens.¹⁶

47. Then (O humankind and jinn), which of the favors of your Lord will you deny?

48. Having in them trees with thick, spreading branches.

49. Then (O humankind and jinn), which of the favors of your Lord will you deny?

50. In them both are two flowing springs.

51. Then (O humankind and jinn), which of the favors of your Lord will you deny?

52. In them both are all kinds of fruit in pairs.¹⁷

53. Then (O humankind and jinn), which of the favors of your Lord will you deny?

54. Reclining upon beds lined with silk brocade, and the fruits of the two Gardens within reach.

55. Then (O humankind and jinn), which of the favors of your Lord will you deny?

56. In them are pure, chaste-eyed spouses (whose glances are fixed on their spouses only), whom no man or jinn has touched before –

57. Then (O humankind and jinn), which of the favors of your Lord will you deny? –

58. Like rubies and coral (they will seem, in rare beauty and radiance).

59. Then (O humankind and jinn), which of the favors of your Lord will you deny?

60. Is the recompense of excellence (in obedience to God) other than excellence?

61. Then (O humankind and jinn), which of the favors of your Lord will you deny?

62. And besides these two, there are yet two other Gardens –¹⁸

63. Then, (O humankind and jinn) which of the favors of your Lord will you deny? –

64. Dark green throughout,

65. Then (O humankind and jinn), which

of the favors of your Lord will you deny?

66. In them both are springs gushing forth.

67. Then (O humankind and jinn), which of the favors of your Lord will you deny?

16. These people are mentioned in the next chapter of the Qur'ān, *Sūrat al-Wāq'ah*, as those who are the foremost in faith and good deeds, and serving God's cause, and therefore made near to God by God Himself.

17. Concerning the pairs of fruit, some say there will be fruits of the same kind as those in the world and fruits peculiar to Paradise. However, if we consider that verse 50 mentions two

springs, and verse 54 below mentions the fruits of the two Gardens, we can put forward the opinion that one of the springs and one of the pairs of fruit will belong to one of the Gardens, and the other to the other. However, it is God Who knows the exact nature of both.

18. These two Gardens will be granted to the people of happiness and prosperity who will be given their Records in their right hands.

68. In them both are fruits, and date-palms and pomegranates.

69. Then (O humankind and jinn), which of the favors of your Lord will you deny?

70. In them both are maidens good in character and beautiful –

71. Then (O humankind and jinn), which of the favors of your Lord will you deny? –

72. Pure maidens assigned for them in secluded pavilions –

73. Then (O humankind and jinn), which of the favors of your Lord will you deny? –

74. Whom no man or jinn has touched before –

75. Then (O humankind and jinn), which of the favors of your Lord will you deny? –

76. (The people of those Gardens are) reclining on green cushions and rich, beautiful mattresses.

77. Then (O humankind and jinn), which of the favors of your Lord will you deny?

78. Blessed and Supreme is the Name of your Lord, the One of Majesty and Munificence.

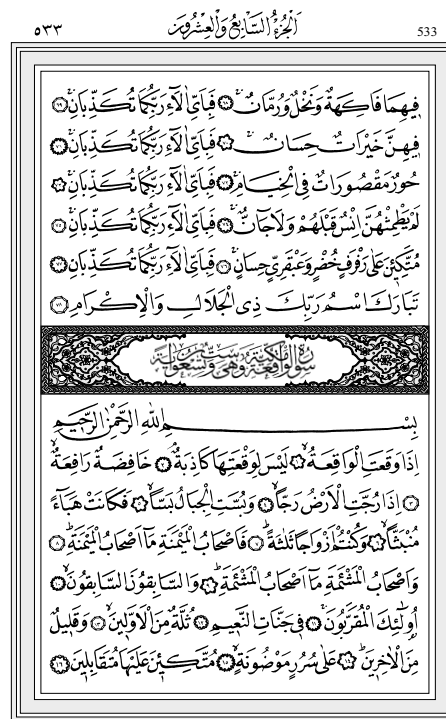
SŪRAH 56

AL-WĀQI'AH

(THE EVENT TO HAPPEN)

Makkah Period

This sūrah of 96 verses was revealed in Makkah and takes its name from the word *al-wāqī'ah* in the first verse. It mentions some events that will take place during the destruction of the world, and the three groups that people will form in the Hereafter, according to their belief and deeds in the world. It also presents some proofs of God's Existence and Oneness and some characteristics of the Qur'ān.



In the Name of God, the All-Merciful,
the All-Compassionate.

1. When the Event to happen happens,
2. There is no denying its happening –
3. Abasing some and exalting others;
4. When the earth is shaken with a violent shock;
5. And the mountains are shattered and crumble,
6. So they become dust scattered;
7. You (all conscious, responsible beings) will be sorted out into three groups,
8. Thus: the people of the Right (the people of happiness and prosperity, who receive their Records in their right hands): how happy and prosperous are the people of the Right!

9. And the people of the Left (the people of wretchedness, who will receive their Records in their left hands): how wretched are the people of the Left!

10. And the foremost (in faith and good deeds, and serving God's cause) will be the foremost (in receiving and enjoying God's mercy).

11. Those are the ones near-stationed to God,¹

12. In Gardens abounding in bounty and blessings.

13. A good many of them are from among the first (to have embraced God's Religion);

14. And a few from the later (generations).²

15. (They will be seated) on lined thrones (encrusted with gold and precious stones),

16. Reclining upon them, facing one another.

1. Nearness to God means transcending corporeality and acquiring perfected spirituality, and thereby gaining proximity to God. It depends on true faith and can be acquired by doing whatever God has decreed as good and right. The obligatory and supererogatory religious duties, done with the consciousness that is their due, are like wings of light that carry one toward the "skies" of infinitude. A traveler to God enters new corridors leading to eternity on the wings of supererogatory duties, and is aware of being rewarded with new Divine gifts, which engender an even greater desire to do both the obligatory and the supererogatory duties. One awakened to this truth feels in their conscience the love of God in direct proportion to their love of God. God declares:

My servant cannot come near to Me through anything else more lovable to Me than doing the obligatory religious duties. However, by doing supererogatory duties he comes nearer to Me, and when he comes nearer to Me, I will be his eyes to see with, his ears to hear with, his hands to grasp with, and his legs to walk on (al-Bukhārī, "Riqāq," 38).

That is, such a believer is directed to act by the Divine Will.

2. As suggested in *sūrah* 52: 21 and explained in note 2 to this verse, particularly at the begin-

ning of a new movement of faith launched by the Prophets and their true successors, those who attain faith first of all are generally more valued in God's sight and will be the foremost in enjoying Paradise. They have outstripped others in believing and supporting God's cause at a time when supporting it was the most difficult, and therefore suffered greater hardships than those that followed. They are usually more sincere in their faith and more devoted to God and His cause. A few people can reach their rank from among the later generations. This is also indicated in verse 9: 100, which gives the greatest rank to the first among the Emigrants and the Helpers, may God be pleased with them all. God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, said that the best among his Community were his Companions, and then those who appeared among the first generation to follow them, and those among the second generation – this is, of course, when one's virtues are considered in general terms. There may always be in later generations those that outstrip the virtuous ones of the preceding generations in certain particular virtues. But in general terms, the best of all generations are the Prophet's Companions, and then the second generation who followed them, and then the third generation who followed the latter.

17. There will go round them immortal youths,³

18. With goblets, and ewers, and a cup from a clear-flowing spring,

19. From which no aching of the head ensues, nor intoxication of the mind;

20. And with fruits such as they choose,

21. And with the flesh of fowls such as they desire;

22. And (there will be) pure maidens, most beautiful of eye,

23. Like pearls kept hidden (in their shells) -

24. A reward for all (the good) that they used to do.

25. They will hear there neither vain talk nor accusing speech,

26. (Hearing) only speech (wishing) peace and security after peace and security.

27. And the people of the Right (the people of happiness and prosperity who will receive their Records in their right hands): how happy and prosperous are the people of the Right!

28. Amidst cherry trees laden with fruit,

29. And banana trees with fruit piled high,

30. And shade long-extended,

31. And water gushing (and flowing constantly),

32. And fruits (of every other kind) abounding,

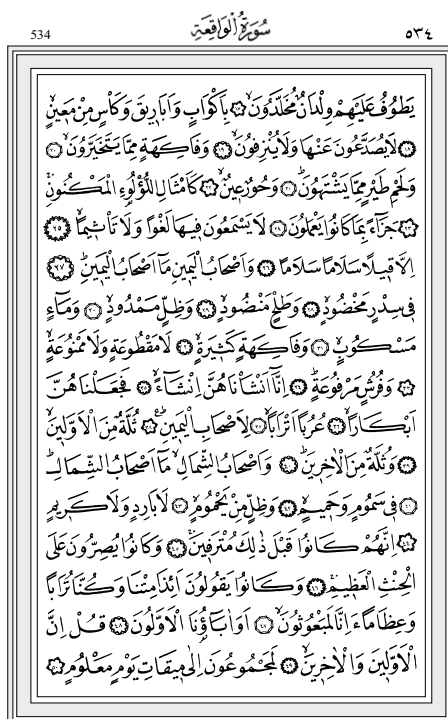
33. Never cut off, nor forbidden;

34. And (with them will be their) spouses, ennobled with beauty and spiritual perfection:^{4/5}

35. We have brought them into being in a new creation,

36. And We have made them virgins,

37. Full of love for their husbands, and equal in age:⁶



38. For the people of the Right (the people of happiness and prosperity):

39. A good many of them are from among the first (to have embraced God's Religion);

40. And a good many are from the later (generations).

41. And the people of the Left (who will be given their Records in their left hands): how wretched are the people of the Left!

42. In the midst of scorching wind and hot, boiling water,

43. And the shadow of black smoke,

44. (A shadow) neither cooling nor refreshing.

45. Indeed, before that, they were lost in excess of pleasures (without moral scruples);

46. And would persist in committing the

greatest sin (of unbelief or associating partners with God and denying the afterlife);

47. And would say: "What! after we have died and become dust and bones, will we indeed be raised from the dead?"

48. "And also our forefathers of old?"

49. Say: "Those of old and those of later times

50. "Will all be brought together at an appointed time on a Day well-known."

3. These youths will be the children who died before reaching puberty. According to many scholars, the children of unbelievers will be admitted into Paradise and serve the people of Paradise (al-Qurṭubī).

4. These are the women who died as Muslims and will be admitted into Paradise. They will be together with their spouses, who will be admitted into Paradise like them.

5. All the blessings of Paradise mentioned so far, as well as the sufferings of Hell that will be cited below, are in the indefinite form. This signifies that although all those blessings and sufferings are cited in the Qur'ān in terms,

and will be presented in Paradise in forms, that we are acquainted with here in this world, they will be different in character or nature; their nature will be peculiar to the other world. It is impossible for us to imagine them in their true nature (see *sūrah* 2: 25, and note 21).

6. Equality of age means either that the spouses will be equal in age with one another, or that men will be of the same age as one another and the women as one another. A Prophetic Tradition says that men will be 33 years old and women 18 years old in Paradise, where there will be no aging (at-Tirmidhī, "Sifat al-Jannah," 12; Ibn Hanbal, 2: 295).

51. Then, O you who have strayed (from the Straight Path), who deny (the after-life),

52. You will surely eat of the tree of *Zaqqūm*;

53. And you fill up your bellies with it.

54. Thereafter you will drink of hot, boiling water;

55. You will drink as the camel raging with thirst drinks.

56. This will be their welcome on the Day of Judgment.

57. It is We Who have created you. So will you not confirm as truth (what We convey to you as truth)?⁷

58. Have you considered the semen that you emit?

59. Is it you who create it, or are We⁸ the Creator?

60. It is also We Who decree death among you⁹ – and We cannot be overcome –

61. So that We may replace you (with new generations like you), and bring you about in a new mode and form of existence you do not know.¹⁰

62. For certain, you know the first creation (how you are brought into the world), then should you not reflect on (and anticipate the second creation)?

63. Have you ever considered the seed you sow (in the ground)?

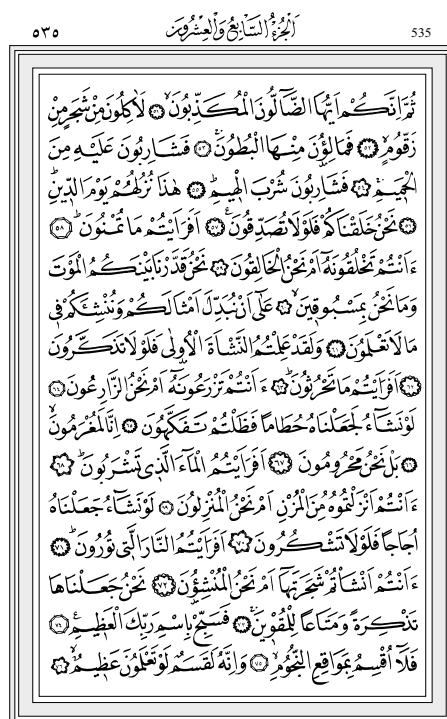
64. Is it you who cause it to grow, or is it We Who make it grow?¹¹

65. If We so willed, We would surely make it into chaff, and then you would not cease to exclaim:

66. “We are indeed in a great loss (with our money, time, and efforts gone to waste)!”

67. “Rather, we are left utterly deprived (of our livelihood)!”

68. Have you ever considered the water that you drink?



69. Is it you who send it down from the cloud, or is it We Who send it down?

70. If We so willed, We would make it bitter and salty. Then, should you not give thanks?¹²

71. Have you ever considered the fire that you kindle?

72. Is it you who bring into being the tree for it, or is it We Who bring it into being?¹³

73. We have made it something for reflection (on Our handiwork and Our grace in making the creation useful and beautiful), and a comfort (especially) for the dwellers (and wayfarers) in the desert.

74. Therefore, glorify the Name of your Lord, the Supreme (declaring His being absolutely above having any defects and partners).

75. I swear by the locations of the stars
(and their falling) –

76. It is indeed a very great oath, if you
but knew.¹⁴

7. That is, We have created you, and maintain you in the world, and will cause you to die. We also know you and whatever you do and have it recorded. Again, We have not created you in vain; you are responsible beings. So why do you not confirm Our declaration that We will raise you from the dead for a new, eternal life?

8. The use of plural form of the pronoun and the verb for the Divine Being is to stress His Grandeur and absolute dominion of the creation.

9. That is, you do not die at random, or at the behest of another power, or as a natural end of your life. We have decreed death and cause you to die as a meaningful dimension of your life until eternity.

10. Through death, God continuously renews and refreshes the world and prepares a new, eternal world. So death, being a change of worlds only, discharges us from life's hardships, which gradually become harder through old age. It releases us from worldly life, which is a turbulent, suffocating, narrow dungeon of space, and admits us to the wide circle of the Eternal Beloved One's Mercy, where we will enjoy a pleasant and everlasting life without suffering. God makes our other world out of our deeds in this world, so we must send there good deeds in order to be worthy of a happy life there.

11. It is clear that the growth of a seed sown under earth requires the ability of the seed to germinate and grow, and the cooperation with it in the right proportions of the earth, the sun, the air, and rain. This cooperation can evidently be created only by a Knowledge Which knows all of these elements and how they should cooperate for a seed to grow, and a Will Which decrees this cooperation, and a Power Which is able to accomplish all of that. No one other than the Absolutely Knowledgeable, Willing, and Powerful One can do that. Further, such a

Being has no need of partners, and His having partners is absolutely inconceivable.

12. Whatever God grants us is pure blessing and grace. So we must always be thankful to Him, and if He sometimes grants us less than our need, or even deprives us of our necessary provisions, we must never complain about Him; rather, we must complain to Him of our own selves. God may sometimes grant less in order to test us, and sometimes to remind us of the importance of His provision for us – that it is He Who provides for us. It even sometimes occurs that He grants us less to punish us for our sins that have caused this deprivation, and/or to warn us to repent and mend our ways. So whatever He decrees for us is for our own good, therefore requiring thanksgiving.

13. The origin of almost all kinds of fuel, including petrol is wood and/or plants, either directly or indirectly, through decay under the ground. This verse particularly refers to the trees of Markh and 'Afār, which grow in the Arabian desert and from which people kindle fire (see *sūrah* 36: 80, note 24).

14. Modern interpreters of the Qur'ān assert that by the locations of the stars, the Qur'ān alludes to the white holes (quasars) and black holes in the sky. These are the locations of stars that have to date been found in the universe. Quasars store incredible amounts of energy, enough to form galaxies (assemblages of billions of stars). As for the black holes, they form as a result of the collapse of a star. They cannot be seen but are recognized by the fact that they devour all radiation and stars that pass nearby, and cause an indirect emission of gamma rays and X-rays, and by the fact that time is suddenly dilated in its vicinity. These star locations are regions of gravitational shock or collapse and of equilibrium in the universe.

77. Most certainly it is a Qur'ān (recited) most honorable,

78. In a Book well-guarded.¹⁵

79. None except the purified ones can reach it (to obtain the knowledge it contains. And none except those cleansed of material and spiritual impurities should touch it).¹⁶

80. It is a Book being sent down in parts from the Lord of the worlds.

81. Is it this Discourse that you hold in low esteem?

82. And do you make your share of it denying it?

83. Then, how is it you do not – when the soul comes up to the throat (of a dying human),

84. While you are looking on,

85. And while We are nearer to him (the dying human) than you are, but you do not see (that)?

86. Then, how is it you do not – if you are not bound to Us in dependence (subject to Our will) –

87. (How is it that) you do not restore

the soul (of that dying human), if you are truthful (in your claim)?

88. Now, if he (that dying human) is of those near-stationed to God,

89. Then (there is for him) comfort in eternal relief (from all kinds of hardships and pains), and abundance, and a Garden of bounty and blessing.

90. If he is of the people of the Right (the people of happiness and prosperity who will receive their Records in their right hands),

91. Then “Peace be upon you” (will be what you will always hear) from the people of the Right.

92. But if he is one of those who denied (Our Message and Our Messengers), who strayed (from the Straight Path),

93. Then his entertainment is boiling water,

94. And roasting in a Blazing Flame.

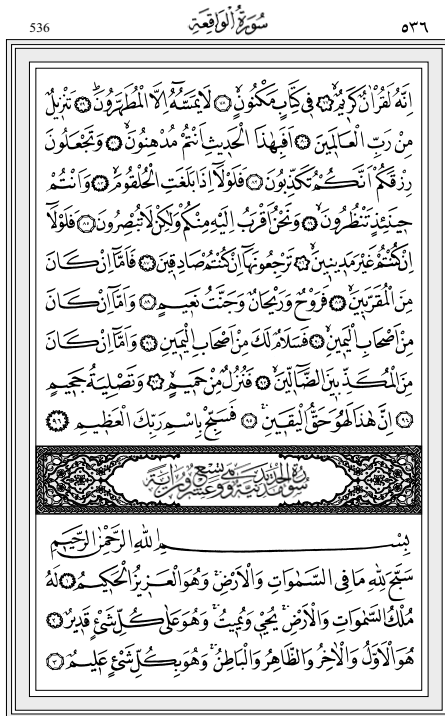
95. Surely this (Qur'ān) is certain truth.

96. So glorify the Name of your Lord, the Supreme (affirming that He is exalted above any falsehood).

15. This Book is the Supreme Preserved Tablet (85: 22). For this Tablet, see *sūrah* 6: 59, note 13; *sūrah* 13: 39, note 13; *sūrah* 17: 14, note 10.

16. This verse expresses both a reality and an order. In expressing a reality, it means that none except the purified ones (the angels and the human beings whom God has purified, such as the Prophets) can reach the well-guarded Book (the Supreme Ever-Preserved Tablet) to attain any knowledge that is contained in it. Such beings as devils cannot reach It. Whenever they

make any attempt to ascend through the heavens they are expelled (see *sūrah* 15: 18, note 5; *sūrah* 26: 212, note 37; *sūrah* 67: 5, note 4). In expressing an order, it means that none except those who have purified themselves from any material impurity by taking minor or major ablution, and those purified from the spiritual impurity of unbelief and the association of partners with God should touch the Qur'ān. Both the syntax of the verse and the words used equally give both meanings.



SŪRAH 57

AL-ḤADĪD (IRON)

Madīnah Period

Revealed in Madīnah, most probably four or five years after the *Hijrah*, this *sūrah* has 29 verses and takes its name from the word *al-ḥadīd* in verse 25. It deals with God's absolute sovereignty, the necessity of sacrifice in God's cause, and the passing nature of worldly pleasures. It promises the Muslims victory and the unbelievers defeat, and reiterates that belief in the previous Prophets requires believing in Prophet Muḥammad as the last, universal Prophet.

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful,
the All-Compassionate.

1. Whatever is in the heavens and the earth glorifies God;¹ and He is the All-Glorious with irresistible might, the All-Wise.
2. To Him belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth. He gives life and causes to die. He has full power over everything.
3. He is the First, the Last, the All-Outward, and the All-Inward. He has full knowledge of everything.²

1. That is, all things, with their existence, their lives, maintenance, and functions, show that God is absolutely above having any defects or any partners in His Divinity, Lordship, and Sovereignty. Even the bodies of the unbelievers show this reality. As explained in note 31 to *sūrah* 2: 30, for every species of creation there is an angel that governs them and represents them in God's Presence, and presents to the Divine Court their glorifications and prayers made through their disposition. And, as stated in *sūrah* 17: 44, every thing and being glorify and praise God in a language that we do not understand.

2. A *ḥadīth* explains this part of the verse as follows:

My God, You are the First – there is none that precedes You; You are the Last – there is none that will outlive You; You are the All-Outward – there is none that encompasses You; and You are the All-Inward – there is none that is more penetrating than You (Muslim, “Dhikr,” HN: 2713).

God is eternal with everything before or after Him. He is uncontained in time and place. The visible existence is the manifestation of His Names, and the origin or source of all creation, which is invisible and spiritual, is also contained in His Knowledge. So, God encompasses all creation in His Knowledge and Power, and He Himself is eternal.

الْبَيْتُ السَّابِعُ وَالْعِشْرُونَ

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هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ
يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا يُخْرِجُ مِنْهَا وَمَا يَنْزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَمَا يُمْسِكُ
فِيهَا وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ۝ لَهُ مُلْكُ
السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ تُرْجَعُ الْأُمُورُ ۝ يُوبِخُ الْأَيْلُ فِي الشَّهَادِ
وَيُوبِخُ الشَّهَادُ فِي الْأَيْلِ وَهُوَ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ ۝ إِنَّهُمْ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ
وَرُسُولِهِ وَأَقْرَبُوا إِلَيْكُمْ فَكَفِّرْ بِهِ قُلُوبَهُمْ فَكَذَّبُوا عَنْكُمْ
مِنْكُمْ وَأَنفَقُوا لَهُمْ أَجْرٌ كَبِيرٌ ۝ وَمَا لَكُمْ لَا تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ
وَالرَّسُولِ يَدْعُوكُمْ لِمُؤْمِنُوا بِرَبِّكُمْ وَقَدْ أَخَذَ مِنْكُمْ أَكْثَرُ
مُؤْمِنِينَ ۝ هُوَ الَّذِي يُزِيلُ عَلَى عَبْدِهِ آيَاتِ بَيِّنَاتٍ لِيُخْرِجَكُمْ
مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ۝ وَمَا لَكُمْ
أَلَّا تُنْفِقُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلِلَّهِ مِيرَاتُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ
لَا يَسْتَوِي مِنْكُمْ مَنْ أَنْفَقَ مِنْ قَبْلِ الْفَتْحِ وَقَاتِلٌ أُولَئِكَ أَكْثَرُ
دَرَجَةً مِنَ الَّذِينَ أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ وَقَاتِلُوا وَكَذَلِكَ وَعَدَ اللَّهُ
الْمُتَّقِينَ ۝ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ ۝ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يُقْرِضُ اللَّهَ
قَرْضًا حَسَنًا فَيُضَاعِفَهُ لَهُ وَلَهُ أَجْرٌ كَرِيمٌ ۝

4. He it is Who has created the heavens and the earth in six days, then He established Himself on the Throne.³ He knows whatever goes into the earth (such as rain and seeds), and whatever comes forth out of it (such as moisture, plant and animal life-forms), and whatever descends from the heaven (such as rain, light, and angels), and whatever ascends into it (such as vapor, and supplications). And He is with you wherever you may be. And God sees well all that you do.

5. To Him belongs the sovereignty (the absolute ownership and dominion) of the heavens and the earth. To God are all matters ultimately referred, (and whatever He wills occurs).

6. He makes the night pass into the day, and He makes the day pass into the night (and so makes each grow longer or shorter). And He has full knowledge of whatever lies (hidden) in the bosoms.

7. Believe in God and His Messenger, and spend (in God's cause) out of all that He has entrusted to you – those among you who believe and spend (in God's cause), for them there is a great reward.

8. What is the matter with you that you do not believe in God (as His being God requires), when the Messenger calls you to believe in your Lord (Who has created and sustains you), and He has indeed taken your pledge,⁴ if you are true believers?

9. He it is Who sends down to His servant Revelations clear as evidence and in mean-

ing in order to lead you out of all kinds of darkness into the light. Surely God is All-Pitying, All-Compassionate toward you.

10. What is the matter with you that you do not spend in God's cause, when God's is the inheritance of the heavens and the earth?⁵ Not equal among you are those who spend before the victory comes and fight (for God's sake, and those who do not); they are greater in rank than those who spend after the victory comes and fight later. However, to all God has promised what is the best (Paradise). God is fully aware of all that you do.⁶

11. Whoever lends God a goodly loan, God will increase it manifold (to his credit), and he will have an honorable, generous reward (in addition).⁷

3. For an explanation of this statement, see *sūrah* 7: 54, note 13.

4. This pledge was that they would obey the commands of God and His Messenger, and spend in God's cause, whether in ease or hardship; support and promote good; prohibit and try to prevent evil; and strive in God's cause without fearing the censure of anyone.

5. Whether we spend in God's cause or not, God Almighty is the ultimate heir to whatever we have, as it is He Who has granted us whatever we have. He is the real Owner of

everything. He has whatever we do, spend or do not spend, recorded, so that He will recompense us for it.

6. Although both types of people mentioned in the verse may be admitted into Paradise on account of their faith and good deeds, everyone will enjoy Paradise according to the degree of their faith, loyalty to God and His cause, and the value of their good deeds.

7. Spending in God's cause is like lending God a loan. God returns it multiplied and, in addition, with extra reward.

12. On that Day, you will see the believing men and the believing women (led swiftly toward Paradise), with their light shining forth before them and on their right hands.⁸ “Glad tidings for you today: Gardens through which rivers flow, (into which you will enter) to abide therein! This is indeed the supreme triumph.”

13. On that Day, the hypocritical men and the hypocritical women will say to those who believe: “Wait for us, that we may have some light from your light.” It will be said: “Turn back (if you can, to the world where such light was to be obtained), and seek light (through your deeds you did there).” Just then a wall of separation will be put between them, with a gate therein (through which the hypocrites, so as to increase their regret, will observe the state of the believers). The inner side of the wall (which will separate the believers from the hypocrites) – there will be in it the mercy (of eternal happiness), and outside it there will be the punishment (of eternal doom).

14. They (the hypocrites) will call out to the believers: “Were we not with you (in the world)?” They will reply: “True! But you (willfully) put yourselves in the way of temptation, and hesitated and doubted (waiting on events to choose which side to be on, and not assuming yourselves to stand by the truth of Islam), and false expectations (that God’s Religion would one day be defeated) deluded you, until God’s decree (of death) came to you; and the deluder (Satan) deluded you (with wrong conceptions) about God.

15. “And this Day, no ransom will be taken from you, nor from those who disbelieved. Your final refuge is the Fire; that is your harbor suited to you. How evil a destination to arrive at!”

يَوْمَ تَرَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَسْعَىٰ نُورُهُمْ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَبِأَنْفُسِهِمْ
 بُشِّرِكَمُ الْيَوْمَ جَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا
 ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ۝ يَوْمَ يَقُولُ الْمُسَافِقُونَ وَالْمُنَافِقَاتُ
 لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا انظُرُوا مَا نَقُتْسِبُ مِنْ نُورِكُمْ قِيلَ ارْجِعُوا وَرَاءَكُمْ
 فَاتَّقِسُوا أَنْوَارَ فُضِيْبَيْنِهِمْ يُسَوِّرُهُ بَابٌ بَاطِنُهُ فِيهِ الرَّحْمَةُ وَظَاهِرُهُ
 مِنْ قِبَلِهِ الْعَذَابُ ۝ يُنَادُوهُمْ كَذَلِكَ الْيَوْمَ يَنْفَعُكُمْ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ وَلَكِنَّكُمْ
 فَتَنْتُمْ أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَتَرَبَّصْتُمْ وَارْتَبْتُمْ وَغَرَّبْتُمْ الْأَمَانِي حَتَّىٰ
 جَاءَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ وَغَرَظَكُمْ بِاللَّهِ الْغُرُورُ ۝ قَالِیَوْمَ لَا نُفِخُ
 مِنْكُمْ فَذِيهِ وَلَا مِنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مَا وَكَلْنَا النَّارَ مِنْ مَوْلَاكُمْ
 وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ ۝ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْ تَحْشَرَ قُلُوبُهُمْ
 لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَمَا تَزَكَّ مِنَ الْحَقِّ وَلَا يَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا
 الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَطَالَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَمَدُ فَحَسَّتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَكَبُرَتْ مِنْهُمْ
 فَاسْتَفْتُونَ ۝ اَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يُحْيِي الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا قَدْ
 بَيَّنَّا لَكُمُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ۝ إِنَّ الْمُضْذِقِينَ وَالْمُضْذِقَاتِ
 وَأَوْفُوا اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا يَبْعَثُ لَهُمْ وُطْءًا جَزْزِيَةً ۝

16. Has not the time yet come for those who believe that their hearts should soften with humility and submit (to God to strive in His cause) in the face of God’s Remembrance (the Qur’ān) and what has come down of the truth (the Divine teachings)? And (has not the time yet come) that they should not be like those who were given the Book before? A long time has passed over them (after they received the Book), and so their hearts have hardened; and many among them (have been) transgressors.

17. Know that God revives the earth after its death (and He may revive the decaying hearts in the same way). We have indeed made clear the signs and Revelations (to enable such revival, and) that you may reason and understand.

18. Those men and women who give alms (by spending out of their wealth in both the prescribed and supererogatory duties of alms-giving), and lend to God a goodly

loan (by spending either in His cause or for the needy), it will be increased manifold to their credit, and they will have an honorable, generous reward in addition.⁹

8. This is the light that the believers send forth from the world through their good deeds. The more deeds there are and the more sincerely they are done, the greater and brighter is the light that they will produce. As understood from the verse, the believers will advance toward Paradise on the right side, while, as will be understood from the following verse, the hypocrites (and the unbelievers), who will receive their records of deeds in their left hands, will advance toward Hell on the left side, and be left behind because of being enveloped by the darkness produced by their unbelief, hypocrisy, and evil deeds.

9. Verse 16 is a warning against the hardening of hearts toward the Divine teachings and God's

Remembrance, and a reminder of the importance of striving in God's cause. One of the most important reasons of this hardening is growing familiarity with the Revelation and the revealed Divine teachings, and the passage of time after it. Another important reason is committing sins (transgression) through indifference to God's warnings. So it is necessary to continuously be alert against such a hardening, and always to seek means for the softening of the heart. As pointed out in verses 17 and 18, just as God revives any land after its death with rain, and this is repeated every year, He may also revive dead or dead-like hearts with clear Revelations, provided we remain loyal to God and His Religion by carrying out God's commands and avoiding transgression, and by spending in His cause.

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الصِّدِّيقُونَ
وَالشَّهَادَةُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ هُمْ أَخْرَجَهُمْ وَوَرَّعَهُمُ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا
وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَحِيمِ ۝ اَعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا الْحَيَاةُ
الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَلَهْوَ وَزِينَةٌ وَتَفَاخُرٌ بَيْنَكُمْ وَتَكَاثُرٌ فِي
الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَوْلَادِ كُلٌّ غِيثٌ عَابَثٌ ۖ فَلَمَّا زَسَنَّا نَهُ فَتَبَدَّجَ
فَتَرَاهُ مُصْفَرًّا ثُمَّ يَكُونُ حُطَامًا ۖ وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ
وَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانٌ ۚ وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعٌ
الْعُرُورُ ۝ سَابِقُوا إِلَى الْمَغْفِرَةِ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا
كَعَرْضِ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ أُعِدَّتْ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ
ذَٰلِكَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَن يَشَاءُ ۚ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ
الْعَظِيمِ ۝ مَا أَصَابَ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي أَنفُسِكُمْ إِلَّا فِي
كِتَابٍ مِّن قَبْلِ أَنْ نَبْرَأَهَا ۚ إِنَّ ذَٰلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ ۚ لِيُكَفِّرَ تَأْسُوا
عَلَىٰ مَا قَانَسْتُمْ وَلَا تَتْرَحُوا ۖ إِنَّمَا أَنِيعُكُمْ ۚ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ
كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ ۝ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَحْلُونَ وَيَأْمُرُونَ
النَّاسَ بِالْبَحْلِ ۖ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْعَنِيُّ الْيُسِيرُ ۝

19. Those who believe in God and His Messengers (those whose actions prove their profession of faith) – they are, in the sight of their Lord, the loyal and truthful (to God in whatever they do and say), and the witnesses (who have borne testimony to the truth with their lives). They have their (particular) reward and their (particular) light. But those who disbelieve and deny Our manifest signs and Revelations – they will be companions of the Blazing Flame.

20. Know that the present, worldly life¹⁰ is but a play, vain talk and ostentation, and mutual boasting among you, and competing in wealth and children – it is like when rain comes down and the vegetation grown by it pleases the farmers, (but) then it dries up and you see it turn yellow, then it becomes straw; and in the Hereafter there is a severe punishment, but also (there is) forgiveness from God and His good pleasure (which are everlasting), whereas the present, worldly life is but a transient enjoyment of delusion.

21. And (rather than competing for the things of this world) race with one another to forgiveness from your Lord, and to a Garden the vastness of which is as the vastness of heaven and earth, prepared for those who truly believe in God and His Messengers. That is God's bounty, which He grants to whom He wills. God is of tremendous bounty.¹¹

22. No affliction occurs on the earth (such

as droughts, famines, or earthquakes), or in your own persons (such as diseases, damages to your property, or the loss of loved ones), but it is recorded in a Book before We bring it into existence – doing so is surely easy for God –¹²

23. So that you may not grieve for what has escaped you, nor exult because of what God has granted you: God does not love anyone proud and boastful –¹³

24. Those who act niggardly (in spending of what God has granted them) and urge others to be niggardly. Whoever turns away (from carrying out God's command to spend in His cause and for the needy), then surely God is All-Wealthy and Self-Sufficient (absolutely independent of all His creatures), All-Praiseworthy (as your Lord, Who provides for you and the needs of all other beings).

10. The expression translated as *the present, worldly life* also means the basic elements or attributes of the present life. So by this expression the Qur'an denotes, rather than the world, the life that pertains to the bodily or material dimension of human existence. Otherwise the world is the field to be sown for harvest in the Hereafter, and is also the place where God's Names are manifested.

11. Verse 3: 133 says: *And hasten, as if competing with one another, to forgiveness from your Lord, and to a Garden as spacious as the heavens and the earth, prepared for the God-revering, pious.* The promise in that verse is to those who keep their duties to God and avoid all kinds of sins out of piety and reverence for God. So we can conclude that those who truly believe in God and His Messengers, whom this verse mentions, are the God-revering, pious ones – those who believe and keep their duties to God and avoid sins out of reverence for Him.

An important point in both verses to be noted is that forgiveness precedes Paradise because Paradise is the place of perfect purity, and no one can enter Paradise without God's forgiveness. So, before they enter Paradise, God will clean or purify the people of Paradise of all their sins out of pure grace, and the hardships they will have to suffer from resurrection to the gates of Paradise will also serve as a means of purification.

12. That is, recording such acts out of His Eternal Knowledge and keeping them record-

ed, and then bringing them into existence by His Power for many wise purposes – such as to punish the sinful as they deserve, or to warn them against their end, or to forgive the sins of believers or to promote the sinless to higher ranks – is absolutely easy for God.

The verse also includes a consolation for people in affliction. Provided the intended lesson has been learned, when we consider any misfortune in the light of Divine Destiny, or as an application of Divine Destiny, we may find rest and not feel the need to complain about it. The verse to come corroborates this.

13. We have free will, are enjoined to follow religious obligations, and cannot ascribe our sins to God. We have free will so that our rebellious carnal soul does not consider itself free of the consequences of its sins by ascribing them to Destiny. Destiny exists so that pious people do not ascribe their good acts to themselves and thereby become proud. Destiny exists so that the successful and the wealthy are not proud of their successes or wealth.

Past and (present) misfortune should be considered in the light of Destiny so that we do not grieve for what has befallen us and what we have not been able to obtain. The future, along with sins and questions of responsibility, should be referred to human free will. That is, we should do whatever we should in order for a desired result, and avoid neglect, faults, and sins. This reconciles the extremes of fatalism and the denial of the role of Destiny in our actions.

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْمِيزَانَ
يُقُومُوا النَّاسَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا الْحَدِيدَ فِيهِ بَأْسٌ شَدِيدٌ
وَمَنْفَعٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَلِيَعْلَمَ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَنْصُرُهُ وَرُسُلَهُ بِالْغَيْبِ إِنَّ
اللَّهَ غَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ ۝ وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا وَإِبْرَاهِيمَ وَجَعَلْنَا فِي
ذُرِّيَّتِهِمَا النَّبُوَّةَ وَالْكِتَابَ فَمِنْهُمْ مُهْتَدٍ وَكَثِيرٌ مِنْهُمْ
فَاسِقُونَ ۝ ثُمَّ قَفَّيْنَا عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِم بِرُسُلِنَا وَقَفَّيْنَا بِعِيسَى
ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ وَآتَيْنَاهُ الْإِنْجِيلَ وَجَعَلْنَا فِي قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ
اتَّبَعُوهُ رَأْفَةً وَرَحْمَةً وَرَهَابِيَّةً ابْتَدَعُوهَا مَا كَتَبْنَاهَا
عَلَيْهِمْ إِلَّا اتِّعَاءَ رِضْوَانِ اللَّهِ فَمَنْ رَعَاهَا حَقَّ رِعَايَتِهَا
فَأَتَيْنَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ وَكَثِيرٌ مِنْهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ ۝
يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَآمِنُوا بِرُسُلِهِ يُؤْتِكُمْ
مِنْ فَضْلِهِ مِنْ رَحْمَتِهِ وَيَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ نُورًا تَمْشُونَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ
وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ۝ لَقَدْ يَنْصَلِمُ أَهْلُ الْكِتَابِ أَلَّا
يَقْدُرُوا عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ مِنْ فَضْلِ اللَّهِ وَأَنَّ الْفَضْلَ بِيَدِ
اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ ۝

25. Assuredly We have sent Our Messengers with manifest truths (and clear proofs of their being Messengers), and We have sent down with them the Book and the Balance so that (relations among) humankind may live by equity. And We have sent down iron,¹⁴ in which is stern might and benefits for humankind, so that God may mark out those who help (the cause of) God and His Messengers, though they do not see Him. Surely God is All-Strong, All-Glorious with irresistible might.¹⁵

26. We certainly sent as Messengers Noah and Abraham, and established in their line Prophethood and the Book. Among them (their offspring) there have been those who have followed the right guidance, but many among them have been transgressors.

27. Thereafter, We sent, following in their footsteps, others of Our Messengers, and We sent Jesus son of Mary, and granted him the Gospel, and placed in the hearts of those who followed him tenderness and mercy. And monasticism, they innovated it – We did not prescribe it to them – only to seek God's good pleasure, but they have not observed it as its observance requires.¹⁶ So We have granted those among them who have truly believed their reward, but many among them have been transgressors.

28. O you who believe! Keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety, and truly believe in His Messenger (Muhammad). He will grant you twofold of His mercy (one for your believing in all the previous Prophets, and one for the Last Prophet), and He will appoint for you a light to move (on the Straight Path in this world, leading to Paradise in the Hereafter), and He will forgive you. God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.¹⁷

29. (This is told you so) that the people of the Book should know that they cannot determine or restrict anything of God's grace, (and neither they nor Muslim believers will be able to attain anything of it unless they believe in Muhammad together with all the previous Prophets), and that all grace is in God's Hand; He grants it to whom He wills. God is of tremendous grace.

14. Sending down iron means the same as sending down cattle in *sūrah* 39: 6; iron is one of God's great bounties which He has bestowed out of the treasures He has with Him, as stated in *sūrah sūrah* 15: 21: *There is not a thing but the stores (for its life and sustenance) are with Us, and We do not send it down except in due, determined measure.*

15. Iron is perhaps the most important and necessary matter for technology. It is also our most elemental material, as it is the core of the earth. So, this verse may also be referring to the origins of the earth. In addition, iron is indispensably necessary to make weapons to fight in God's cause to uphold His Word, and to eradicate injustice.

From another point of view, this verse is very significant in assessing a sound society and government. The Messengers are the God-appointed leaders of humankind, who always guided them to the truth and led them in all aspects of life throughout human history. The Book is the compilation of knowledge, instructions, and laws essential to their happiness in both worlds. The Balance is the criterion to attain what is right in belief, thinking, and action, and also to realize justice in human individual and social life (see *sūrah* 55: 7-9, note 4). Iron symbolizes force or power in human social life. Without the Book, iron (force) destroys justice and brings about injustice. Without the Balance, iron misuses the Book according to its own benefits. Without iron, the Book and Balance are not sufficient to form a good society and government. Said Nursi remarks: "Principles of wisdom and laws

of truth have no effect upon ordinary people unless the former are combined with the state's laws and the latter with power" (*The Letters*, "Seeds of the Truth," 2: 306).

16. Islam does not approve of monasticism. It is said that there is no monasticism in Islam. Monasticism for the Muslim Community is striving in God's cause. Islam does not approve of holding aloof from people and life in order to attain self-perfection. Rather, it calls its followers to be among people and to work for their welfare, and to consider self-perfection along with the perfection of others. Even though some members of Islamic Sufi orders have practiced retreat or seclusion for self-training and perfection, they have done so only for a short restricted period and considered being among people to work for their perfection as being the greatest rank.

17. Although some interpreters have thought that this verse addresses the people of the Book, it is addressed to the Muslims, though not excluding the former, in order to urge them to believe in the Last Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings. While the Jews refuse to believe in the Messengers, Jesus and Muḥammad, upon them both be peace, who came after the Messengers sent to them, and the Christians refuse to believe in God's Last Messenger, Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, the Muslims believe in all the Prophets. So the later deviations of the people of the Book should never cause the Muslims to have any negative opinion of any of the previous Messengers and their true followers.

SŪRAH 58

AL-MUJĀDILAH
(THE PLEADING WOMAN)

Madīnah Period

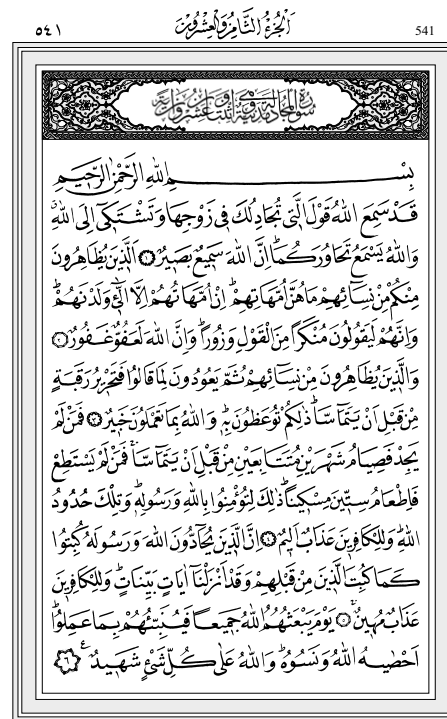
Consisting of 22 verses, this sūrah was revealed in Madīnah, most probably after the Battle of the Trench in the fifth year after *Hijrah*. It derives its name from the first verse, where a woman's plea to the Messenger to solve a problem between her and her husband is recounted. It decisively abolishes the pre-Islamic custom of a form of divorce that took effect when a man said to his wife, "You are henceforth like my mother's back to me." It also denounces the hypocrites for their holding secret counsels against the Messenger, and forbids the believers from taking as guardians those whom God has condemned to eternal punishment. Finally, it orders that support be given to God's Religion.

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful,
the All-Compassionate.

1. God has indeed heard (and accepted) the words of the woman who pleads with you concerning her husband and refers her complaint to God. God hears the dialogue between you.¹ Surely God is All-Hearing, All-Seeing.²

2. Those among you who declare their wives to be unlawful for them by using against them the expression, "Be as my mother's back to me," (should know that) their wives are not their mothers. Their mothers are none other than the women who gave them birth. Such men certainly utter a word abhorred (by the Shari'ah) and a falsehood. Yet God is surely All-Pardoning (He overlooks the faults of His servants), All-Forgiving.

3. Those who declare their wives unlawful for them (by using against them that ab-



horred expression) and thereafter wish to go back on the words they have uttered must free a slave before they (the spouses) touch each other. This is what you are urged to do. And God is fully aware of what you do (so do not seek to evade this act of penance and expiation for your wrong).

4. Whoever does not find (means to do that), let him fast two (lunar) months consecutively before they (the spouses) touch each other. And he that is not able to do so, (his penance shall be) to feed sixty destitute ones (two meals). This is in order that you may perfect your faith in God and His Messenger (so that you believe in the truth of whatever God has enjoined and His Messenger has conveyed to you, and live accordingly). These are

the bounds of God. And for the unbelievers there is a painful punishment.

5. Those who oppose God and His Messenger (in the observance of God's bounds) will certainly be abased (in the world) even as those (who did likewise) before them were abased. We have certainly sent down clear Revelations (to guide you to happi-

ness in both worlds). And for the unbelievers there is a humiliating punishment.³

6. On the day when God will raise them all from the dead, and make them truly understand all that they did (in the world, and call them to account): God has had it written down, though they have forgotten it. God is witness over everything.

1. There is reference here to a pre-Islamic custom among the pagan Arabs. A husband would say to his wife, "You are henceforth as my mother's back to me," thus forbidding himself from conjugal relations with her. This meant an irrevocable divorce, but a woman thus divorced was not allowed to remarry. In *Sūrat al-Ahzāb* (verse 4), which was revealed before this *sūrah*, the Qur'ān took the first step towards abolishing this custom (it was called *zihār*), by declaring that a woman, whose husband had pronounced her to be as his mother's back, was in no way his mother in reality. Aws ibn Sāmit, from the Aws tribe, among the Muslims of Madinah, was angry with his wife for some reason, and declared that she was as unlawful to him as his mother's back. Afterwards, he regretted having done so, but according to custom, he was not able to return to his wife. So his wife, Hawlah bint Tha'labah, appealed to God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, and told him about the case. She added that her children had grown up and she lived alone with her husband. So if her husband left her, she would have been left alone without anyone to protect her, and she added that her husband would agree to re-accept her as his wife. During her conversation with the Messenger, God revealed this and the following verses concerning the same subject, thereby decisively and permanently abolishing the pagan custom.

2. The verse concludes: "God is All-Hearing,

All-Seeing." God hears everything, even the conversation between a woman and the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, about a particular, personal, and private matter between her and her husband. A woman is generally more compassionate than a man, and is a source of care and tenderness that inspires self-sacrifice. As a requirement of His being All-Compassionate, Almighty God heard her complaint and considered it a matter of great importance through His Name, the Truth. In that He expresses a universal principle in relation to a particular event, we may realize that the One Who hears, sees, and weighs a particular, minor incident must hear, see, and weigh all things. One Who claims Lordship over the universe must be aware of the troubles of any creature who has been wronged and hear its cries, for one who cannot do so cannot be Lord. Thus, God being All-Hearing and All-Seeing, establishes these two mighty truths. (See *The Words*, "The 25th Word," 446.)

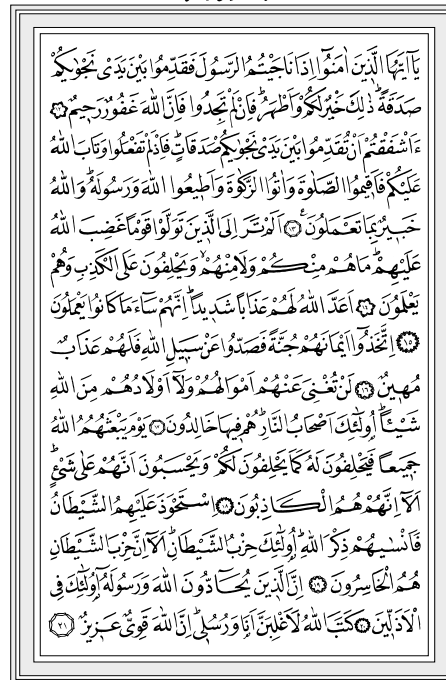
3. The verse is clear enough in warning that the communities that oppose God and His Messenger(s) in their ordering of life, those who do not observe the rules they have laid down, will inevitably suffer abasement (manifested as total or partial destruction through "natural" calamities, internal or external wars, famine, drought, pestilence, etc.); and what awaits those who obstinately reject them in the Hereafter is a much more humiliating and shameful punishment (in Hell).

4. Generally, the disbelieving Jews and hypocrites in Madīnah, instead of saying the words of greeting as ordered by God (sūrah 24: 61), used to and pronounce the word *salām* (“peace”) in a manner to make it indistinguishable from *sām* (death). They also vented their spite by using ambiguous expressions in their conversations. They either used words with double meanings, one innocent and the other offensive, or changed the pronunciation of the expressions used by the Companions (see sūrah 2: 104, note 94). The verse refers to their enmity and that of the hypocrites which were displayed in such ways.

5. Believers always pursue godliness and piety, and therefore God’s approval and good pleasure. So, if believers come together privately or publicly, they do so only to discuss and solve matters in godliness and piety, and their con-

versations are conducted around these values. Further, as pointed out in sūrah 4: 114, *No good is there in most of their secret counsels except for him who exhorts to a deed of charity, or kind equitable dealings and honest affairs, or setting things right between people. Whoever does that seeking God’s good pleasure, We will grant to him a tremendous reward.*

6. Merit is not to be sought only in sitting in the assembly of a scholar or spiritual guide. Merit lies in faith and knowledge. So, one should seek the assemblies of scholars and/or guides only with the intention of visiting them for God’s sake, and with their permission, and only in order to increase in faith and knowledge. When (true) knowledge, which leads one to greater piety and a better religious life, and from which others benefit, is added to faith, God will exalt its owner in many ranks.



12. O you who believe! When you intend to consult the Messenger in private, offer something in alms (to the needy) before your consultation. That is better for you and purer. Yet if you do not find (means to do so), then God is surely All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.

13. Is it that you are afraid of offering something in alms before your consultation (with him)? (If so) and you have not done it, and God has turned to you in forgiveness, then establish the Prayer in conformity with its conditions, and pay the Prescribed Purifying Alms, and obey God and His Messenger. God is fully aware of all that you do.⁷

14. Have you not considered those who take for confidants and guardians a people whom God has condemned to punishment? They are neither of you (O believers), nor of the others (whom they take for confidants and guardians). They swear to a lie (that they are of you), while they know (it to be a lie).

15. God has prepared for them a severe punishment. Evil indeed is that which they do habitually.

16. They take their oaths as a covering (to screen their misdeeds and themselves from accusation), and bar (people) from God's way. Therefore there is for them a humiliating punishment.

17. Neither their wealth nor their children will avail them anything against God.

They are companions of the Fire: they will abide therein.

18. The Day when God will raise them all from the dead, they will swear to Him as (now) they swear to you. They fancy that they will have some standing (through their oaths). Be aware: they are but liars.

19. Satan has subdued them and so caused them to forget remembrance of God. Those are the party of Satan. Be aware: the party of Satan, they are the losers (the self-ruined).

20. Those who oppose God and His Messenger – surely those will be among the most abased.

21. God has decreed: "I will most certainly prevail, I and My Messengers." Surely God is All-Strong, All-Glorious with irresistible might.

7. It is clear that this verse was revealed to train and educate the believers in their relations with the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. Some people frequently appealed to him in private concerning their affairs, some with the hope of nearness to him, and still some others in order to appear to be near to him. Since the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, refused nobody, this caused him a lot of trouble; and since most of those who appealed

to him were from among the wealthy, it caused grief for the poor. In order to train and educate the believers and make them more sincere in their relationship with him, and to purify their hearts, the Qur'ān ordered them to spend something in charity before their appeal to him. When this order had the desired effect, God annulled it. However, it still retains its spirit, meaning, and importance in educating people in their relationship with the leaders of Muslims.

22. You never find a people who truly believe in God and the Last Day loving towards those who oppose God and His Messenger, even if they be their (own) parents, or their children, or their brothers (and sisters), or their clan.⁸ Those (are they) in whose hearts God has inscribed faith and has strengthened them with a spirit from Him (which is the source of their spiritual vigor and intellectual enlightenment). And He will admit them into Gardens through which rivers flow, therein to abide. God is well-pleased with them, and they are well-pleased with Him. Those are the party of God. Be aware: the party of God are those who are the prosperous.

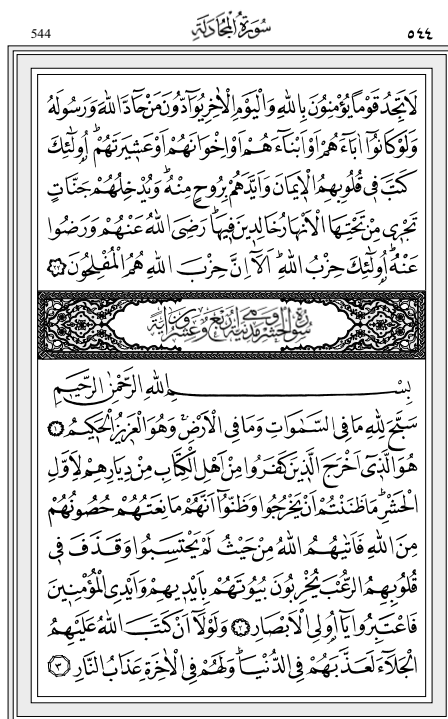
8. As pointed out by Hamdi Yazır in interpreting this verse, this Qur'ānic statement should be understood in the light of or considered together with *sūrah* 60: 8–9. God never forbids the believers to be good and beneficial to others, even if they are unbelievers or hypocrites. He always orders goodness and justice. So what is forbidden in this verse concerning love is that a believer cannot love an unbeliever or the followers of other false religions because of their unbelief or false belief. The believers cannot prefer blood relations over the relationship created by faith. This means that the Qur'ān categorically rejects racism. It also forbids loving and taking for friends those who fight against the Muslims because of their Religion and who try to violate the most fundamental rights of human beings, notably the right to believe in God and obey His commands.

SŪRAH 59

AL-*HASHR* (THE GATHERING)

Madīnah period

Revealed in Madīnah, most probably in the fourth year after the *Hijrah*, this *sūrah* consists of 24 verses. It takes its



name from the word *hashr* in verse 2, which means gathering people to dispatch them somewhere. The *sūrah* deals with the Muslims' encounter with the Jewish tribe of Banū Nadīr, and mentions the conspiracies of the hypocrites in alliance with some of the Jews. It gives instructions on the distribution of the war-gains obtained from the enemy without fighting. It also advises the believers to always be God-revering and pious, and describes God with some of His Attributes.

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful,
the All-Compassionate.

1. Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth glorifies God. He is the All-Glorious with irresistible might, the All-Wise.
2. He it is Who drove out those who disbelieve from among the People of the Book from their (fortified) homes as the

first instance of gathering (them for punishment and banishment from the heartland of Islam). You did not think that they would go forth (so easily), just as they thought that their strongholds would protect them against God. But (the will of) God came upon them from where they had not reckoned (it could come): He cast dread into their hearts. And so they were

wrecking their homes by their own hands, as well as by the hands of the believers.¹ Learn a lesson, then, O people of insight.

3. Had it not been that God had decreed banishment for them, He would certainly have punished them (with death and expropriation) in this world. And for them in the Hereafter, there is the punishment of the Fire.

1. When God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, emigrated to Madīnah, he signed a pact with the Jewish tribes living there. The pact stipulated that the Jews would remain neutral in the hostilities between the Muslims and the pagan Quraysh, but if there were to be an attack on Madīnah, they would defend the city together with the Muslims. But the Jewish tribes were reluctant to honor their agreements. During the Battle of Badr, they favored the Makkan polytheists; after Badr, they openly encouraged the Quraysh and other Arab tribes to unite against the Muslims. They also collaborated with the hypocrites, who were apparently an integral part of the Muslim body-politic. To sabotage the spread of Islam, they began to fan the flames of old animosities between the Aws and Khazraj, the two tribes of Madīnan Muslims. Ka'b ibn Ashraf, the chief of the Banū Nadīr, went to Makkah and recited stirring elegies concerning the Makkans killed at Badr to provoke the Quraysh into renewed hostile action. He also slandered the Muslims and satirized God's Messenger in his poems.

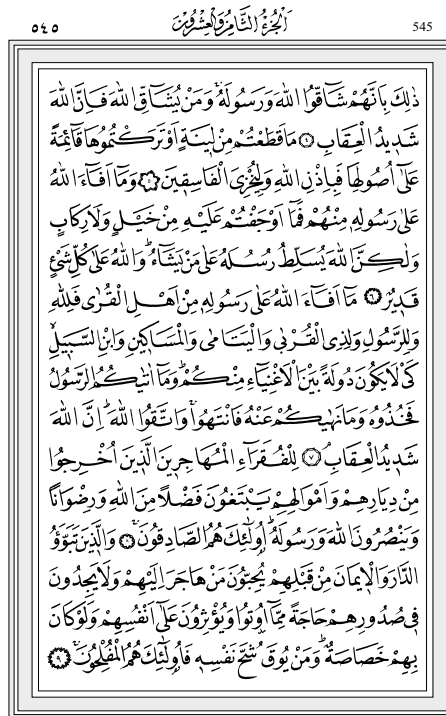
The violation by the Jewish tribes of their obligations according to the treaty exceeded all reasonable limits. A few months after Badr, a Muslim woman was treated indecently by some Jews of Banū Qaynuqa', the most anti-Muslim Jewish tribe. During the ensuing fight, a Muslim and a Jew were killed. When God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, reproached them for this conduct and reminded

them of their treaty obligations, the Jews threatened him: "Don't be misled by your encounter with a people who have no knowledge of warfare. You were lucky. But if we fight you, you will know that we are men of war."

Finally, God's Messenger had to attack the Jewish Banu Qaynuqa'; he defeated them and banished them from the outskirts of Madīnah.

As for the Jewish Banū Nadīr tribe, its members also secretly intrigued with the Makkan pagans and the Madīnan hypocrites to destroy the Muslim community once and for all. They even tried to kill the Prophet while he was visiting them. God's Messenger asked them to leave their strategic position, about three miles south of Madīnah, and depart from the city. They would be allowed to return every year to gather the produce of their date groves. But when 'Abdullāh ibn Ubayy, the chief of the hypocrites, promised them help in case of war, the Banū Nadīr disagreed. They had great faith in their strongly built houses and other strongholds.

The Muslim army then besieged them in their fortresses. The Banū Nadīr, seeing that neither the Makkan polytheists nor the Madīnan hypocrites cared enough to help them, had to leave the city. They were dismayed, but their lives were spared. They were given ten days to remove themselves, their families, and all they could carry. Most of them joined their brethren in Syria and others in Khaybar (Ibn Hishām, 3: 47-49, 190-192).



4. This is because they defied and opposed God and His Messenger. Whoever defies and opposes God, then surely God is severe in retribution.

5. Whatever (of their) palm-trees you may have cut down or left them standing on their roots,² it was by God's leave and so that He might disgrace the transgressors.

6. What of their God bestowed as gains of war on His Messenger – and you did not spur any horse or riding-camel for it, but God gives His Messenger mastery over whomever He wills. God has full power over everything –

7. What God has bestowed on His Messenger as gains of war from the peoples of the townships, (one-fifth of) it belongs to God, and to the Messenger, and his near kinsfolk, and orphans, and the destitute, and the wayfarer (lacking means to sustain a journey), so that it should not become a fortune circulating among the rich among you.³ Whatever the Messenger gives you, accept it willingly; and whatever he forbids you, refrain from it. Keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety. Surely God is severe in retribution.

8. It is also for the poor Emigrants, who have been driven from their homes and their property, seeking favor with God and His approval and good pleasure, and who help (the cause of) God and His Messenger. Those are they who are truthful (in their profession of faith and loyalty to its commands).

9. Those who, before their coming, had their abode (in Madīnah), preparing it as a home for Islam and faith, love those who emigrate to them for God's sake, and in their hearts do not begrudge what they have been given, and (indeed) they prefer them over themselves, even though poverty be their own lot.⁴ (They, too, have a share in such gains of war.) Whoever is guarded against the avarice of his own soul – those are the ones who are truly prosperous.

2. God allowed the Muslims to cut down the trees during their siege of the Banū Nadīr to facilitate the operation. However, except for such strict military exigencies, the Prophet continually forbade the destruction of trees and crops. The Qur'ān's special mention of this incident during the fighting against the Banū Nadīr must refer to this extraordinary exemption.

3. For an explanation of this distribution, see *sūrah* 8: 41, note 8. The principle laid out in the sentence – *it should not become a fortune circulating among the rich among you* – is very important and is a basic characteristic of Islamic economy and social justice. Islam orders people to strive and be industrious; it does not commend begging. However, it is a fact that due to human facilities and capacities, people vary

in their earning power and their wealth. But in Islam there should be no extremely rich people while there are destitute people. So, through ordinances such as those prescribed and recommended alms as a recompense for fasts that have been broken willingly, or that cannot be fulfilled due to extreme old age or permanent illnesses, and for broken oaths, and unlawful actions such as saying to one's wife, "You are henceforth as my mother's back to me," (see *sūrah* 58: 1, note 1), it seeks as broad a distribution of wealth as possible, so that the standard of life will be balanced in the community.

4. These verses tell (and remind) us what praiseworthy qualities the *Muhājirūn* (Emigrants) and the *Anṣār* (the Helpers – the Madīnan Muslims) had and their degree in those qualities.

وَالَّذِينَ جَاءُوا مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا وَلِإِخْوَانِنَا
الَّذِينَ سَبَقُونَا بِالْإِيمَانِ وَلَا تَجْعَلْ فِي قُلُوبِنَا غِلًا لِلَّذِينَ
آمَنُوا رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ رَؤُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٥٤﴾ أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ نَافَقُوا
 يَقُولُونَ لِإِخْوَانِهِمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَئِنْ
أُخْرِجْتُمْ لَنَخْرُجَنَّ مَعَكُمْ وَلَا نُطِيعُ فِيكُمْ أَحَدًا أَبَدًا
وَإِنْ قُوتِلْتُمْ لَنَنْصُرَنَّكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ إِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ
﴿٥٥﴾ لَئِنْ أُخْرِجُوا لَا يَخْرُجُونَ مَعَهُمْ وَلَئِنْ قُوتِلُوا لَا يَنْصُرُوهُمْ
وَلَئِنْ نَصَرُوهُمْ لَيُكُونَ لَأَذًى بَارِئَةً لَمْ يَنْصُرُوا فِيهِمْ وَلَا نَفْعًا
أَشَدُّ رَهَبَةً فِي صُدُورِهِمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَا
يَفْقَهُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾ لَا يَتَّقُونَكَ كَجَمْعٍ إِلَّا فِي فِتْنَةٍ مُخَصَّصَةٍ
أَوْ مِنْ وَرَاءِ جُدُرٍ بَأْسُهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ شَدِيدٌ تَحْسَبُهُمْ جَمْعًا
وَقُلُوبُهُمْ شَتَّى ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾ كَمْ مَثَلٍ
الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ قَرِيبًا ذَاتُوا آلٍ أَرِهَهُمْ وَهُمْ عَذَابُ
آلِهِمْ كَمَثَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِذْ قَالَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ اكْفُرْ فَلَمَّا كَفَرَ
قَالَ إِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِنْكَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ اللَّهَ رَبَّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٥٨﴾

10. And all those who come after them (and follow in their footsteps) pray: “O Our Lord! Forgive us and our brothers (and sisters) in Religion who have preceded us in faith, and let not our hearts entertain any ill-feeling against any of the believers. O Our Lord! You are All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate (especially towards Your believing servants).”⁵

11. Have you not considered those who are hypocrites? They say to their brothers who disbelieve from among the People of the Book: “If you are driven away (from Madīnah), we will certainly go out with you, and we will never obey anyone against you. If war is waged against you, we will most certainly help you.” God bears witness that they are indeed liars.⁶

12. For if they are indeed driven away, they will never go out with them; and if war is waged against them, they will never help them. Even supposing that they would help them (in such an eventuality), they would most certainly turn their backs in flight, and so they would not receive help (from anywhere, and be destroyed because of their manifest treachery to the Muslims).

13. The dread they have of you in their hearts is more intense than their fear of God. This is because they are a people who are devoid of understanding and so cannot grasp the truth.

14. They will never fight against you as a united body (in alliance with the Hypocrites, with the Jews of Khaybar, and others), unless it be from within fortified strongholds or from behind high walls. Severe is their belligerent discord

among themselves (except when not opportunistically allied in warfare against you). You think of them as one body, but in fact their hearts are at odds with one another. This is because they are a people who do not reason (and come to an understanding about the situations they face).

15. Just like those (the Jews of the Banū Qaynuqa‘) who, a short time before them (the Jews of the Banū Nadīr), tasted the evil result of their own doings – and (in the Hereafter) for them there is (also) a painful punishment.

16. (The hypocrites have deceived them) just like Satan, when he says to human, “Disbelieve (in God)!” Then when he disbelieves, he says (to human): “Surely I am quit of you, for surely I fear God, the Lord of the worlds!”⁷

5. Caliph ‘Umar understood from these verses that the spoils gained without fighting are for all the Muslims, including the Emigrants, the Helpers, and those succeeding them in later centuries. His view received a general welcome from other Companions.

6. As explained in note 1 above, when God’s Messenger asked the Jewish Banū Nadīr tribe to leave their strategic position, about three miles south of Madīnah, and depart from the city, ‘Abdullāh ibn Ubayy ibn Salūl, the chief of the hypocrites, promised to help the Banū Nadīr in case of war. However, when the Muslim army besieged them in their fortresses, neither the Makkan polytheists nor the Madīnan hypocrites dared to help them.

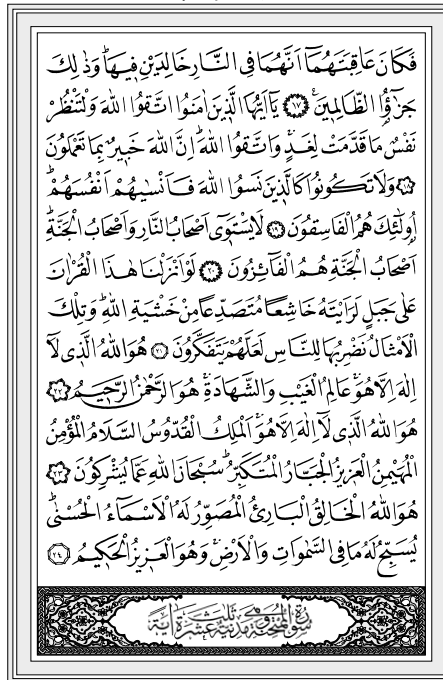
7. The hypocrites promised help to the Jews of the Banū Nadīr and provoked them to fight against the Messenger. But when fighting

began, the hypocrites did nothing. Their manners are like the manner of Satan. He makes promises to humans, and calls them to disbelieve or commit sins, but when they have done whatever he has urged them to do, he withdraws and derides them. Actually, he has no power to do anything to fulfill his promises. Before the Battle of Badr began, Satan told the Makkan army: *“Today no power among humankind can overcome you, and for sure I am your supporter.”* But when the two hosts came within sight of each other, he turned on his heels to run away and said: *“Indeed I am quit of you; surely I see that which you do not see. Indeed, I fear God”* (sūrah 8: 48). He had perceived that the Muslim army was supported by angels, and in fear of receiving harsh blows, he preferred to take flight. His words *“Surely I am quit of you,”* and *“for surely I fear God,”* were only excuses for his flight.

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17. So the end of both (Satan and those whom he has deceived, and the hypocrites and those whom they have betrayed) is that they will find themselves in the Fire to abide therein. That is the recompense of the wrongdoers.

18. O you who believe! Keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety, and let every person consider what he has forwarded for the morrow. Keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety. Surely God is fully aware of all that you do.

19. And do not be like those who are oblivious of God and so God has made them oblivious of their own selves.⁸ Those, they are the transgressors.

20. Not equal are the companions of the Fire and the companions of Paradise. The companions of Paradise, they are the triumphant.

21. If We had sent down this Qur'an on a mountain, you would certainly see it humble itself, splitting asunder for awe of God. Such parables We strike for humankind so that they may reflect (on why the Qur'an is being revealed to humankind, and how great and important their responsibility is).

22. God is He save Whom there is no deity; the Knower of the unseen (all that lies beyond sense-perception) and the witnessed (the sensed realm). He is the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate.

23. God is He save Whom there is no deity; the Sovereign, the All-Holy and All-Pure, the Supreme Author of peace and salvation, and the Supreme Author of safety and security Who bestows faith and removes all doubt, the All-Watchful Guardian, the All-Glorious with irresistible might, the All-Compelling of supreme majesty, the One Who has exclusive right to all greatness. All-Glorified is God in that He is absolutely exalted above what they associate with Him.

24. He is God, the Creator, the All-Holy Maker (Who creates without any defects), the All-Fashioning. To Him belong the All-Beautiful Names.⁹ Whatever is in the heavens and on the earth glorifies Him, (declaring Him to be absolutely above having any defects). He is the All-Glorious with irresistible might, the All-Wise.¹⁰

8. This verse is telling those who are oblivious of God and the believers: You are oblivious and unaware of yourselves. You do not want to remember death although you always consider others mortal. You hold back when confronting hardship and rendering service, but believe that you should be the first to be rewarded when it is time to collect the wages. You do not like obeying God in your lives and follow your lusts and caprices, and so are oblivious of the purpose for your worldly life. To purify yourselves of this, carry out your responsibilities, be prepared for death, and forget whatever reward you might obtain in the world. You should never forget

why you are here in the world and what you should do, and for what end you are heading. You should know your true leader and follow him. Otherwise, (a Day will come and) it will be said: *“We are oblivious of you today (so do not hope for forgiveness and favor), as you were oblivious of the encounter of this day of yours, and your (lasting) refuge will be the Fire, and you have no helpers (sūrah 45: 34).*

9. For God’s Beautiful Names, see *sūrah* 7: 180, note 44; *sūrah* 17: 110, note 41.

10. It is *sunnah* to recite these last three verses after the Early Morning and Evening Prayers.

SŪRAH 60

AL-MUMTAḤANAH (THE WOMAN TO BE TESTED)

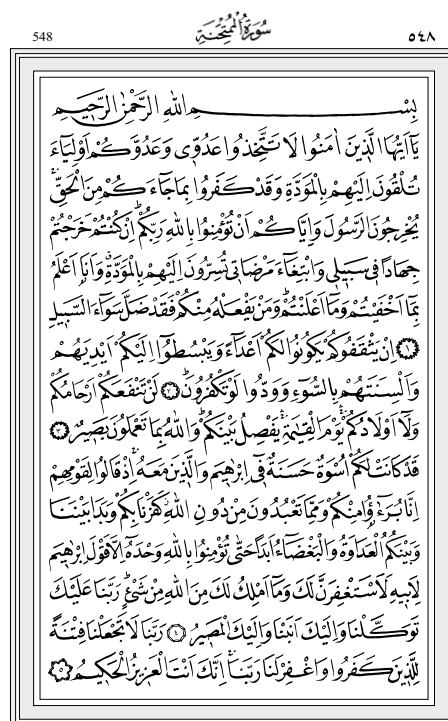
Madīnah Period

Revealed in Madīnah between the Treaty of Hudaibiyah and the conquest of Makkah, this *sūrah* has 13 verses. It derives its name from the 10th verse, which commands that women who have declared their conversion to Islam and emigrated to Madīnah should be tested as to whether they are true. The *sūrah* also deals with what the Muslims' relations with their disbelieving enemies should be.

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful,
the All-Compassionate.

1. O you who believe! Do not take My enemies and your enemies for friends, offering them love and affection, while they have disbelieved in the truth that has come to you and driven the Messenger and yourselves away (from your homes) only because you believe in God, your Lord (Who has created you and sustains you). If you (now) have set forth (from your homes) to strive in My cause and to seek My approval and good pleasure, (then do not take them for friends). You reveal to them your secret in secrecy out of your love and friendship, but I am better aware (than yourselves) of what you do in secret as well as of what you disclose. Whoever does so among you has surely strayed from the right way.¹

2. Should they gain the upper hand over you, they will be to you as enemies (not friends), and stretch forth their hands and tongues against you with malice, and they long for you to disbelieve.



3. Your relatives will be of no benefit to you, nor even your children, on the Day of Resurrection. God will distinguish and part you from each other (according to how you believed and acted in the world).² God sees well all that you do.

4. Indeed, you have had an excellent example to follow in Abraham and those in his company, when they said to their (idol-
atrous) people (who were their kin): “We are quit of you and whatever you worship besides God. We have rejected you (in your polytheism), and there has arisen between us and you enmity and hate forever until you believe in God alone (as the only One to be worshipped).” (So it was) except for Abraham’s saying to his father: “I most surely will plead for God’s forgiveness for

you, though I have no power at all to do anything for you against God.”³ (And their prayer was:) “O Our Lord! It is in You that We have put our trust, and it is to You that we turn in utmost sincerity and devotion, and to You is the homecoming.

5. “O Our Lord! Do not make us a prey

to those who disbelieve (lest, in overcoming us they think their unbelief to be true and increase therein). And forgive us, our Lord (especially those of our sins that may cause us to fall prey to those who disbelieve). You are the All-Glorious with irresistible might, the All-Wise.”

1. When the Treaty of Hudaibiyah was violated by the attack of the Banū Bakr, an ally of the Makkan polytheists, on the Banu Khudā‘ah, an ally of the Muslims, resulting in some of the latter being killed, God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, began to prepare for war. As always, he kept the affair quite secret and no one, including his wives and closest friends, knew where the campaign would be. However, an Emigrant named Khaṭīb ibn Abī Balta‘ah guessed the intention of God’s Messenger. He sent a letter to the Quraysh, informing them of the Messenger’s preparations. The Messenger was told of this through a Revelation, and ordered ‘Alī, Zubayr ibn al-‘Awwām and Miqdād ibn ‘Amr to take the letter from the woman to whom Khaṭīb had entrusted it. They did this successfully. When questioned about why he had written this letter, Khaṭīb excused himself by saying that he

had family members in Makkah and desired their protection. Since this was not an ill-intended treachery and Khaṭīb was one who had proved that he was a sincere Muslim by participating in the Battle of Badr, the Messenger forgave him (Ibn Hishām, 2: 39–42). The verse is about this incident and intends to warn the Muslims against similar events.

2. See *sūrah* 2: 166; *sūrah* 6: 94; *sūrah* 80: 37.

3. This saying of Abraham, upon him be peace, should be considered and evaluated together with 9: 114: *The prayer of Abraham for the forgiveness of his father was only because of a promise which he had made to him. But when it became clear that he was an enemy of God, he (Abraham) dissociated himself from him. Abraham was most tender-hearted, most clement.*” For the identity of Abraham’s father, see *sūrah* 9: 114, note 25.

6. You certainly have in them an excellent example to follow for everyone who looks forward to God and the Last Day. Whoever turns away, then (let him know that) God is He Who is the All-Wealthy and Self-Sufficient (absolutely beyond need), the All-Praiseworthy.

7. (When you obey God in His commands and prohibitions,) it may be that God will bring about love and friendship between you and those of them with whom you are in enmity.⁴ God is All-Powerful, and God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.

8. God does not forbid you, as regards those who do not make war against you on account of your Religion, nor drive you away from your homes, to be kindly to them, and act towards them with equity. God surely loves the scrupulously equitable.

9. God only forbids you, as regards those who make war against you on account of your Religion and drive you away from your homes, or support others to drive you away, to take them for friends and guardians. Whoever takes them for friends and guardians, those are the wrongdoers.

10. O you who believe! When believing women come to you as emigrants, test them,⁵ (though only) God knows best their faith. Then, if you have ascertained that they are believers,⁶ do not return them to the unbelievers. They are not (being believers) lawful (as wives) for the unbelievers, nor are the unbelievers lawful (as husbands) for them. But return to them (the unbelievers) whatever they expended (by way of bridal-due when they wed those women).⁷ And there will be no blame on you (O believers) if you marry them when you have given them their bridal-due. Also, (on the other side) do not continue to retain disbelieving women

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِيهِمْ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ
وَمَن تَبَوَّلَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ ۚ عَسَى اللَّهُ أَن يَجْعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ
وَبَيْنَ الَّذِينَ كَادْتُمْ أَنَّهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ حُزْبًا وَبَيْنَهُمْ مَوَدَّةٌ وَاللَّهُ قَدِيرٌ ۚ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ
۝ لَا يَنْهَى اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ كَادْتُمْ أَن يُتَوَلَّوْا فِي الدِّينِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوكُم
مِّن دِيَارِكُمْ أَن تَبَرُّوهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوا إِلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ مُّقْسِطٌ
۝ إِنَّمَا يَنْهَى اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ كَادْتُمْ أَن تُتَوَلَّوْا فِي الدِّينِ وَأَخْرَجُوكُم مِّن
دِيَارِكُمْ وَطَاهَرُوا عَلَىٰ أَخْرَاجِكُمْ أَن تَتَوَلَّوْهُمْ وَمَن يَتَوَلَّهُمْ فَاُولَٰئِكَ
هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ۝ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا جَاءَكُمُ الْمُؤْمِنَاتُ مِهَاجِرَاتٍ
فَانْتَحِسُوهُنَّ ۚ اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِإِيمَانِهِنَّ فَإِنْ عَلِمْتُمُوهُنَّ مُؤْمِنَاتٍ فَلَا
تَرْجِعُوهُنَّ إِلَى الْكُفَّارِ لَأَهْلُهُنَّ فَنَّهُنَّ وَلَا هُنَّ حِلٌّ لَّهُمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَسْمِعُونَ
مَا أَنْفَقُوا وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ أَن تَنْكِحُوهُنَّ إِذَا آتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ أَجْرَهُنَّ
وَلَا تُمْسِكُوا بِعِصَمِ الْكُفَّارِ فَوَسَّوْا مَا نَفَقْتُمْ وَلَيْسَ لَكُمُ مَا أَنْفَقُوا
ذَلِكُمْ حُكْمُ اللَّهِ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ۝ وَإِن فَانَكُم
بَشَعٌ مِّنْ أَزْوَاجِكُم إِلَى الْكُفَّارِ فَمَا يَقْتَضِهِمْ فَآوُوا الَّذِينَ ذَهَبَتْ
أَزْوَاجُهُمْ مِّثْلَ مَا أَنْفَقُوا وَآتَوْا اللَّهَ الْبَدَىٰ أَنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنُونَ ۝

in marriage, and ask for the return of whatever you expended as their bridal-due (if they remain among the unbelievers or join them), just as the disbelieving men (whose wives have emigrated to you after embracing Islam) have the right to demand the return of whatever they spent. That is God's judgment and His law; He lays down the law and judges between you. God is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

11. If anything of the bridal-dues of your (former) disbelieving wives (who remain among the unbelievers or have joined them) has passed to the unbelievers, and afterwards you have your turn (of victory) over them, then pay to those whose wives have gone away the equivalent of what they expended (as bridal-due).⁸ And keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety, in Whom you are believers.

4. The events that are described here began after the Treaty of Hudaibiyah. The Muslims obeyed God's commands strictly, relayed to them by God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, and it soon became clear that they were invincible by God's grace. In the atmosphere of peace brought about by the Treaty, many among the polytheists found opportunity to consider Islam clearly. They were finally awakened to the truth and Islam spread widely among the Arab tribes. After the conquest of Makkah in particular, nearly all the tribes embraced Islam.

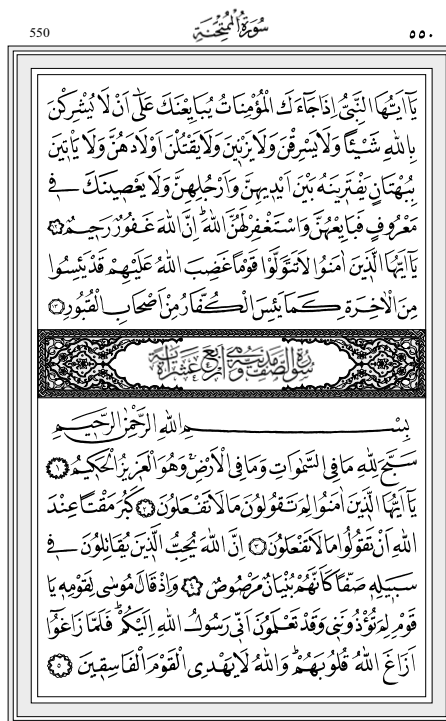
5. Under the terms of the Treaty of Hudaibiyah, people or tribes could join or ally themselves with whomever they wished – the pagan Quraysh or the Muslims in Madinah – and any Makkan men who defected to Madinah would be returned. The Quraysh took this stipulation to include also married women. So when several Makkan women embraced Islam after the Treaty and emigrated to Madinah, their return to Makkah was demanded. However, since the word "men" was used in the stipulation mentioned, the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, responded that the stipulation included only the men, not the women, and he rejected the demand. This verse is concerned with these women and, of course, encom-

passes all women who take refuge in a Muslim land claiming that they have become Muslims and who have left their husbands on account of their religion.

6. In order to establish whether they were believers, they were asked to swear by God. It is clear that this is a procedure of legal form and effect. It is because of this that God reminds us that it is only He who can determine whether they are true believers.

7. Since a former husband who is not Muslim is not responsible for the breaking of the marriage contract, and it is the (newly Muslim) wife who is considered to be responsible, she has to refund the bridal-due that she received at the time of the marriage contract. If the woman is unable to do that, the Muslim community (or state on behalf of the community) is obliged to indemnify the former husband.

8. If the unbelievers did not return what the Muslim husbands had spent on their (former disbelieving) wives as dowry, the Muslims were to compensate this out of what the (former disbelieving) husbands had spent on their wives who had converted to Islam. Or, if the Muslims were to gain war-spoils from the unbelievers, the Muslim husbands were to be compensated out of this.



12. O Prophet! When the believing women (who have professed Islam) come to you to swear allegiance to you – that they will never associate partners with God in any way, and will not steal, and will not commit any illegal sexual intercourse, and will not kill their children, and will not indulge in slander (such as attributing any of their children to other than their own father) that they have willfully devised, and that they will not disobey you in anything that is proper⁹ – then accept their allegiance and ask God for their forgiveness. Surely God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.

13. O you who believe! Do not take for friends and guardians a people who have incurred God's condemnation and punishment: (people) who are bereft of any hope in the Hereafter (because of what their wickedness has earned), just as the unbelievers are bereft of any hope of (ever seeing again) those in the graves.

9. The stipulations are important in understanding the place of women in the Age of Ignorance and for what purposes they were employed at that time, i.e. before Islam. It may be said that the same is true in almost every age of ignorance.

SŪRAH 61

AŞ-ŞAFF (THE RANKS)

Madīnah Period

The name of this *sūrah* is derived from verse 4 where the word *şaff* (ranks) is used in praise of the Muslims who fought in ranks, coming together as though they were a firm and solid building. This *sūrah* consists of 14 verses. It was revealed just before or just after the Battle of Uhud. It stresses the importance of striving hard in the cause of God after faith, and of the necessary concordance between professed belief and actual behavior.

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful,
the All-Compassionate.

1. All that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth glorifies God. He is the All-Glorious with irresistible might, the All-Wise.

2. O you who believe! Why do you say what you do not do (as well as what you will not do)?

3. Most odious it is in the sight of God that you say what you do not (and will not) do.¹

4. God surely loves those who fight in His cause in ranks as though they were a firm and solid structure.

5. And (remember) when Moses said to his people: "O my people! Why do you affront me² while you know indeed that I am the Messenger of God sent to you?" And so, when they swerved from the right way, God made their hearts swerve from the truth. God does not guide the transgressing people.

1. The last two verses severely condemn saying one thing and doing another; i.e. breaking one's promise, lying, and showing oneself to be different from what one really is. These are things that are incompatible with faith and which are signs of hypocrisy.

2. For Moses' being affronted by his people, see *sūrah* 2: 51, 55, 60, 67, 71; *sūrah* 4: 153; *sūrah* 5: 20, 26; *sūrah* 7: 138, 141, 148, 151; *sūrah* 20: 86, 98; and *Exodus*, 5: 20, 21; 14: 11-13; 16: 2-16; 17: 3-4, *Numbers*: 11: 1-15; 14: 1-10; 16: 1-50; 20: 1-5.

6. And Jesus son of Mary said: “O Children of Israel! Surely I am the Messenger of God sent to you, confirming (whatever of the truth is contained in) the Torah which was revealed before me,³ and bringing the glad tidings of a Messenger to come after me, whose name is Ahmad.”⁴ But when he came to them (the whole of human-kind including the later generations of the Children of Israel) with the manifest signs (of his being God’s Messenger), they said: “This (which he preaches and does) is clearly (nothing but) sorcery.”

7. Who is more in wrong than him who fabricates falsehood in attribution to God, when he is being invited to Islam (which is what the promised Messenger is conveying to them)? God surely does not guide the wrongdoing people.

8. They long to extinguish God’s light⁵ with (a breath from) their mouths (as if it entailed no more than extinguishing a candle with a breath), but God will surely perfect His light, however hateful (it may be) to the unbelievers.

9. He it is Who has sent His Messenger with the guidance and the Religion of truth (based on truth, and embodying it), that He may make it prevail over all religions, however hateful it may be to those who associate partners with God.⁶

10. O you who believe! Shall I direct you to a bargain (a deal) that will save you from a painful punishment?

11. That you believe in God and His Messenger, and strive hard in God’s cause with your wealth and persons. Doing so is what is to your own good, if you but knew it.

12. So that He may forgive you your sins and admit you into Gardens through which

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وَأَذَقَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ بَاجِيَ إِسْرَائِيلَ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا
بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ وَبَشِيرًا بِرَسُولٍ يَأْتِي مِنْ بَعْدِي اسْمُهُ أَحْمَدُ فَلَمَّا
جَاءَهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ قَالُوا هَذَا سِحْرٌ مُبِينٌ وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ افْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ
الْكُذْبَ وَهُوَ يُدْعَى إِلَى الْإِسْلَامِ وَاللَّهُ لَكَاهِلِي الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ
يُرِيدُونَ لِيُطْفِئُوا نُورَ اللَّهِ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَاللَّهُ مُتِمُّ نُورِهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ
الْكَافِرُونَ هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَى وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظَاهِرَهُ
عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُونَ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا هَلْ أَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَى
بَيْعَةٍ تَنْجِيكُمْ مِنْ عَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَتُجَاهِدُونَ فِي
سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِأَمْوَالِكُمْ وَأَنْفُسِكُمْ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ
يُغْفِرُ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَيُدْخِلُكُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ وَمَسَاكِنَ
طَيِّبَةً فِي جَنَّاتٍ عَدْنٍ ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ وَالْآخِرَى خَيْرٌ مِنْهَا
نُفِصْرًا مِنَ اللَّهِ وَفَتْحٌ قَرِيبٌ وَبَشِيرٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا
أَنْصَارًا لِلَّهِ كَمَا قَالَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ لِلْحَوَارِيِّينَ مَنْ أَنْصَارِي إِلَى اللَّهِ
قَالَ الْحَوَارِيُّونَ نَحْنُ أَنْصَارُ اللَّهِ فَأَمَتَتْ طَائِفَةٌ مِنْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ
وَكَهَرَتْ طَائِفَةٌ فَأَيَّدْنَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا عَلَى عَدُوِّهِمْ فَأَصْبَحُوا ظَاهِرِينَ

rivers flow, and into delightful dwellings in Gardens of perpetual bliss. That is the supreme triumph.

13. And yet another (blessing) which you love: help from God and a near victory soon to come (which will lead to further victories). Give glad tidings to the believers.⁷

14. O you who believe! Be helpers of God (‘s cause and Messenger), even as Jesus son of Mary said to his disciples: “Who will be my helpers (on this way) to God?” The disciples said: “We are the helpers (in the cause) of God.” And so it happened that some of the Children of Israel believed (in him and his Message) and others disbelieved (thus becoming two groups). So We strengthened those who believed against their enemies, and they became the uppermost.

3. Jesus did not come with a new religion or message from God. He communicated the same message as all the previous Prophets had done,

and the Shari’ah of Moses; the only difference was that he made lawful for them certain things that had been forbidden to them (3: 50). He also

made clear to them some of the matters in which they differed (*sūrah* 43: 63). For Jesus and other dimensions of his Messengership, see *sūrah* 3: 48–51, notes 8–9; *sūrah* 5: 46–47, 110, 116–118; *sūrah* 19: 30–34.

4. Every Prophet gave the glad tidings of the Messenger to come after him and declared his faith in him. (For the mission of the Messengers and the preceding Messenger's giving the tiding of the advent of the one to follow, see 3: 81, note 15; and for why God sent a Messenger with a Book after the others, see *sūrah* 5: 48, note 11.)

So, it is natural that Jesus gave the glad tidings of the Prophet Muḥammad, upon them be peace. It is also clear in the *Gospel of John* that the Children of Israel had been expecting another Prophet besides Jesus:

Now this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" He confessed, and did not deny; but confessed, "I am not the Christ." And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you that Prophet?" And he answered, "No." Then said they to him, "Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?" He said: "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said." (*John*, 1: 19–23)

As understood from this passage, the Children of Israel had been expecting the coming of the Christ (Messiah), Elijah, and another Prophet (*that prophet*) who must have been known and who was expected by everyone at that time.

As explained in Appendix 1, this prediction is supported by several references. Paráklētos (differently rendered as *Counselor*, *Helper*, or *Comforter* in different versions of the New Testament) is, in fact, a corruption of *Periklytos* (the "Much-Praised"). Its Aramiac counterpart is Mawhamana, which means Aḥmad. Aḥmad and Muḥammad are derived from the same root verb, "Ḥa-Mi-Da" meaning to praise. However, Aḥmad also means one who praises. In many Prophetic Traditions, it is stated that one of the Prophet Muḥammad's names is Aḥmad, and this is mentioned by Ḥasan ibn Thābit, a

famous poet during the Prophet's time, in one of his poems. So the Prophet Muḥammad was also known and mentioned as Aḥmad during his own lifetime. Though the name Aḥmad had not been known and used before him among the Arabs, this name became widely known and used during his time. It is of interest that Bediüzzaman Said Nursi records that the Prophet Muḥammad was mentioned in the Torah also with the name Munhamanna, meaning Muḥammad, the praised one. (For other predictions of the Prophet Muḥammad in the Old and New Testaments, see Appendix 1.)

Concerning the Prophet Muḥammad's mission regarding the People of the Book, and their relationship with him, the Qur'ān states: *They follow the (most illustrious) Messenger, the unlettered Prophet, whom they find described (with all his distinguishing features) in the Torah and the Gospel (that are) with them. He enjoins upon them what is right and good and forbids them what is evil; he makes pure, wholesome things lawful for them, and bad, corrupt things unlawful. And he relieves them of their burdens (remaining of their own Law) and the restraints that were upon them. So those who believe in him (with all sincerity), honor and support him, and help him, and follow the Light (the Qur'ān) which has been sent down with him – those, they are the truly prosperous* (7: 157).

5. It is clear that God's light is Islam, which removes "the veil of darkness" from the surface of the entire universe, a veil put there by other systems or false religions or philosophies; Islam illuminates minds, hearts, and the ways of humanity in all spheres of life and from birth to eternity.

6. For an explanation, see *sūrah* 9: 33, note 9.

7. The bargain and the glad tidings mentioned in the verses are stated in 9: 111 thus: *God has bought from the believers their selves and wealth because Paradise is for them. They fight in God's cause, and they kill or are killed. This is a promise with which God has bound Himself in the Torah and in the Gospel and in the Qur'ān. Who could be more faithful to his covenant than God? So (O believers) glad tidings to you because of the bargain you have made with Him! That indeed is the supreme triumph.*

SŪRAH 62

AL-JUMU'AH
(FRIDAY)

Madīnah Period

This sūrah of 11 verses takes its name from verse 9, in which the *Jumu'ah* Congregational Prayer is made obligatory. It was revealed in the early part of the Madinan period of the mission of God's Messenger. It orders the believers to hasten towards the remembrance of God when they are called on Friday (the day of *Jumu'ah*). It also mentions some fundamentals of the mission of God's Messenger, and criticizes the Jews who claimed that they alone were God's friends.

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful,
the All-Compassionate.

1. All that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth glorifies God, the Absolute Sovereign, the All-Holy and All-Pure, the All-Glorious with irresistible might, the All-Wise.

2. He it is Who has sent among the unlettered ones¹ a Messenger of their own, reciting to them His Revelations, and purifying them (of false beliefs and doctrines, and sins, and all kinds of uncleanness), and instructing them in the Book and the Wisdom, whereas before that they were indeed lost in obvious error.

3. And (with the same mission, He has sent him) to other peoples than them who have not yet joined them (in faith). He is the All-Glorious with irresistible might, the All-Wise.

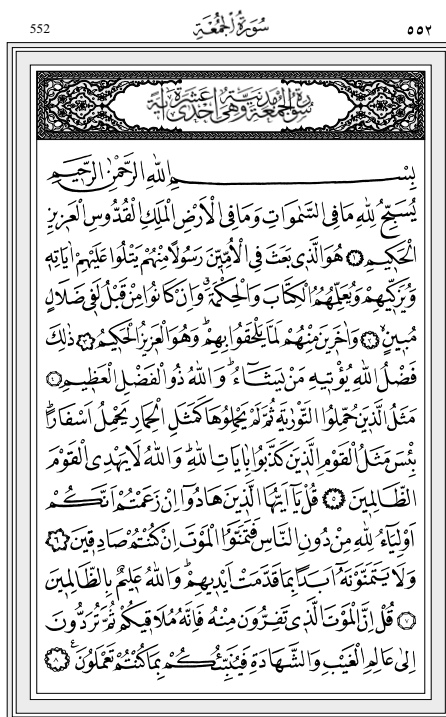
4. That is God's grace. He grants it to

whom He wills. Surely God is of tremendous grace.

5. The parable of those entrusted to carry the Torah, who subsequently do not carry it out in practice, is that of a donkey carrying a load of books (it transports what it does not understand). How evil is the example of those who (ignore what their Book teaches and) deny God's Revelations (sent down for them and containing news of the Last Messenger)! God does not guide the wrongdoing people.

6. Say: "O you who are Jews! If you claim that you are the favorites of God to the exclusion of all other people, then wish for death, if you are truthful (in your claim)."

7. But they will never wish for it because of what they have forwarded (to the Hereafter of sins and offenses) with their own



hands. God has full knowledge of the wrongdoers.

8. Say: "Death, from which you flee, will surely meet you in any case. Then you will be returned to the Knower of the Unseen

and the witnessed (all that lies beyond human sense-perception, and the sensed realm), and He will make you understand all that you were doing (and call you to account)."

1. The Jews are a people to whom the Divine Book (the Torah) was given. Most of them knew how to read and write during the Prophet's time. But as will be pointed out in verse 5 below, although they were instructed in the Torah, they acted as if they were unaware of the value of what they had been entrusted with, just as a donkey laden with books does

not understand the value of its load. On the other hand, the Arabs, who were unlettered in the sense that they had not been given the Book, or that most of them did not know how to read and write, greatly appreciated the Book sent to them through the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, and made it the guide for their lives.

9. O you who believe! When the call is made for the Prayer on Friday, then move promptly to the remembrance of God (by listening to the sermon and doing the Prayer), and leave off business (and whatever else you may be preoccupied with).² This is better for you, if you but knew.

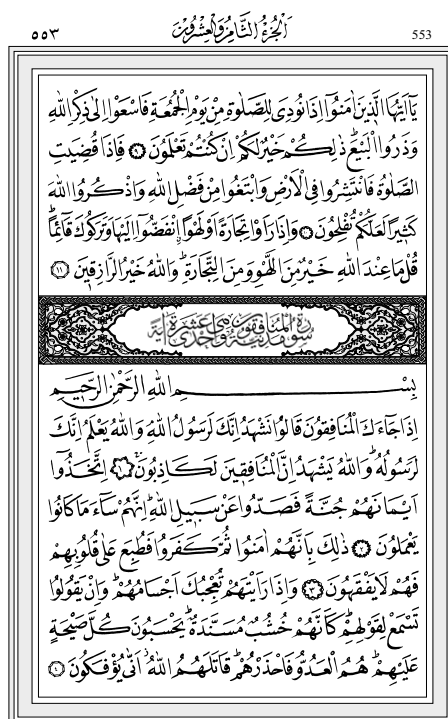
10. And when the Prayer is done, then disperse in the land and seek (your portion) of God's bounty, and mention God much (both by doing the Prayer and on other occasions), so that you may prosper (in both worlds).

11. Yet (it happened that) when they saw (an opportunity for) business or pastime, they broke away for it and left you standing (while preaching the sermon). Say: "What is with God is better (for you) than pastimes and business."³ God is the Best to be sought as provider with the ultimate rank of providing."

2. The Friday Congregational Prayer is obligatory and a major Islamic symbol. God's Messenger declared that God seals the heart of one who misses it three consecutive times without a valid excuse (Abū Dāwūd, "Ṣalāh," 215; at-Tirmidhī, "Ṣalāh," 359). There are also elements in the Friday Prayer that concern the Muslim community's political freedom and condition, and it cannot be offered alone.

This prayer is offered during the time of the Noon Prayer, and the normal Noon Prayer is not performed on Friday. Every free, adult, sane, and resident Muslim male who can attend must attend, unless he has a valid reason not to do so. It is not obligatory upon women, children, those with valid excuses (e.g., illness, lack of security, extreme cold), and travelers.

A sermon must be made before the Friday Prayer. (*The remembrance of God* in the verse includes both the sermon and the Prayer itself.)



The imām gives the sermon from a pulpit while standing. He begins by praising God and calling God's blessings and peace upon God's Messenger and his family. Next, he gives a sermon in which he exhorts Muslims to good deeds, discourages them from evil, advises them, and seeks to enlighten them mentally and spiritually and to guide them. He should not make the sermon too lengthy. After this part of the sermon, he sits for a short while and then, standing up, praises God, calls for God's blessings and peace upon God's Messenger and his family, and prays for all Muslims. The congregation must listen carefully and silently.

The Friday Prayer consists of two *rak'ahs*. It is a *sunnah* to offer four *rak'ahs* before it, just like the four *rak'ahs* offered before the Noon Prayer. After the Prayer, another (supererogatory) prayer of four *rak'ahs* is recommended.

Particularly the scholars of the Ḥanafī School of Law have had some doubts about the Friday Prayer's validity under certain (political) conditions of the Muslim community. In some parts of the world, Muslims are under the general control of non-Muslims (literally and explicitly, or by indirect means), and so do not have the absolute freedom to offer their Jumu'ah Congregational Prayer and/or give the sermon in the manner that would make the Prayer and sermon valid. Therefore, to be certain that the performance of the prescribed Noon Prayer has been carried out correctly, they have ruled that another Prayer of four *rak'ahs*, just like the prescribed Noon Prayer, along with the intention of offering a

later noon prayer, should be offered after the four-*rak'ah* supererogatory Prayer. They also advise following this with another supererogatory Prayer of two *rak'ahs* with the intention of offering the *sunnah* Prayer for that time.

3. This verse alludes to an event that took place during the time of the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings. There had been a famine in Madīnah when a long-expected caravan arrived from Syria. The Messenger was giving the *Jumu'ah* sermon, and on hearing the trumpet sound to proclaim the coming of the caravan, most of the congregation left the mosque. So the verse warns all Muslims to be attentive to the remembrance of God during the Prayer.



SŪRAH 63

AL-MUNĀFIQŪN (THE HYPOCRITES)

Madīnah Period

Revealed in Madīnah, most probably in the 6th year after the *Hijrah*, this *sūrah* has 11 verses, and it takes its name from the word *al-munāfiqūn* (hypocrites) in the first verse. It reveals the inner world of the hypocrites and their plots against Islam. It orders the believers not to cling to the passing delights of the world and to remain free of hypocrisy.

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful,
the All-Compassionate.

1. When the hypocrites come to you, they say: "We bear witness that you are indeed God's Messenger." God knows that you are indeed His Messenger, and God bears witness that the hypocrites are certainly lying (they do not believe in the truth of what they say).¹

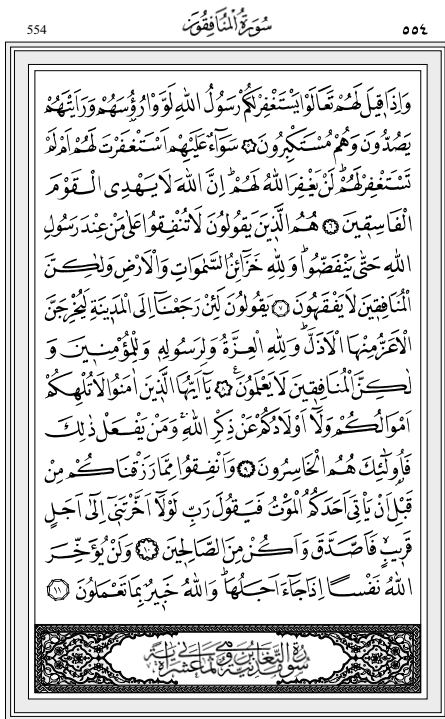
2. They make their oaths a shelter (to hide their inner unbelief and protect themselves in the Muslim community), and so divert themselves (and seek to bar others) from God's way. Evil indeed is what they habitually do.

3. That is because they declared faith but thereafter (inwardly) disbelieved, so a seal has been set on their hearts so that they do not grasp the truth (and cannot recover the ability to reach it).

4. When you see them, their outward form pleases you, and (their posture and speech are attractive and effective, so that) you give ear to their words when they speak. (In reality) they are like blocks of wood propped up and (draped over) in striped cloaks.² They think (being themselves treacherous) every shout (they hear) to be against them. They are the enemies themselves, so beware of them. May God destroy them (they are liable to destruction by God)! How they are turned away from the truth (and pursue evil purposes)!

1. The hypocrites who emphatically bore witness to the Messengership of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, in his presence, upon him be peace and blessings, were lying, saying what they did not believe in or what was contrary to their hearts. They did so in order to hide their hypocrisy and the unbelief in their hearts. One who declares something true to be true frequently, emphatically, and without any reason incurs doubt and should be doubted.

2. This description also implies the hypocrites' manner of sitting. Due to the inferiority complex that they had developed through constant hypocrisy, they sat reclining on cushions in a manner as if they were extremely important persons. The verse also draws attention to their manner of dressing, and hints at the secret organizations of hypocrisy. Hypocrisy is always the same, and hypocrites are of the same character in different ages.



5. When it is said to them, “Come, and let the Messenger of God ask forgiveness for you (from God),” they turn away their faces, and you see them drawing back in arrogance.³

6. It is alike for them whether you ask forgiveness for them or do not ask forgiveness for them: God will never forgive them (so that they might return to guidance and hope for happiness in both worlds). God surely does not guide transgressors (whose hearts are infected with irremediable hypocrisy).

7. It is they who say (to their comrades): “Do not spend on those (impoverished Muslims) who are with God’s Messenger, so that they may disperse (from around him).” But the treasures of the heavens and the earth belong to God (Who provides

for whom He wills as He wills, so the hypocrites have no power to withhold anything from those impoverished Muslims). But the hypocrites do not grasp this (being incapable of truth).

8. They say: “For certain, if we return to Madinah, those with more status and power will drive out from it the weaker and lowlier ones.” But all glory and might belong to God, and (by His leave) to His Messenger and the believers. But (being incapable of knowledge of the truth) the hypocrites do not know this.⁴

9. O you who believe! Let not your wealth nor your children (distract and) divert you from the remembrance of God. Those who do so, they are the losers.

10. And spend (in God’s cause and for the needy) out of whatever We provide for you before death comes to any of you and he says: “My Lord! If only You would grant me respite for a short while, so that I may give alms, and be one of the righteous!”

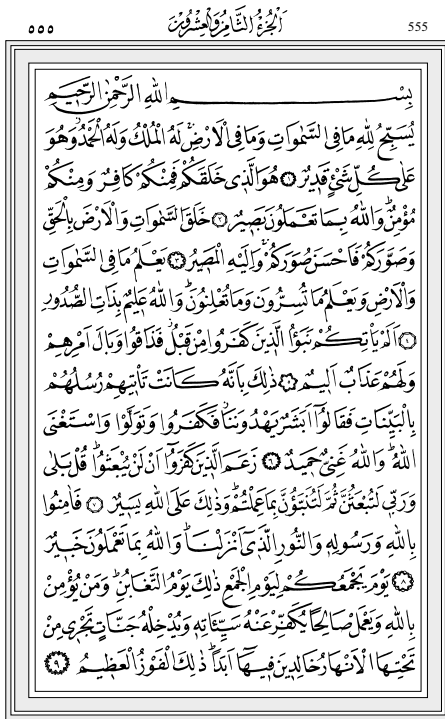
11. But never will God grant respite to a soul when its appointed term has come. God is fully aware of all that you do.

3. In fact, the hypocrites were expected to come to the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, to beg his pardon and ask for God's forgiveness because of their continuous scheming, and their plots that were revealed each time. Not only did they not do this, they even arrogantly refused the call to approach the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, so that he might pray to God for their forgiveness.

4. When God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, emigrated to Madīnah, the Arab peoples of al-Aws and al-Khazraj of Madīnah were preparing to crown 'Abdullāh ibn Ubayy ibn Salūl as their king. So Ibn Ubayy never forgave the Messenger and, though he accepted Islam outwardly, he was always a fierce enemy of the Prophet and Islam. He collaborated with the Makkan polytheists and Madīnan Jews, and tried to bring about dissension among the

Muslims. The events described in these verses happened during the return from the military expedition against the Banū Mustaliq in the 5th year of *Hijrah*. Availing himself of a quarrel that had broken out between two Muslims, one from Madīnah and the other from Makkah (an emigrant), when the army had halted half-way for a rest, he tried to instigate the *Anṣār* (Helpers) against the *Muhājirūn* (Emigrants). But the sagacity of the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, who ordered the army to march without halting until they reached Madīnah, was enough to extinguish the fire of dissension before it was kindled.

Verse 8 emphasizes that all glory and real power rest first with God, then with the Messenger, and then with the believers because of their faith in and submission to God. So the believers must always seek these with God and by being good, sincere Muslims.



SŪRAH 64

AT-TAGHĀBUN
(GAIN AND LOSS)

Madinah Period

This sūrah of 18 verses was revealed in Madinah. It takes its name from the phrase in verse 9, *yawm at-taghābun* (the day of loss for some and gain for some). The sūrah concentrates on faith in God and the Hereafter, doing one's duty to God in reverence for Him, on sincerity, contentment, and obedience to God, and on spending in His cause.

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful,
the All-Compassionate.

1. Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth glorifies God. To Him

belongs the sovereignty (absolute ownership and dominion of everything), and for Him are all praise and gratitude; and He has full power over everything.

2. He it is Who has created you, but among you are those who are unbelievers, and among you are those who are believers. God sees well all that you do.¹

3. He has created the heavens and the earth with truth (meaningfully, for a definite purpose, and on solid foundations of truth), and has formed you, and made your forms so well. And to Him is the homecoming.

4. He knows all that is in the heavens and on the earth, and knows all that you keep concealed, as well as all that you disclose. God has full knowledge of whatever lies hidden in the bosoms (of His creatures).

5. Have there not come to you the illustrative histories of those who disbelieved before, and therefore tasted the evil results of their deeds? And (in the Hereafter) there is for them a painful punishment.

6. This is because the Messengers (appointed for them) came to them consistently with manifest truths (and clear proofs of their being Messengers), but (consistently) they said, "Shall a mere mortal guide us?", and so they disbelieved and turned away (from the warning and hope offered to them). God was independent (of any need of them: it was they who needed to believe in and obey Him). God is All-Wealthy and Self-Sufficient (on Whom the whole creation is dependent), All-Praiseworthy.

7. Those who disbelieve claim that they will never be raised from the dead. Say: "Yes indeed, by my Lord, you will certainly be raised from the dead, then you will certainly be made to understand all that you did (in the world and called to account for it)." That is easy for God.

8. Believe, then, (O humankind) in God and His Messenger, and the Light (i.e. the Qur’ān) that We send down! God is fully aware of all that you do.

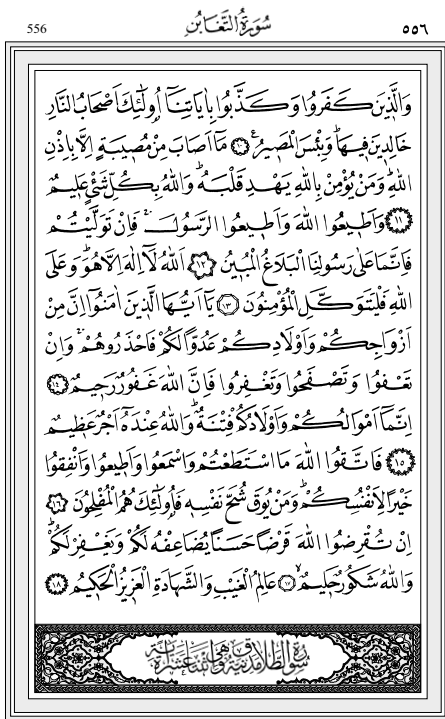
9. On the Day when He will assemble you all for the Day of Assembly – that will be the day of loss (for the unbelievers) and

gain (for the believers). Whoever believes in God and does good, righteous deeds, He will blot out from them their evil deeds (which they sometimes happen to commit), and admit them into Gardens through which rivers flow, therein to abide forever. That is the supreme triumph.

1. It is God Who creates everything and every event, including the actions of human beings. Whatever He creates is, in fact, beautiful in that it is His creation. His creation of humankind is also beautiful. He creates every human being with the capacity and ability to believe, but some humans misuse this capacity and ability, choosing instead to disbelieve. Since in this world people are generally judged outwardly according to their verbal profession and actions, some may be regarded and treated as believers although they are inwardly unbelievers. However, God sees fully whatever everybody does and knows them with their inner worlds, and therefore He will judge them as they really are. So the verse contains a warning for the hypocritical ones and calls everybody to sincerity in belief and action.

2. Everything in the world occurs according to certain laws God has established, and whatever a person meets as a consequence of whatever they do is also according to these laws. It is God Who has established and created both the causes and the effects. However, He is never dependent on these laws and, if He so wills, He

can create or bring about different things or nothing as a result of the same cause; or He can annul a law for whomever He wills. So, though things usually occur according to certain laws which God has established, and we should consider these laws in our lives, we should never hold back from praying to God because we think that these laws are absolute, or that whatever we do we cannot escape its consequences. Those who know that God has this power and believe in Him accordingly, or those who believe in God in the perception of how He acts, submit to Him wholly and find peace and rest in their hearts in this life. For the same meaning, see *sūrah 57: 22–23: No affliction occurs on the earth (such as droughts, famines, and earthquakes) or in your own persons (such as diseases, damages to your property, and the loss of loved ones), but it is recorded in a Book before We bring it into existence – doing so is surely easy for God – So that you may not grieve for what has escaped you, nor exult because of what God has granted you: God does not love anyone proud and boastful.* Also see notes 12 and 13 concerning these verses.



10. But as for those who disbelieve and deny Our Revelations, they will be the companions of the Fire, therein to abide: how evil a destination to arrive at!

11. No affliction befalls except by God's leave. Whoever believes in God (truly and sincerely), He guides his heart (to true knowledge of His eternal Will, and how He acts with regard to the life of His creatures, and so leads him to humble submission to Him, and to peace and serenity).² God has full knowledge of all things.

12. Obey God and obey the Messenger.³ If you turn away (from that command, know that) what rests with Our Messenger is only to convey the Message fully and clearly.

13. God, there is no deity but He: so in God let the believers put their trust.

14. O you who believe! Among your

spouses and children there may be enemies for you, so beware of them. Yet, if you pardon, forbear, and forgive (their faults towards you and in worldly matters), then (know that) God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.⁴

15. Your worldly possessions and your children are but a source of temptation and trial (for you); and God it is with Whom is a tremendous reward.

16. Keep, then, from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety as far as you can,⁵ and listen attentively and submit (to His commands), and obey Him, and spend (in His cause and for the needy) as it is to the betterment of your souls. Whoever is guarded against the avarice of his soul, those are they who are truly prosperous.⁶

17. If you lend God a goodly loan,⁷ He will increase it manifold to you and will forgive you. God is All-Responsive (to gratitude), All-Clement (forbearing before many of the faults of His servants).

18. (And He is) the Knower of the Unseen and the witnessed (all that lies beyond human sense-perception, and the sensed realm), the All-Glorious with irresistible might, the All-Wise.

3. The repetition of *obey* in the imperative mood for the Messenger indicates that he is also authorized to command or forbid, and that Muslims must do what he says.

Obedience to God means unconditional obedience to what has been revealed in the Qurʾān. Obedience to the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, means following his way of life (Sunnah) as closely as possible and obeying what has been enjoined and prohibited in the Qurʾān and by him. The Sunnah is a comprehensively detailed account of the life of God's Messenger, who said: "Take care! I have been given the Book and its like [i.e. my Sunnah] together with it" (Abū Dāwūd, "Sunnah," 5).

The Sunnah defines what is stated in general terms by referring to particular instances, and it defines the general principle underlying statements in the Qurʾān that are in themselves specific and particular. Also, the Sunnah (like the Qurʾān which it embodies) is also concerned with moral guidance, so the Sunnah provides inspiration and the horizons for moral and spiritual instruction in all spheres of life, as well as providing the inspiration and horizons (limits) within which Islamic legislation may be affected. Everything it teaches, every legal ruling, and every piece of moral instruction, which is derived from the Sunnah, remains within the framework, the spirit, the "color" and temperament, of the Qurʾān.

As stated in *sūrah* 8: 20 as well, Muslims must not turn away from the Messenger. Therefore, willful disobedience to the Sunnah, even belittling or criticizing it, is to approach heresy or apostasy.

4. Spouses are dutiful towards each other, and parents have intrinsic love for and duties towards their children. However, the love of spouses for each other and the love of parents for their children should be regulated according to the commandments of the Religion. Love of family may sometimes bar a person from his or her religious duties or cause him or her to indulge the family excessively or to work for the children and their future without considering the children's duties towards God and their afterlife, whereas true love necessitates that parents should first consider the

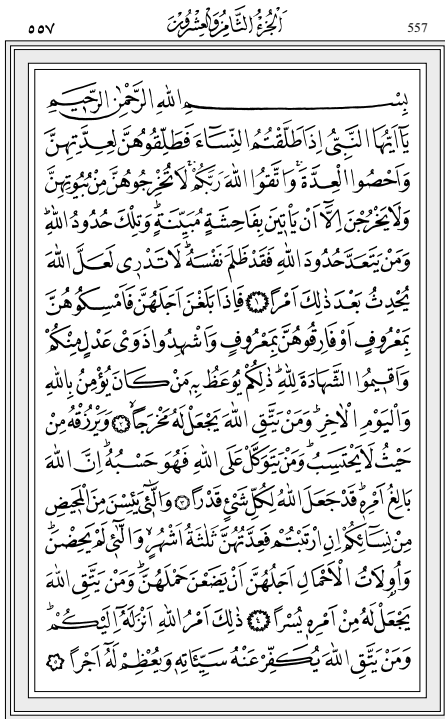
afterlife and the religious duties of their children. They should consider their worldly welfare within the framework of the Religion. Unfortunately, many spouses and parents neglect this cardinal principle and they misuse their love and compassion for each other and for their children. In addition to this, some spouses and children may put pressure upon each other and their parents to act without considering the religious commandments and cause each other or themselves to lose in the Hereafter. This is, in fact, enmity. So the Qurʾān draws the attention of spouses to this fact and warns them. However, despite such enmity, parents should be careful, patient, and tolerant in their mutual relations and in their approach to the conduct of their children. They can be forbearing and pardon their mutual faults towards each other and the faults of their children towards themselves. (This is what is expected from parents, but children must be extremely careful about observing the rights of their parents.) They should also overlook any faults concerning worldly matters and be able to act as educators concerning religious matters. They should always give precedence to religious matters over worldly ones.

The next verse concisely expresses this truth.

5. This statement is not contradictory with *Keep from disobedience to God in reverent piety with all the reverence that is due to Him (sūrah 3: 102)*, nor does the former abrogate the latter. God should be revered and obeyed as He should because His position as God requires this. In fact, every position requires respect and obedience to the extent of its greatness. However, each human being has a capacity for respect and obedience particular to him/herself; s/he cannot go beyond this. But as we cannot know the limits of our own capacity, we must try to revere and obey God as His being God requires us to do to the utmost of our capacity.

6. This verse explains how people can be saved from the enmity of their spouses or children and be successful in the trial of their worldly possessions and children.

7. See *sūrah* 57: 11, note 7.



SŪRAH 65

AT-TALĀQ (DIVORCE)

Madinah Period

This sūrah of 12 verses was revealed in Madinah. It takes its name from its subject matter as well as from the first verse, where the verb *TalLaQa* ("to divorce") occurs. It contains rules additional to those mentioned in *Sūrat al-Baqarah* concerning divorce, the waiting period, alimony, and habitation.

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful,
the All-Compassionate.

1. O (most illustrious) Prophet!¹ When you (Muslims) intend to divorce women, divorce them considering their waiting-period

(as appointed in Law), and reckon the period (with due care), keeping from disobedience to God, your Lord, in reverence for Him and piety. (While the divorce is taking effect, during their waiting-period) do not drive them out from their houses (where they have lived with their husbands), nor shall they themselves leave, except in case they have committed an open indecency.² These are the bounds set by God. Whoever exceeds the bounds set by God has surely wronged his own self. You do not know: it may be that afterward God will enable some new situation (to come about between the concerned parties).³

2. Then, when they reach the end of their waiting-term, either retain them in a fair manner and in observance of their rights, or (the waiting-period having ended) part with them in a fair manner and in observance of their rights. And (as the commanded way, in either case) call upon two (Muslim) men of probity from among you as witnesses, and establish the testimony for God (with due consciousness of your responsibility to Him). Anyone who believes in God and the Last Day is exhorted to act so. Whoever keeps from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety, He enables a way out for him (of every difficulty),

3. And provides for him from where he does not reckon. Whoever puts his trust in God, He is sufficient for him (for all his needs). God surely executes what He decrees; assuredly God has appointed a measure for everything.⁴

4. Those of your women who have passed the age of monthly courses (or those who for some reason do not have monthly periods) – if you are in uncertainty about it – their waiting-period is three (lunar) months. As for the women who are pregnant (whether divorced or widows), their

waiting-period is until they deliver their burden. Whoever keeps from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety, He makes his affair easy for him.

5. All that (which has been said) is God's

commandment which He has sent down to you. Whoever keeps from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety, He blots out from him his evil deeds, and vastly enlarges reward for him.⁵

1. While all the other Prophets are mentioned in the Qur'ān with their names, the Qur'ān usually addresses God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, by his mission. This is done in order to refer to the fact that his mission has the greatest importance and that his position is unequaled among the Prophets. According to a rule of Arabic grammar, mentioning something (a position, reputation, or an attribute) without specifying to whom it belongs, means that he who possesses this possesses it in the greatest degree. Therefore, this implies that God's Messenger (the Prophet Muḥammad), upon him be peace and blessings, is the greatest representative of the office of Prophethood.

2. Islam orders that if a man wishes to divorce his wife he should do so during the time when she is not in the course of a monthly period and he has had no intercourse with her. The wife is then to wait for three monthly courses, during which the husband is obliged to provide for her and cannot force her to leave the home. They can turn to each other during this period. If they do so, they do not have to renew the marriage contract. If they turn to each other after the end of this period, they have to renew it. This divorce can also occur for a second time; but if it is repeated for a third time, they can no longer turn to each other, unless the woman first marries another man and divorces him or is divorced by him. For other ordinances

concerning divorce, see *sūrah* 2: 228–232, 234, notes 152–154; *sūrah* 33: 49, note 23.

3. That is, there may be reconciliation between the divorced spouses and they may reassume their marital relations before the final divorce occurs. This statement is a warning to observe the bounds set by God. If we observe them strictly, God may bring about a new thing that will please us. So we must submit to God and carry out His orders without transgressing the limits set by Him.

4. That is, God has established certain causes, conditions, and limits, and a certain frame and, therefore, a certain result for everything. Nothing occurs beyond the limits which He has established.

5. Blotting out evil deeds means forgiving the minor sins that may have been committed in obeying God's commandments. It is as stated in: *If you avoid the major sins which you have been forbidden, We will blot out from you your minor evil deeds and make you enter by a noble entrance (to an abode of glory)* (4: 31). So it may be inferred that disobedience to the orders and prohibitions of the Qur'ān concerning divorce and the waiting-period in these verses, within the framework of *taqwā* (piety and reverence for God), is a major sin. It may also be inferred that a believer should be careful concerning all of God's commandments (orders and prohibitions).

12. God is He Who has created seven heavens and of the earth the like of them; His commands (concerning the creation and its operation, and the life of the inhabitants of the heavens and earth)

descend through them,⁷ so that you may know for certain that surely God has full power over everything, and that God indeed encompasses all things in (His) Knowledge.

6. This, as well as the following verse, is, in one respect, the summation of what befell the Jews, Christians, and Muslims when they broke with God's commandments in their daily lives.

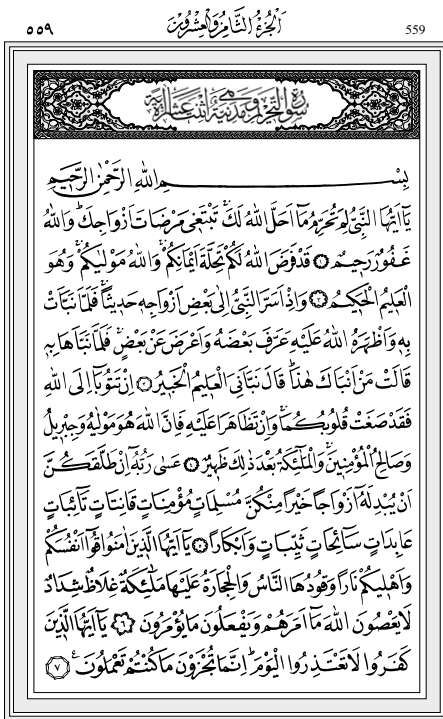
7. The earth and the heavens are like two countries under one government that conduct important relations and transactions. For example, *He directs the affair from heaven to the earth; then the affair ascends to Him in a day the measure of which is a thousand years of what you reckon* (sūrah 32: 5; and see note 4). Moreover, the earth needs the light, heat, blessings, and forms of mercy (like rain) sent from the heavens. Also, as all Revealed religions confirm, angels and spirit beings descend to the earth for certain purposes. Thus, we may deduce that the inhabitants of the earth can ascend to the heavens.

People can travel to the heavens via their minds, visions, and imaginations. Freed from or purified of their carnal and material being's gross heaviness, the spirits of Prophets and saints travel in such realms; our Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, traveled through all the realms of the heavens with his spirit and body, which gained the refinement of spirit; this is what we call the Ascension (*Mi'raj*); and God lifted up the Prophet Jesus, upon him be peace, with both his spirit and body to the heavens. The spirits of ordinary people do so after death, and then are returned to the intermediate realm (between this world and the next). Since those who are "lightened" and have acquired "subtlety" and spiritual refinement travel there,

certain inhabitants of the earth may go to the heavens if they are clothed in an "ideal" body, energetic envelope, or immaterial body or form, and are light and subtle like spirits. And also, humankind can physically travel to the heaven.

The earth, as Said Nursi describes it (*The Words*, "The 15th Word," 195), despite its small size and insignificance when compared with the heavens, is the heart and center of the universe with respect to its meaning and art, for it is our cradle and dwelling place. Moreover, it exhibits all the miracles of the Divine Names and concentrates and reflects God's infinite activity as the Master, Sustainer, Trainer, and Ruler of all beings. It is also the center and pivot of the endless Divine creativity displayed in infinite liberality, particularly in the numerous small plant and animal species, as well as in the microcosm of samples of all that is found in the Hereafter's truly vast worlds: the speedily operating workshop for eternal textiles, the fast-changing place of copies of eternal scenes, and the narrow, temporary field and tillage that rapidly produces seeds for the permanent Gardens (in the Hereafter).

Due to this immaterial greatness and importance with respect to art, the wise Qur'an puts the earth on a par with the heavens, although it is like the tiny fruit of a huge tree when compared with the heavens. It places the earth on one side of the scales and the heavens on the other, and repeatedly says, the "Lord of the heavens and the earth" (mentioning both together).



SŪRAH 66

AT-TAḤRĪM (PROHIBITION)

Madīnah period

Revealed in Madīnah seven or eight years after the *Hijrah*, this *sūrah* of 12 verses takes its name from the infinitive form of the verb *ḤarRaMa* (forbid, make something unlawful) that occurs in the first verse. It warns against any disrespect towards God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, and that righteousness lies not in belonging to a certain family but in one's faith and good deeds. It also calls believers to repentance for their misdeeds.

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful,
the All-Compassionate.

1. O (most illustrious) Prophet! Why do you forbid (yourself) what God has made lawful

to you, seeking to please your wives?¹ And God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.

2. God has already decreed for you (O believers) on the breaking of your oaths (of not fulfilling what is not just and right, and the expiation thereof).² God is your Guardian, and He is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

3. (It so happened that) the Prophet confided something to one of his wives, and when she divulged it (to another), and God acquainted him of it, he made known part of it, and missed out part. And when he informed her of it, she asked: "Who has told you this?" He said: "He informed me Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Aware."³

4. If you two (wives of the Prophet) turn to God in repentance (then that is indeed what you should do); for the hearts of both of you swerved (from what is right). But if you back each other up against him, (be mindful that) God Himself is His Guardian, and that Gabriel, and the righteous ones among the believers, and all the angels besides, are his helpers.⁴

5. It may happen that his Lord, if he should divorce you (O wives of the Prophet), will give him in your place wives better than you – submissive to God (*muslimah*), true in faith (*mu'minah*), devout in obedience to God, penitent, dedicated to worship and fasting – widows or virgins.⁵

6. O you who believe! Guard yourselves and your families (through the enabling discipline of the Islamic faith and worship) against a Fire whose fuel is human beings and stones. Over it are angels stern and strict (in executing the command to punish), who do not disobey God in whatever He commands them, and carry out what they are commanded (to carry out).

7. "O you who disbelieve! Do not offer excuses for yourselves this Day! You are only being recompensed for what you used to do (in the world)."⁶

1. Although there are some reports about what the Messenger had forbidden himself, that God had made lawful to him, the gist is as follows:

The Messenger was extremely kind. He was particularly kind towards his wives. In order not to cause any trouble for anybody, he had to bear many hardships. God established exceptional rules for him, particularly in relation to his family life, so that there would not be any undue problems for him (in fulfilling his mission) (33: 50). Therefore, the statement, “*Why do you forbid (yourself) what God has made lawful to you?*” expresses a consolatory warning. It is interesting that both this verse and verse 33: 50, which contains exceptional rules for the Messenger, end with the phrase, *God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate*. This means that God had willed ease for him and was particularly compassionate towards him.

2. See *sūrah* 2: 224–225; *sūrah* 5: 89.

3. This explicitly shows that the Revelations that the Messenger received did not consist only of what is in the Qur’ān. In addition to the Qur’ān, he received many other Revelations, and declared: “Take care! I have been given the Book and its like together with it” (Abū Dāwūd, “Sunnah,” 5).

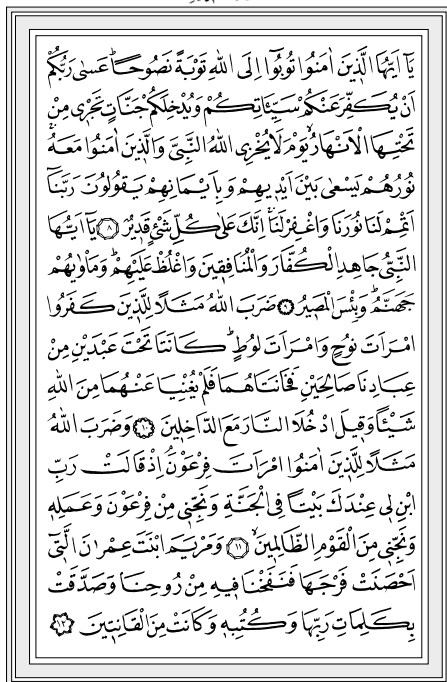
4. This verse teaches us four important things:

- Doing something which will affront the Messenger causes one’s heart to swerve, as declared in 61: 5: *And (remember) when Moses said to his people: ‘O my people! Why do you affront me while you know indeed that I am the Messenger of God sent to you?’ And so, when they swerved from the right way, God made their hearts swerve from the truth. God does not guide the transgressing people.*

- Any disloyalty from inside a home or country is usually more dangerous than that from outside.
- Whatever scheme is made against God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, God will absolutely protect him. In addition, Gabriel, who brings him God’s Revelation, those who are advanced in righteousness among the believers, and all other angels are also his helpers. So no one can cause any harm to him or his mission.
- Even being a wife of a Prophet is not enough to save one unless one believes and does good deeds. Rather, according to the rule, responsibility is proportionate to authority or blessing; the greater the favor God blesses one with, the greater the responsibility. (Also see *sūrah* 33: 29–32.)

5. This is the second warning in the Qur’ān to the wives of God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, (for the first one, see *sūrah* 33: 29–33, and for the Messenger’s relationship with his wives, see *sūrah* 33, note 16). This verse does not mean that his wives did not have the praiseworthy qualities mentioned. Rather, it reminds them that both as Muslim women and, especially, as the wives of the Messenger, they should set an example for all other believing women; thus, they should have these qualities in the highest degree and retain them.

6. This verse, which addresses the unbelievers, contains a severe warning for the Muslims also. It warns that any disobedience to God and His Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, and doing things that will affront either of them may drive them to unbelief and therefore to the Fire in the Hereafter. So, they must also be on the alert against sins.



8. O you who believe! Turn to God in sincere and reforming repentance.⁷ It is hoped⁸ that your Lord will blot your evil deeds from you and admit you into Gardens through which rivers flow, on a Day when God will not disgrace nor disappoint the Prophet and those who believe in his company. Their (the believers') light will shine and spread before them, and on their right hands, as they say: "Our Lord! Perfect our light (by Your grace so that we may reach Paradise), and forgive us."⁹ Surely You have full power over everything!"

9. O Prophet! Strive hard against the unbelievers and the hypocrites (as occasion and conditions require), and be stern against them.¹⁰ Their final refuge is Hell: how evil a destination to arrive at!

10. God presents the wife of Noah and the wife of Lot as an example for those who disbelieve. They were married to two of Our righteous servants yet betrayed them (by rejecting the Messages they brought from God and collaborating with the unbelievers). But they (their husbands) availed them nothing against God, and it was said to them: "Enter the Fire with all those who enter it!"¹¹

11. And God presents the wife of the Pharaoh as an example for those who believe. She prayed: "My Lord! Build for me a home in Paradise in nearness to You, and keep and save me from the Pharaoh and his conduct, and save me from the wrongdoing people."¹²

12. And also Mary, the daughter of 'Imrān,¹³ who kept herself chaste (body and soul), so We breathed into it out of Our Spirit,¹⁴ and who affirmed the truth of the words of her Lord (His Revelations – commandments, promises and warnings – to His Messengers), and His Books; and she was of those devoutly obedient to God.

7. ‘Ali, the Prophet’s cousin and son-in-law and the fourth Caliph, may God be pleased with him, describes a sincere, reforming repentance as follows:

In order that your repentance can be a sincere, reforming, and valid one, you should (1) sincerely feel remorse for the sin you have committed; (2) fulfill all the obligatory religious duties and make up the missed ones; (3) return any right you have usurped to its owner; (4) beg the pardon of those you have offended; (5) resolve not to commit again the sin you have committed; and (6) make your carnal soul taste the difficulty of obedience to God as you have caused it to taste the pleasure of sinning (Yazır, Zamakhsharī).

8. God is never obliged to accept repentance, but a repentant one should sincerely hope that He will accept it and forgive them.

9. This means that human beings are fallible, and except for the Prophets, almost everyone goes to the other world with some sins. In addition, the good deeds of human beings will not be enough for them to provide the light that they will need in order to reach Paradise from the very moment they will be resurrected. So they will pray to God to complete their light purely out of His grace (also see *sūrah* 57: 12, 19). They will also need forgiveness in order to be saved from the darkness of their sins. On the other hand, the hypocrites will not be able to advance towards Paradise and will be enveloped by the darkness of their hypocrisy (*sūrah* 57: 13).

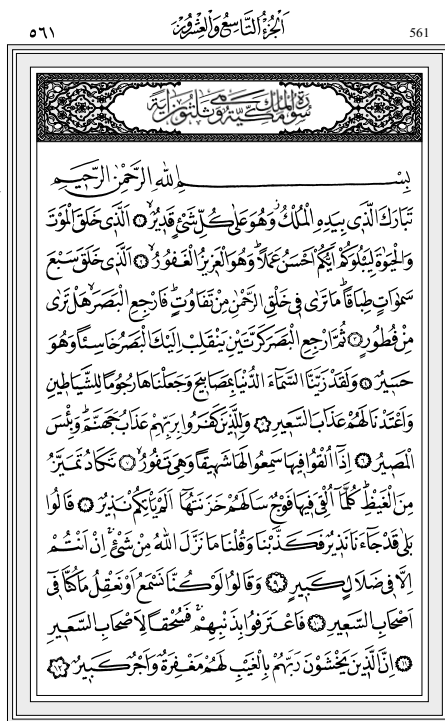
10. For an explanation, see *sūrah* 9: 73, note 15; verse 123, note 28.

11. This is the final judgment against them, and also a reference to their condition in the grave.

12. Some reports say that the name of the Pharaoh’s wife was Āsyā. The prayer the Qur’ān quotes from her explains her sincere and deeply established faith in and devotion to God, and her keeping away from the wrongdoings of the Pharaoh and the rebellion of his people against God. Some interpreters infer from “his deeds” that God also saved her from intercourse with the Pharaoh. The Pharaoh may have been (sexually) impotent and had no offspring, as many Pharaoh-like tyrants have been throughout history. This carries the implication that their tyrannical rule will not last long.

13. See *sūrah* 3: 33–34, note 7.

14. God not only breathed into Mary to conceive of Jesus, upon him be peace, a “spirit” from Him, but also breathed it into the “body” He fashioned out of clay so that Adam, upon him be peace, might come to the world. For the meaning of God’s breathing out of His Spirit, see *sūrah* 4: 171, note 34; *sūrah* 15: 29, note 8. Even though the verse attributes the breathing into Mary to God, this is because it is God Who creates every act of every being. In fact, it was the Archangel Gabriel or another, angel-like Spirit (see *sūrah* 19: 17, note 3).



SŪRAH 67

AL-MULK

(THE SOVEREIGNTY)

Makkah Period

This sūrah of 30 verses was revealed in Makkah. It derives its name from the first verse where the word *al-mulk* (sovereignty) occurs. The basic points the sūrah deals with are the testimony of the universe to God's Oneness, the end of the unbelievers who pay no heed to God's Messages, God's favors to humankind, and human dependence on God in both worlds.

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful,
the All-Compassionate.

1. Blessed and Supreme is He in Whose Hand is the Sovereignty; and He has full power over everything.

2. He Who has created death and life,¹ so

that He may try you (and demonstrate to yourselves) which of you is better in deeds; and He is the All-Glorious with irresistible might (Whose will none can frustrate), the All-Forgiving (Who forgives many of His servants' sins so that they learn from being tested);

3. He Who has created seven heavens² in harmony. You do not see any fault or incongruity in the creation of the All-Merciful. Look yet again: can you see any rifts?

4. Then look again and yet again (and however often you do so, with whatever instruments to aid your looking), your sight will fall back to you dazzled (by the splendor of God's creation), and awed and weakened (being unable to discern any flaw to support any excuse for claiming that there could be any sharing in the dominion of the universe).³

5. And, indeed, We have adorned the lowest heaven (the heaven of the world) with lamps (stars), and made (out of) them missiles to drive away devils; and for them We have prepared (in the Hereafter) the punishment of the Blaze.⁴

6. And also for those who disbelieve in their Lord is the punishment of Hell. How evil a destination to arrive at!

7. When they are cast into it, they will hear its raucous breath (by which they are sucked in) as it boils up,

8. Almost bursting with fury. Every time a group is cast into it,⁵ its keepers will ask them: "Did no warner ever come to you?"

9. They will say: "Yes, indeed, a warner came to us but we denied (him) and said (to him): "God has never sent down anything; you are only in a great error."

10. They will say: "If only we had listened (to him) or reasoned (and distinguished what was to our benefit from what was to our harm, and acted accordingly), we would not (now) be among the companions of the Blaze."

11. Thus will they acknowledge their sins, but God's mercy will (then) be far from the companions of the Blaze!

12. As for those who stand in awe of their

Lord though unseen (beyond their perception), for them there is forgiveness (to bring unforeseen blessings), and a great reward.

1. Death is not the end of a life or the removal of life from living things or beings. Rather, it is something that is created, like life. God creates death in a living thing or being and so that thing or being dies. Since God's creation is at all times beautiful, death is also beautiful. This is because all human beings have an intrinsic feeling of eternity, and so feel imprisoned in the narrow confines of the material world as they yearn for eternity. Whoever is aware of their conscious nature will hear it pronouncing eternity, over and over again. If we were given the whole universe, we would still hunger for the eternal life for which we have been created. This natural inclination towards eternal happiness comes from an objective reality: the existence of eternal life and our desire for it. Death is the door that opens onto eternity.

Those who believe and live righteous lives are greeted with opened windows from the places reserved for them in Paradise. The Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, stated that the souls of the righteous are drawn out as gently as flowing water from a pitcher. Even better than that, martyrs do not feel the agony of death and do not even know that they are dead. Instead, they consider themselves as being transferred to a better world and enjoy perfect happiness.

Although death seems to bring decomposition, extinguish life, and destroy pleasure, in fact, it represents a Divine discharge from the heavy duties of worldly life. It is no more than a change of residence, a transference of the body, and an invitation to and the beginning of everlasting life. It releases us from the hardships of this worldly life, which is a turbulent, suffocating, narrow dungeon that gradually becomes harder with old age and illness, and admits us to the infinitely wide circle of the mercy of Eternal, Beloved One. There we may enjoy the everlasting company of our beloved ones and the consolation of a happy, eternal life.

The world is continually enlivened through acts of creation and death. Death leads to a more

perfect life. The dying of plants, the simplest level of life, proves itself a work of Divine artistry, like their lives, but one that is more perfect and better designed. When the seed of a fruit dies in the soil, it seems to decompose and rot away. But in reality, it undergoes a perfect chemical process, passing through predetermined stages of re-formation, and ultimately grows again into an elaborate, new tree. So a seed's death is really the beginning of a new tree, a new, more perfect and elaborate life. Since the death of fruit, vegetables, and meat in our stomachs causes them to rise to the degree of human life, in this sense their death can be regarded as more perfect than their lives. Since the dying of plants is so perfect and serves so great a purpose, our deaths, given that we are the highest form of life, must be much more perfect and serve a still greater purpose. Once we have gone underground, we certainly will be brought into eternal life.

2. See *sūrah* 2: 29, note 28.

3. Said Nursi describes the splendor of the universe in his inimitable style as follows:

The universe is like a magnificent palace, a well-ordered factory, a well-planned city, all of whose elements or parts are interrelated with one another and with the whole of it, all at the same time, and which work together for great purposes. Even over long distances, elements hasten to help each other when needed and do not get lost. For example, the sun and the moon, day and night, and summer and winter work with plants to help animals and to help convey their food to them, which they take from the treasury of Mercy. Animals hasten to help human beings. For example, honeybees and silkworms take honey and silk from the treasury of the All-Merciful and prepare them for the use of humankind. Particles of soil, air, and water help fruit and vegetation, each of which has a different taste and quality of nourishment. In turn, they help the body's cells in perfect orderliness and for great purposes.

This perfect, purposeful, and well-arranged mutual helping is manifested by all of those things, especially inanimate objects. It is also an evident proof and clear argument that they are servants of an All-Wise Sustainer, workers controlled by a Munificent Manager, who all work by His command and leave, and by His Power and Wisdom.

On the surface of this planet, we observe acts of ever-original and purposeful creation. These occur in infinite abundance together with beautiful and perfect artistry; with absolute ease and in perfect order and arrangement; at incredible speed with no loss of proportion, firmness, or substantiality; and in an infinite distribution of species together with each individual's infinite beauty. These acts occur with the greatest economy or lowest cost imaginable, yet every individual is priceless, distinguished perfectly from everything else while having the highest correspondence and similarity between and among species, despite the vast distances of time and space. They are in balance with an absolute variety, a perfect individualization of characters and features, though generated from similar or even the same materials, structural principles, and organization. Each thing is enough to manifest the stamp of the One and Single Creator and Lord. Perfect artistry despite abundance, perfect order despite absolute ease, perfect measure, proportion, and firmness despite incredible speed, perfect individualization despite world-wide distribution, the highest price and value despite the greatest economy, perfect distinction despite absolute integration and similarity – all point to the One, Single Creator and Lord, Who has absolute Will, Power, and Knowledge (*Mathnawī an-Nūriyah*, 51–52).

4. Concerning these “missiles” thrown to drive away devils, Said Nursi writes:

The earth and the heavens are interconnected like two countries under one government, and there are journeys between them (See also *sūrah* 65, note 7). Important necessities for the earth are sent from the heavens, pure spirits travel to the heavens, and evil spirits, in imitation of pure ones, attempt to travel to the heavenly abode. Physically, these are subtle beings made of smokeless fire. However, they will certainly

be repulsed and repelled, for by nature they are evil and unclean. As the silence and tranquility, the order and serene regularity of the heavens, and their vastness and radiance show, their inhabitants are not like those of the earth; they are all obedient to God and do whatever He commands them. There is nothing to cause quarrels or disputes among them because they are innocent, their realm is vast, their nature is pure, and their stations are fixed. So when devils or evil spiritual beings attempt to ascend to the heavens, the pure inhabitants there are mobilized to repel them.

Without a doubt, there must be a sign or reflection in the visible, material world of this important interaction and contest. For the wisdom of the sovereignty of Divine Lordship requires that the Lord should put a sign, an indication, for conscious beings, particularly for humankind, whose most important duty is observing, witnessing, supervising, and acting as a herald to His significant disposals in the realm of the Unseen. This is just as He has made the rain and the sun's heat a sign for them to explain, in physical terms, His countless miracles in spring, and has also made apparent (natural) causes as the indications of the wonders of His art, so that He may call the inhabitants of the visible, material world to witness them, indeed to attract the attentive gaze of all the inhabitants of the vast heavens and the earth to that amazing exhibition. That is, He displays the vast heavens as a castle or a city arrayed with towers on which sentries are posted, so that those inhabitants of the heavens and earth may reflect on the majesty of His Lordship.

Since wisdom requires the announcement of this elevated contest, there will surely be a sign for it. However, other than the fact that some stars are being used as “missiles” against the devils, no event among those of the atmosphere and heavens seems to be appropriate to this announcement. For it is evident how suitable these stellar events are for the repulsion of the devils, events that resemble missiles and rockets fired from the formidable bastions of high castles. Furthermore, unlike other events that take place in the heavens, no other function is known for such stellar

events. In addition, this function has been widely recognized since the time of Adam, and witnessed by those who know the reality of things and events.

Like angels and other creatures, there are also many different varieties of stars. Some are extremely small, and some are extremely large. Everything that shines in the sky can be called a star. One sort of star is that which the Majestic Creator, the Gracious Maker, has created as a sort of jewel on the face of the sky or like the shining fruit of a vast tree. He has also made them places of excursion or mounts or dwelling-places for His angels. He has made one sort of small star a missile to drive off devils and kill them. Thus, firing these shooting stars to repulse devils may have three meanings:

The first: It is a sign that there is a contest (among conscious beings) in the vastest sphere of existence.

The second: It indicates that in the heavens there are watchful guards and obedient inhabitants, i.e., Divine forces, who do not like the earthly evil-doers to mix with and eavesdrop on them.

The third: The spying devils, who are representatives of the foulness and wickedness of the earth, attempt to soil the clean and pure realm of the heavens inhabited by pure beings, and spy on the conversations of their inhabitants in the name of evil spirits (disbelieving jinn and their human companions who try to mislead people, particularly through sorcery, mediumship, and soothsaying). Shooting stars are fired to prevent these and to repulse them from the doors of the heavens. (See *The Words*, "The 15th Word," 192-199.)

At this point, it will be useful to write about meteor showers. The Perseid meteor shower, for example, which is observed almost every year suggests that such meteors are shot for certain, yet unknown, important purposes. The observations made in 1993, for example, demonstrate the fact that the structure of the shower is yet little understood.

According to information given by the International Meteor Organization about the events of the 1993 shower (*Astronomy*, October 1993), the first results posted for the night of

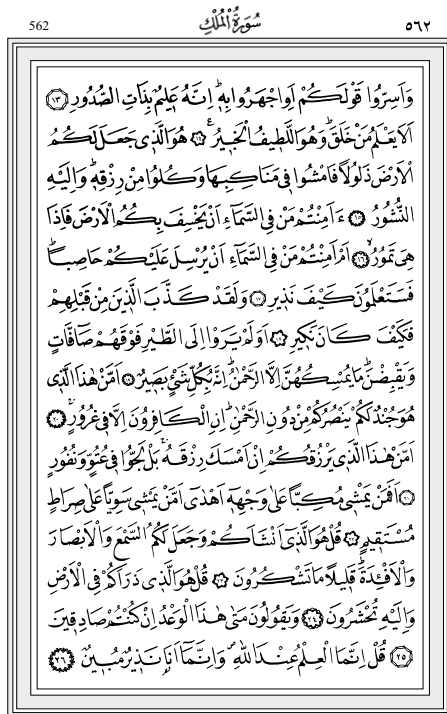
August 11th-12th of that year came from Japan. Up to 20:30 UT, 11 on August 11th, the meteor rates were found to be normal. A zenithal hourly rate (ZHR) of 40 meteors per hour (m/h) was tentatively assigned to the shower at that time.

However, preliminary data from European observers indicated that the rates gradually increased to a ZHR of order 100 m/h between 20:00 on August 11th and 01:00 on August 12th. Observers in France also reported a noticeable increase in rates after 00:30, on August 12th, with the rate being about twice the 'normal' rate. The rates continued to climb between 01:00 and 03:00, and a preliminary ZHR of 200-250 m/h was ascribed to this period. The rates appeared to reach a maximum between 03:00 and 03:30. The ZHR at its maximum was estimated to be of the order of 500 m/h. Later observations from the Canary Islands indicated that the rates began to decline after 04:00.

Higher than normal rates were also reported by many observers in the United States and Japan. As observed by Martin Beech in *Astronomy*, 1993 (p. 11), the results clearly indicated that the shower did not behave as predicted. Speculation about a possible meteor storm proved incorrect. Another unexpected feature in 1993 was the high number of bright fireballs observed. Observers reported something like five times the normal level of Perseid fireballs on the night of August 11th-12th. The Perseid shower once again demonstrated how difficult it is to predict meteor shower activity.

A. Cressy Morrison (p. 100) mentions, as a typical human characteristic, the reluctance to give up fixed ideas and the stubborn resistance to accepting unfamiliar truths. The early Greeks knew that the earth was spherical, but it took two thousand years to convince (Western) men that this fact was true. New ideas encounter opposition, ridicule and abuse, but truth survives and is verified. Neither scientific studies nor developments in science can offer any excuse not to accept God. What we observe in nature, and what we obtain from it, must encourage us to know Him more closely and to see the strong bridge between science and religion, the world and the Hereafter, and between reason and spirit.

5. See *sūrah* 8: 37; *sūrah* 39: 71.



13. Whether you keep concealed what you intend to say or speak it out loud, He surely has full knowledge of all that lies in the bosoms.

14. Is it conceivable that One Who creates should not know?⁶ He is the All-Subtle (penetrating to the most minute dimensions of all things), the All-Aware.

15. He it is Who has made the earth subservient to you (as if a docile animal), so go about through its shoulders (uplands) and eat of His provision;⁷ but (be ever mindful that) to Him will be the Resurrection.

16. And yet, are you secure that He Who is above everything will not cause the earth to swallow you up then, when it is in a state of commotion?

17. Or are you secure that He Who is above everything will not send against you a dead-

ly sand-storm? Then you will know how
My warning is.

18. Indeed, those before them denied (the truth and were destroyed). So (reflect on) how awesome was My disowning them!

19. Have they never considered the birds above them, flying in lines with wings they spread out and fold in? Nothing holds them up except the All-Merciful. He indeed sees everything very well.

20. Who is there that will be an “army” for you, (a means of strength and support) to help you (to survive or succeed), apart from the All-Merciful? The unbelievers are surely in nothing but delusion.

21. Who is there that can provide for you if He should withhold His provision? No, but they persist in disdain and aversion (in obstinate flight from truth and reality).

22. (Now consider:) Is one who goes prone upon his face (with no breadth or depth to his line of sight, barely seeing what is touching his face) better guided, or one who goes upright (with a clear line of sight to what is ahead of him) on a straight path?

23. Say: “He it is Who has brought you into being and endowed you with hearing, and eyes, and hearts. How little you give thanks!

24. Say: “He it is Who has multiplied you on the earth, and (it is) to Him you will be gathered (to give account of your life on that earth).”

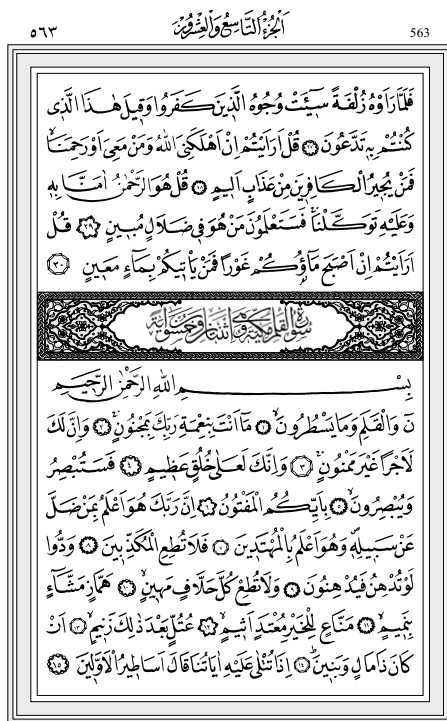
25. They say (questioning with derision): “When is this promise (of gathering) to be fulfilled, if you are truthful (in your claim)?”

26. Say: “The knowledge (of that, and true and full knowledge of all things) is with God. And I am but a plain warner.”

6. This is of high significance. Humans who manufacture something prepare a manual to describe how it must be used and we use it according to that guide. This means that one who manufactures it knows it best, and that only one who truly knows can manufacture it. So God, being the All-Knowing, creates; and being the Creator, He knows all that He creates. Thus, we must conclude that One Who knows and creates is entitled to and should control and govern it, because only the One Who creates and knows can govern what He creates in the best way. However, it shows the injustice and ignorance of humankind that while they

claim authority over what they make or manufacture, they deny God's authority over what He creates.

7. The phrase, *going about through the shoulders of the earth* means that although it is impossibly difficult to travel on the shoulders of a horse or camel, the earth is more compliant to humankind than a trained camel or horse. In addition, the verse implies that God's provision exists more on the shoulders of the earth (the mountains and uplands) and the plains among them. So the verse calls humanity to explore the mountains for the provision God has created in them.



27. But then, when they see it close at hand, the faces of those who disbelieve turn black with grief, and it will be said to them (who had been so mocking): "This is what you were calling for (derisively)."

28. Say: "Have you ever considered (this): whether God destroys me and those in my company or He has mercy on us (and enables us to triumph), then who is there that can protect the unbelievers from a painful punishment?"

29. Say: "He is the All-Merciful. In Him We believe, and in Him we put our trust, so you will soon come to know who it is that is lost in obvious error."⁸

30. Say: "Have you ever considered (this): If your water should vanish underground (leaving you with no source of water), who

is there that can bring to you (a source to replace it of) gushing water?"

8. The last verses contain a strong argument for God's Existence and Oneness, silencing the opponents. "We have believed in God and do rely on Him. If, supposing the inconceivable, we were mistaken, what harm would we suffer? But if we are true and you deny a truth, which is the greatest and most important truth of life and being, then who will be able to save you from the consequence of your denial, which is eternal punishment?"

SŪRAH 68

AL-QALAM (THE PEN)

Makkah Period

This sūrah of 52 verses is one of the earliest Revelations in Makkah. It takes its name from the word *al-qalam* (the Pen) in the opening verse. It categorically refutes some allegations of the polytheists against God's Messenger and proves the office of Prophethood. It cites the perfect character of the Messenger as the most visible and undeniable proof of his Prophethood. It warns against the evil consequences of ingratitude and unbelief, and promises the believers a happy, eternal life in the Hereafter.

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful,
the All-Compassionate.

1. *Nūn*. By the Pen and what they write with it line by line.¹
2. You are not, by the grace of your Lord, a man possessed.
3. And yours, for sure, is a reward constant and beyond measure.
4. You are surely of a sublime character, and do act by a sublime pattern of conduct.²
5. Soon you will see, and they will see,

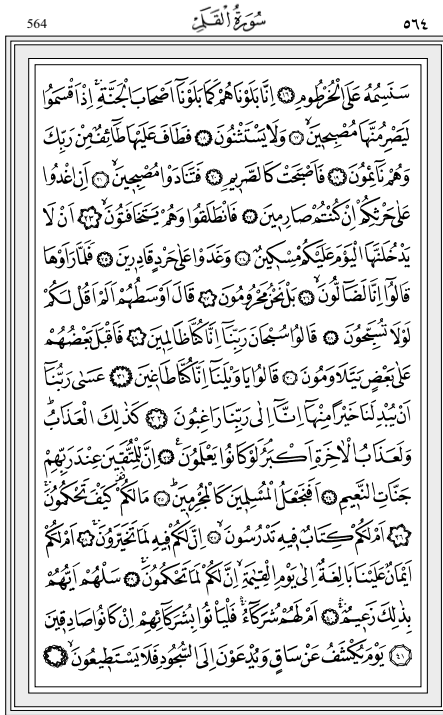
6. Which of you is afflicted with madness.
7. Surely your Lord is He Who knows best who is astray from His way, and He knows best those who are rightly guided.
8. So pay no heed to (the desires of) those who persistently deny (God's Message).
9. They wish you to compromise (with them in matters of faith), so they would compromise (with you).
10. Pay no heed to any contemptible oath-maker (who swears much with no consideration of truth, and no will to act on his word);
11. A defamer, circulating slander (in all directions),
12. Who hinders the doing of good, transgressor of all bounds (of sense or decency), one addicted to sinning,
13. Cruel and ignoble, and in addition to all that, morally corrupt,
14. Because he has wealth and many sons.
15. When Our Revelations are recited to him, he says: "Fables of the ancients."

1. Endowing humankind with the capacity of speech is one of God's greatest blessings. The greatest expression is the Qur'ān, which is also God's greatest blessing on humankind (*sūrah* 55: 1-4). God also draws attention to the fact that He has taught humans to write with the pen (96: 4). One of the basic reasons for which the Qur'ān has come down to us unchanged is that God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, had it written down by scribes, verse by verse. Writing is the most important means of both storing and transmitting information. So due to this great importance, God swears by the Pen – especially the pens with which the Qur'ān was written down – and what is written with the pen – especially the Qur'ān. *Nūn* is one of the abbreviated or isolated letters, concerning which see *sūrah* 2, note 1. In addition to its other meanings or implications, *nūn* may be referring to the inkpot or similar equipment used in writing. In addition, the Qur'ān calls

the Prophet Jonah *Dhu ḥ-Nūn* (the owner of *Nūn*) in *sūrah* 21: 87 and verses 48-50 of this *sūrah* also mention him. So according to some, *Nūn* also refers to the fish which swallowed up the Prophet Jonah, upon him be peace.

2. The sublime character of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, and the praiseworthy qualities he had in the greatest degree are known to history and to everybody. Including his fiercest opponents in his time, no one, except some blind, willfully prejudiced orientalists, has ever been able to say anything that could taint his pure person. For an account of his most sublime qualities, see *The Messenger of God: Muḥammad*, pp., 279-309.

With his every act and word, he represented the Qur'ān. As his wife 'A'ishah said, he was a perfect embodiment of the Qur'ān. So the verse also points to this fact and means that every word and act of his is an embodiment of a Qur'ānic principle.



16. We will brand him on the nose (to mark indelibly his disgrace).

17. For sure, We try them (with drought as they rely on their wealth and children We have granted them and reject Our call), just as We tried the owners of the garden. They swore that they would assuredly harvest its produce the next day.

18. They made no allowance (in their oaths, being oblivious of the rights of the needy and oblivious of God's will).

19. Then a visitation from your Lord encompassed it while they were sleeping.

20. So by morning it had become bleak.

21. So they cried out to one another, having risen for the morning:

22. "Hurry to your cultivated land if you mean to harvest (its produce)!"

23. So they set out, confiding to one another:

24. "(Take care) that no destitute enter there on you today."

25. So early they went, firmly resolved in intent (to collect the harvest and not share it with the destitute).

26. But when they saw it, they said: "We have assuredly arrived at the wrong place!"

27. (Then when they realized that it was indeed their garden:) "No, rather we are made destitute!"

28. The one more equitable among them said: "Did I not say to you: 'Will you not glorify God?'"³

29. They said: "All-Glorified is our Lord! Indeed we have done wrong (by regarding ourselves as self-sufficient and not dependent on Him)."

30. Then they approached one another, reproaching themselves.

31. They said: "Oh, woe to us! We were habituated to arrogance and rebellion.

32. "It may be that our Lord will grant us something better than this instead. Surely to our Lord do we turn with hope."

33. That is (an example of) the punishment (such as the ingrate rebellious may be made to endure in the world); and certainly, the punishment of the Hereafter is greater, if they but knew!

34. For the God-revering, pious there are Gardens of bounty and blessing with their Lord.

35. Do We ever treat those who have submitted to God like the disbelieving criminals (who have submitted only to their own lusts and fancies)?

36. What is the matter with you (that you can judge so)? How can you judge (that all are valued alike in God's sight whether

they are as Muslims, wholly submitted to God or not)?

37. Or do you have a Book (revealed by God) that you read,

38. Wherein you find that you will indeed have whatever you prefer (to have)?

39. Or do you have a covenant with Us confirmed by Us on oath as binding until the Day of Resurrection, that you will have whatever you judge (should be yours)?

40. Ask them (seeing that they do not

have such a covenant) which of them will vouch for that?

41. Or do they have partners (with God who guarantee them whatever they wish for themselves)? Then let them produce their partners if they are truthful (in their claim).

42. On the Day when the truth will be manifest and they are in trouble, and being called to prostrate, they will be incapable of it:

3. That is, 'Why do you not acknowledge Him as Lord, Who alone sustains and provides all that we are and have? Why do you not hold

Him in awe, Who does not admit any partner in His authority, and is not pleased with arrogance and wrongdoing?"

حَاشَعَةً أَبْصَارُهُمْ رَهْمَهُمْ ذَلِيلَةً وَقَدْ كَانُوا يَدْعُونَ إِلَى التَّجْوُدِ وَمُنَافِقِينَ
 سَالِمُونَ قَدْ رَفَعْنَا فِي هَذِهِ الْحَبِيبِ سَنَسْتَدْرِجُهُمْ مِنْ نَحْبٍ لَا
 يَخْلُفُونَ وَأَمَّا لِمِثْلِهِمْ عَذَابٌ أَدْنَى لِمِثْلِهِمْ جَزَاءً فَهُمْ مِنْ مَغْرُومٍ مَقْضُوعٍ
 أَمْعَدُهُمُ الْعَذَابُ فَهُمْ يَكْتُمُونَ فَاصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ وَلَا تَكُنْ
 كَصَاحِبِ الْحُوتِ إِذْ نَادَى وَهُوَ مَكْشُوعٌ لَوْلَا أَن تَدَارَكْهُ نِعْمَةٌ
 مِن رَّبِّهِ لَنُبِذَ بِالْعَرَاءِ وَهُوَ مَذْمُومٌ فَاصْبِرْ لَهُ رَبُّهُ فَعَمَلَهُ مِنَ
 الصَّالِحِينَ وَإِنْ كُنَّا لَنَدْرِيهِمْ وَلَيْلُغْنُوكَ بِأَبْصَارِهِمْ لَمَّا تَسْمَعُوا
 الذِّكْرَ وَيُظْهِرُونَ لَكَ نَجْوَاهُمْ وَمَا هُوَ إِلَّا دَسٌّ مِنَ الْعَالَمِينَ

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
 الْحَقُّ مَا الْحَقُّ وَمَا أَذْرَكَ مَا الْحَقُّ كَذَبْتَ قَوْلًا وَمَا
 بِالْقَارِعَةِ فَلَمَّا غَمَسْنَا بِالنَّاصِيَةِ وَأَمَّا عَادُ فَاهْلِكُ بِرِيحٍ
 صَرْصَرٍ عَاتِيَةٍ سَجَّهَا عَلَيْهِمْ سَبْعَ لَيَالٍ وَفُلَانِيَّةٍ آيَةً حُسُومًا فَتَرَى
 الْقَوْمَ فِيهَا صَرْعَى كَأَنَّهُمْ أُخِيطَ بِخَالٍ وَابٍ قَبْلَ تَرَى لَهُمْ مِنْ بَاقِيَةٍ

43. Downcast will be their eyes, with abasement overwhelming them. Assuredly they were called to prostrate while they were yet safe and whole (in the world, but they did not).

44. So leave Me with such as deny this Word (the Qur'an). We will lead them on to perdition step by step from where they do not know.

45. But I grant respite to them (so that they may mend their ways). My scheme (all that is willed for them) is firm and unfailing.

46. Or is it that you ask them for a wage (in return for your calling them to Our Word), and so they are weighed down with debt?

47. Or do they have the authority to determine what will happen in the future that they prescribe and stipulate (what is to come, and how they are to be judged)?

48. So wait patiently for your Lord's judgment, and do not be like the companion of the fish,⁴ when he called out choking inwardly (with distress).⁵

49. If there had not reached him grace from his Lord (Who accepted his repentance), he would indeed have been cast forth on the desert shore, being reproached.⁶

50. But his Lord chose him and enabled him to be among the specially chosen, righteous servants.

51. Those who disbelieve would (if they could) strike you down with their looks because of hatred and enmity, when they hear the Reminder, and they say: "Surely he is a man possessed."

52. But it is not other than a Reminder for all beings.

4. The companion of the fish is the Prophet Jonah, upon him be peace. For a detailed explanation of his story, see sūrah 10: 98, note 20; sūrah 21: 87-88, note 18; sūrah 37: 139-148.

5. He called out in the abdomen of the fish: "There is no deity but You, All-Glorified You are (in that You are absolutely above having any defect). Surely, I have been one of the wrongdoers (who have wronged themselves)"

(sūrah 21: 87). For the meaning of this, see sūrah 21, note 18.

6. Verses 37: 143-145 say: *Had it not been that he was one who glorified (God, declaring Him absolutely above having any defects and partners), he would certainly have remained in its belly (serving as his grave) until the Day when all will be raised (from the dead). But We caused him to be cast forth on a desert*

shore, sick as he was. However, this verse says that if there had not reached him grace from his Lord, he *would indeed have been cast forth on the desert shore, being reproached*. Yet there is no contradiction between these verses. Verse 37: 143 says that if the Prophet Jonah, upon him be peace, had not been one who *always* glorified God, he would have remained in the belly of the fish until the Day

of Resurrection. His being one who always glorified God caused him to be cast forth. This verse says that if he had not glorified God *in the belly of the fish*, he would have been cast forth, being reproached. His special glorification in the belly of the fish caused him to be cast forth, forgiven, preserved on desert land and returned to his people, who accepted his message.



SŪRAH 69

AL-ḤĀQQAH (THE SURE REALITY)

Makkah Period

Revealed in the early years of the Qur'ānic Revelation in Makkah, this *sūrah* of 52 verses takes its name from the word *al-ḥāqqah* (the Sure Reality) in the first verse, implying the Day of Resurrection and Judgment. It warns those who associated partners with God and indulged in committing sins, reminding them of what befell some early wrongdoing communities, and draws attention to the Day of Resurrection and Judgment. It also offers evidence to establish the Divine origin of the Qur'ān and the Prophethood of Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings.

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful,
the All-Compassionate.

1. The Sure Reality.
2. What is the Sure Reality?!
3. And what enables you to perceive¹ what the Sure Reality is?
4. The (tribes) of Thamūd and 'Ād denied the Sudden, Mighty Strike.²
5. Now as for the (tribe of) Thamūd – they were destroyed by the overwhelming (catastrophe).
6. And the (tribe of) 'Ād – they were destroyed with a furious, roaring windstorm,
7. Which God made to prevail against them for seven nights and eight days, uninterrupted,³ so that you could have seen people lying overthrown in it, as though they were hollow trunks of palm-trees.
8. Now do you see any of them remaining?

1. The phrase *What enables you to perceive* denotes that the thing being asked about is unusual and that it is impossible for anyone to perceive it unless God makes it known.

2. The Sure Reality (which will undoubtedly take place and make every truth perfectly clear) signifies the Day of the Resurrection and Judgment with all the events that will take place during it. The *Sudden, Mighty Strike* implies the event of the Last Day or the destruction of the world.

3. For the peoples of 'Ād and Thamūd, see *sūrah* 7: 65–79, notes 16–17, *sūrah* 11: 50–68, and *sūrah* 26: 123–158. The Qur'ān uses several words for the punishment that struck the Thamūd, such as the awful blast (*sūrah* 11: 67), a shocking catastrophe (*sūrah* 7: 78), and the lightning-like punishment of humiliation (*sūrah* 41: 17). These are aspects of the punishment that the Qur'ān describes, being suited to the subject and style of the *sūrah* where they are mentioned. In *sūrah* 29: 40, the Qur'ān sums up the kinds of punishment by which God destroyed many peoples.

وَجَاءَ فُرْعُونُ وَمَنْ فِيهِ وَالْمُؤْتَفِكَاتُ بِالْحَاطَةِ ۝ فَعَصَوْا
رَسُولَ رَبِّهِمْ فَأَخَذَهُمْ أَخَذَةً رَابِيَةً ۝ إِنَّا نَأْتِيهِمَ الْهَاجِ
فِي الْحَارَةِ ۝ لِيَحْمِلَهَا كَلُّهُمْ نَذِيرَةً ۝ وَنَعَسُوا أَدْنَ وَأَعْيَتْهُمُ
فَإِذَا نَفَخَ فِي الصُّورِ نَفْخَةٌ وَاحِدَةٌ ۝ وَحُمِلَتِ الْأَرْضُ وَالْجِبَالُ
فَهُكَّتَا دَكَّةً وَاحِدَةً ۝ فَيَوْمَئِذٍ وَقَعَتِ الْوَاقِعَةُ ۝ وَانْشَقَّتِ
السَّمَاءُ فَهِيَ يَوْمَئِذٍ وَاهِيَةٌ ۝ وَاللَّهُ عَلَى أَرْجَائِهِمْ وَنَحْمِلُ
عَرْشَ رَبِّكَ فَوْقَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ ثَمَانِيَةٌ ۝ يَوْمَئِذٍ تُعْرَضُونَ لَا تَخْفَى مِنْكُمْ
خَافِيَةٌ ۝ فَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوْكِنَ كِتَابَهُ يَمِينُهُ فَيَقُولُ هَؤُلَاءِ أَهْوَاؤِي وَكَانِي
۝ إِنِّي ظَنَنْتُ أَنِّي مُلَاقٍ حِسَابِيَةٍ ۝ فَهُوَ فِي عِيشَةٍ رَاضِيَةٍ ۝ فِي جَنَّةٍ
عَالِيَةٍ ۝ قُطُوفُهَا دَانِيَةٌ ۝ كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا هَنِيئًا بِمَا أَسْلَفْتُمْ فِي الْأَيَّامِ
الْأُولَى ۝ وَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوْكِنَ كِتَابَهُ بِيَمِينِهِ فَيَقُولُ يَا لَيْتَنِي لَمْ أُوتَ كِتَابِي
۝ وَلَمْ أَدْرَأْ حِسَابِيَةٍ ۝ إِنِّي كَانْتُ الْقَاصِيَةَ ۝ مَا أَخْلَى عَنِّي
مَالِيَةٍ ۝ هَلَكَ عَنِّي سُلْطَانِيَّةٌ ۝ خُذُوهُ فَغُلُّوهُ ۝ ثُمَّ الْجَحِيمَ صَلُّوهُ
۝ ثُمَّ فِي سِلْسِلَةٍ ذَرْعُهَا سَبْعُونَ ذِرَاعًا فَاسْلُكُوهُ ۝ إِنَّهُ كَانَ
لَإِيْمِنًا بِاللَّهِ الْعَظِيمِ ۝ وَلَا يَحِصُّ عَلَى عَذَابِ الْمُسْكِينِ ۝

9. And there was the Pharaoh, and many other communities before him,⁴ and the cities overthrown (where Lot's people lived): all of them indulged in the unpardonable sins.

10. And they rebelled against their Lord's Messenger (sent to each to warn them), and so He took hold of them with a severe seizing.

11. It was We Who, when the water (of the Flood in the time of Noah) burst beyond limits, carried you (i.e. your believing ancestors) in the on-moving Ark,

12. So that We might make it a reminder for you (to be transmitted from generation to generation), and that heeding ears might take it in and retain it.

13. And when (the Last Hour comes and) the Trumpet is blown⁵ with a single blast,

14. And the earth, and the mountains (on it) are removed and burst within, and are crushed with a single crushing –

15. It is on that Day that the Event to happen⁶ will happen:

16. And the sky split asunder, and so, on that Day it will be most frail;

17. And the angels will be at its ends;⁷ and above them, eight will bear the Throne of your Lord on that Day.⁸

18. On that Day, you will be arraigned for judgment, and no secret of yours will remain hidden.

19. Then as for him who is given his Record⁹ in his right hand, he will say: “Here, take and read my Record!”

20. “I surely knew that (one day) I would meet my account.”

21. And so he will be in a state of life pleasing to him,

22. In a lofty Garden,

23. With clusters (of fruit) within easy reach.

24. “Eat and drink to your hearts’ content for all that you sent ahead in advance in days past (in anticipation of this Day).”

25. But as for him whose Record is given in his left hand, he will say: “Ah, would that I had never been given my Record,

26. “And that I had known nothing of my account!

27. “Oh, would that death had been (and nothing thereafter had followed).

28. “My wealth has availed me nothing,

29. “And all my authority (my power over all that I had) has gone from me!”

30. (And the command will come): “Lay hold of him and shackle him (by the neck, the hands, and the feet)!”

31. “Then in the Blazing Flame let him to roast.

32. “Then, fasten him with a chain the length of which is seventy cubits.”¹⁰

33. For he surely did not believe in God, the Supreme,

34. And did not urge the feeding of the destitute.

4. By *many other communities* before that of the Pharaoh the Qur’ān is referring to the people of Noah, upon him be peace (see *sūrah* 7: 59–64; *sūrah* 11: 25–48; *sūrah* 23: 23–29; *sūrah* 26: 105–121; *sūrah* 71: 1–28, and the corresponding notes); the people of Shu’ayb, upon him be peace (*sūrah* 7: 85–93; *sūrah* 11: 84–95; *sūrah* 15: 78–79; *sūrah* 26: 176–189, and the corresponding notes); and the companions of ar-Rass (*sūrah* 25: 38, note 8). There were, no doubt, other communities not mentioned in the Qur’ān, who were also destroyed for their wrongdoings.

5. For the Trumpet and its being blown, see *sūrah* 2, note 31; *sūrah* 6: 73, note 14, and *sūrah* 39: 68, note 22.

6. *The Event to happen* is a title of a Qur’ānic chapter (56). It also implies what will take place on the Day of Resurrection.

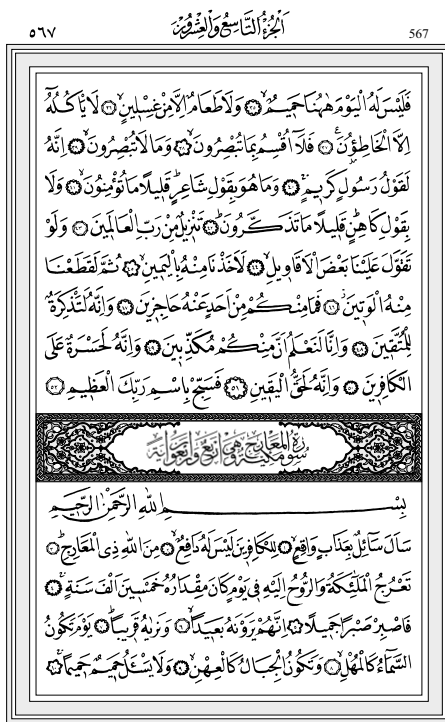
7. This statement may be considered together with verse (25: 25): *On that Day the heaven will split asunder with the clouds (covering it) and the angels will be made to descend in a majestic descending.*

8. As explained in *sūrah* 7, note 13, the Supreme Throne of God (*‘Arsh*), the exact nature of which we cannot know, signifies God’s absolute authority over the universe. Deducing from Bediüzzaman Said Nursi’s description of water as the *‘arsh* (throne) of mercy and earth as the throne of life, we can say that the *‘Arsh* (Throne) indicates primarily God’s Attributes of Knowledge, Will, Power, and Providence, and His Names originating in them, such as the All-Knowing, the All-Willing, the All-Powerful, and the All-Providing. As it encompasses the whole universe, it is also composed of God’s

Names, the First, the Last, the All-Outward, and the All-Inward. These are His most prominent Attributes and Names relating to the creation and the actual rule of the universe. And as pointed out in *sūrah* 2, note 30, no event in the universe is conceivable without the operative intervention of the angels. The Qur’ān mentions many types of angels (*sūrah* 37: 1–3; *sūrah* 77: 1–4; *sūrah* 79: 1–5; *sūrah* 82: 11). So those who bear God’s Throne may be Archangels whom He employs in the rule of the universe for some wise purposes and for the majesty of His rule, particularly those who are endowed with the greatest manifestation of the Attributes of God mentioned. According to some, based on a Prophetic Tradition recorded in *ad-Durr al-Manthūr* by as-Suyūṭī, there are four beings that bear the Throne during the life of the world, and there will be eight on the Resurrection Day. According to Muhyī’d-Dīn ibn al-‘Arabī and Ibn Maysarah al-Jilī, these are the Prophets Muḥammad, Abraham and Adam, upon them all be peace, and the angels Ridwān (the chief guard of Paradise), Mālik (the chief guard of Hell), Gabriel, Mikā’il (Michael), and Isrā’fil (Yazır, 8: 5325–5326).

9. For this Record, see *sūrah* 17: 13–14, note 10.

10. As Hamdi Yazır suggests in interpreting this verse (8: 5334), this chain of seventy cubits may be the result of the sins committed by a sinful unbeliever throughout their seventy years of life. So in addition to its apparent meaning, the verse may be referring to the average human life-span in the world, or to the years spent (after puberty) in unbelief and sins. Each year will be a link in the chain in Hellfire.



35. And so, he will have none to befriend him this Day,

36. Nor any food except foul pus.¹¹

37. None eat it except the sinful (those guilty of denying God, or of associating partners with Him and oppressing people).

38. No indeed! I swear by all that you can see,

39. And all that you cannot see,¹²

40. It surely is the speech (conveyed to

you by) an illustrious, noble Messenger (Gabriel),

41. And not a poet's speech (composed in a poet's mind). How little is what you believe! (It is so limited by the poverty of your souls and hearts.)

42. Nor is it a soothsayer's speech (pretending to foretell events). How little it is that you reflect and be mindful! (It is so limited by the poverty of your minds.)

43. (No indeed!) It is a Revelation being sent down in parts from the Lord of the worlds.

44. If he (the Messenger) had dared to fabricate some false sayings in attribution to Us,

45. We would certainly have seized him with might;

46. Thereafter We would certainly have cut his life-vein.

47. Then not one from among you could have shielded and saved him from Us.

48. And it is a sure Reminder (bringing hope and guidance) for the God-revering, pious.

49. We are most certainly aware that among you are some who deny (it).

50. It will surely be a bitter regret for the unbelievers.¹³

51. And this (the whole Qur'ān) is surely certain truth.

52. So glorify the Name of your Lord, the Supreme.¹⁴

11. Since both the people of Paradise and the people of Hell prepare their eternal future with their deeds in the world, this foul pus must be the product of their denial of God or association of partners with God, and their oppressing the poor and denying them any help.

12. This oath is very important in that neither the truth nor creation consists in what is observable and perceivable by humanity. Moreover, the basic truth lying behind all that

we observe and perceive is unobservable and imperceptible through our senses. It is because of this that the Qur'ān begins praising the believers by saying that they believe in the Unseen. With this oath, the Qur'ān draws attention to this fact and to the fact that the most fundamental and essential truths should not be looked for in the observable realm of creation. The truth of the Resurrection and the Final Judgment, and that of eternal life, both of

which are presented in the previous verses, and the truth of the Revelation and its communication by the Messenger are among such truths.

13. The unbelievers will see that the Qur'ān is the truth from God; they will realize what a future it has prepared for the believers both in the world and, especially, in the Hereafter, and what a great loss its rejection has brought, and

how those who have rejected it will greatly regret doing so.

14. We must declare God as the Lord of supreme authority over creation without any partner. This also refers to the majesty and supremacy of the Qur'ān. This order teaches us how we should thank, praise, exalt, and glorify God, and in what circumstances we should do this.

SŪRAH 70

AL-MA 'ĀRIJ

(THE STAIRS OF ASCENT)

Makkah Period

From the early years of the Revelation of the Qur'an in Makkah, this *sūrah* of 44 verses takes its name from the word *al-ma'ārij* (the stairs of ascent) in the third verse. Its central concern is the rejection of the Makkan polytheists' denial of the afterlife and of the Prophethood of Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings.

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful,
the All-Compassionate.

1. A questioner (in mocking denial of the Day of Resurrection) has asked about the punishment certain to befall,

2. (And prepared for) the unbelievers; none can ward it off (from them).

3. (It is) from God, Whose are the stairs of ascent.

4. The angels and the Spirit ascend to Him (thereby), in a day the measure of which is fifty thousand years (of your normal worldly years).¹

5. So (O Messenger), endure (their insolence) with becoming patience.

6. They see it (the punishment) as far off (beyond their reason),

7. But We see it as (certain to come and) near at hand:

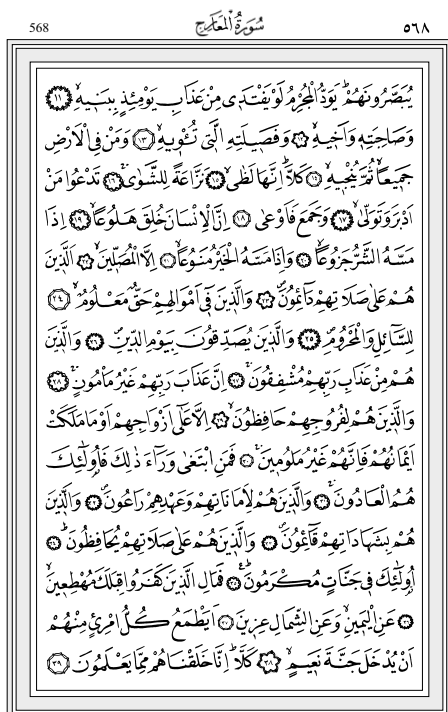
8. The Day when the sky will be like molten metal;

9. And the mountains will be like multi-colored tufts of wool;

10. And no loyal friend will ask after his friend –

1. "Reaching" God requires traversing great "distances" and ascending innumerable steps. So the stairs of ascent to God, and the measure of the day as being fifty thousand years, imply both our distance from Him despite His infinite nearness to Us and His indescribable "elevation" and transcendence (see also *sūrah* 32: 5, note 4). The *day* may also be referring to the Day of Judgment. In this case, its measure suggests the great distances between the stations or worlds of the Hereafter, and the dread and hardships the people of Hell will suffer while they are being driven through these stations and worlds to Hell. In this case, such a great distance constitutes a great threat. As explained in several places in

this study, the angels are dutiful in conveying God's commands throughout the universe. They also convey the worship and life-functions of all creatures before the Presence of God. So, by the stairs of ascent and a day measuring fifty thousand years, the verse may be referring to this fact. The Spirit mentioned in verse 4 is either Gabriel or another angel-like being that is greater than the angels. According to Imam Ghazzālī, he is an angel (or angel-like being) whom God employs in breathing an individual's spirit into that individual's body. Bediüzzaman Said Nursi maintains that there is a spirit representing every thing, every being. So the Spirit may be the being responsible for all the spirits.



11. Though they will be in sight of each other. Every disbelieving criminal will yearn to ransom himself from the punishment of that Day even by his sons,
12. And his wife and his brother,
13. And all his kinsfolk who sheltered him,
14. And whoever else is on the earth – all of them – so that he might then save himself.
15. By no means! It is a furiously flaming fire,
16. Tearing away the skin.
17. It will call to itself those who turn their backs (on the call to faith) and turn away (from worship of God),
18. And amass wealth and withhold it (from spending in God's cause and for the needy).

19. Surely human has been created with a restless, impatient disposition:²
20. Fretful when evil visits him,
21. And niggardly when good visits him –
22. Except those who are devoted to the Prayer.
23. Those who are constant in their Prayer;
24. And those in whose wealth there is a right acknowledged (by them),
25. For such as have no means other than begging, and such as are denied help (because, having self-respect, they cannot beg and are thought to be well-off);
26. And those who affirm as true the Day of Judgment;
27. And those who are fearful of their Lord's punishment (and live accordingly) –
28. Indeed, their Lord's punishment is that of which no one can ever feel secure;
29. And those who strictly guard their private parts, and their chastity and modesty,
30. Save from their spouses, or (as a permission for men) those (bondsmen) whom their right hands possess – for with regard to them they are free from blame;
31. But whoever seeks beyond that, such are those who exceed the bounds (set by God).³
32. And those who are faithful to their trusts (which either God or society or an individual places in their charge) and to their pledges (between them and God or other persons or society);
33. And those who are upholders (of right and justice) by bearing true witness and without avoiding giving testimony;
34. And those who safeguard their Prayers (including all the rites of which they are constituted) –
35. Those will be in Gardens, high-honored.

36. What is the matter with those who disbelieve, that (with the intent of mockery) they hasten on toward you with staring eyes fixed on you,

37. From the right and from the left, in crowds?

38. Does every one of them covet admis-

sion into the Garden of bounty and blessing (regarding himself as supremely deserving Paradise without the effort of faith)?⁴

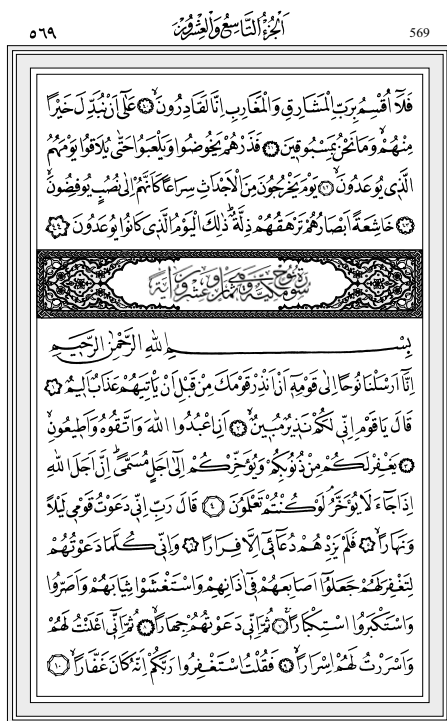
39. By no means! We have surely created them out of that (simple matter) which they know very well,

2. Each person has two aspects: one angelic, pure, and spiritual; and the other one turned to the elements, plants, and animals. All people are "children of the world." We have been equipped with lust (e.g., for the opposite sex, children, income, wealth, and comfort), and anger, and intellect. By nature, we are fallible, forgetful, neglectful, fond of disputing, obstinate, selfish, jealous, and much more. Since our free will distinguishes us from other conscious beings, such as angels, these powers, faculties, and negative-seeming feelings are not restricted. However, to attain individual and collective happiness in both worlds, and to rise to higher ranks of humanity, we should restrict these powers according to certain precepts and channel them into virtues. For example, obstinacy can be channeled into steadfastness in defense of right and truth; and jealousy can become approvable competition in doing good things. Impatience and restlessness can be channeled into the virtue of alertness to danger, or the preemptive preparation against it; or into the virtue of promptness and impulsiveness towards what is best, when there is the occasion or opportunity to do good things.

Our human nature is no more than our struggle against the negative and/or negative-seeming aspects of our character, restricting or channeling these into virtues, and acquiring distinction with good qualities so that we may become good, worshipful servants of God and useful members of society. The Messenger of God, upon him be peace and blessings, said: "The most perfect in faith among the believers are the most perfect in conduct" (Ibn Hanbal, 2: 250); "A human can cross with good conduct the distances which he cannot with acts of worship and adoration" (al-Haythamī, 8: 24).

3. See *sūrah* 23, note 1.

4. While the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, was reciting the Qur'ān at the Ka'bah, some leading polytheists would come and sit around him in separate circles and stare at him with enmity. They would mock the believers, who were lowly (in worldly wealth and status), and say: "If there is Paradise and people will enter it, then it is more fitting that it should be we who will enter it, not you."



SŪRAH 71

NŪH (NOAH)

Makkah Period

From the early years of the Revelation of the Qur'an in Makkah, this *sūrah* of 28 verses takes its name from the word *Nūh* (Noah). It records how the Prophet Noah, upon him be peace, conveyed God's Message to his people and how harshly they reacted against it. The *sūrah* ends with Noah's appeal to God after ages of harshness, derision and persecution endured at the hands of his people.

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful,
the All-Compassionate.

1. We sent Noah as Messenger to his people (and commanded him): "Warn your people before a painful punishment comes to them."
2. He said: "O my people! I am indeed a plain warner to you (and I urge you):
3. "Worship God alone, and keep from disobedience to Him in reverence for Him and piety, and obey me,
4. "So that He may forgive you your sins (which you have committed so far) and grant you respite until a term appointed by Him (instead of destroying you because of your sins). The term appointed by God, when it comes, is never deferred. If you but knew!"¹
5. (After long ages spent in conveying God's Message, he turned to his Lord in prayer and)² he said: "My Lord, I have surely called my people night and day;
6. "But my call has only caused them to flee more and more (from accepting the truth).
7. "And every time I have called them so that You may forgive them, they have thrust

40. So, I swear by the Lord of the points of sunrise and sunset, that surely We are able⁵

41. To replace them with (others) better than them (in respect of faith in God and in their worship of Him), and We are not to be frustrated (in doing what We will).

42. So leave them plunging in their falsehoods and amusements until the Day that they have been promised –

43. The Day when they come forth from their graves in haste as if they were hurrying to a goal:

44. Downcast will be their eyes, abasement overwhelming them. That is the Day that they have been repeatedly promised.

5. These verses emphasize the helplessness of humankind before God, and His full power and authority over every point of space and time with whatever takes place therein.

their fingers in their ears, and wrapped themselves up in their garments, and grown obstinate and more and more arrogant (in refusing my call).

8. “Then I have called them in a loud (emphatic) manner;

9. “Then again, I have called them in public, and I have spoken to them confidentially in private.

10. “I have said: ‘Ask your Lord for forgiveness, for surely He has always been All-Forgiving.

1. For God’s sparing and reprieving people over a term appointed by Him, see *sūrah* 10: 98, note 20. The term mentioned here is the final term, which normally is never altered, neither delayed nor brought forward. However, if a person (or people) persists in doing things that incur God’s punishment, then God may punish

and destroy that person or group, as He has destroyed many peoples throughout history. This is also included in God’s Destiny, which relates to both cause and effect. If they had paid heed to God’s Message conveyed to them by His Messengers, upon them be peace, they would not have been destroyed.

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يُرْسِلُ السَّمَاءَ عَلَيْهِمُ مِذْرَآءً ﴿١٠﴾ يُغِيْدُ ذُرَّهُمْ بِأَمْوَالٍ وَبَسْبَبٍ
وَيَجْعَلُ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ وَيَجْعَلُ لَكُمْ أَنْهَارًا ﴿١١﴾ مَا لَكُمْ لَا تَشْكُرُونَ
لَهُ وَقَالُوا ﴿١٢﴾ وَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا أَمْطَارًا ﴿١٣﴾ أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ خَلَقَ
اللَّهُ مَسْجِدَ صَدَاقٍ طِبَاقًا ﴿١٤﴾ وَجَعَلَ الْفَرْقِينَ تَوْرًا وَجَعَلَ الْفَسْرَ بِلَاحًا
وَاللَّهُ أَنْتُمْ مِنْ الْأَرْضِ بَنَاتَا ﴿١٥﴾ فَرَمَيْدُكُمْ فِيهَا وَخُجَيْجُكُمْ الْخِرَاجَا ﴿١٦﴾
وَاللَّهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ بِسَاطًا ﴿١٧﴾ لَتَسْلُكُنَّ مِنْهَا شُدَّاءَ فِرَاجًا ﴿١٨﴾
قَالَ نُوحٌ رَبِّ انْهَمْ عَصَوِي وَاتَّبِعُوا أَمْرَ زَوْجِي مَا لَهُ وَوَلَدُهُ
الْإِخْسَارُ ﴿١٩﴾ وَمَكْرُؤُا مَكْرٍ كَيْتَارًا ﴿٢٠﴾ وَقَالُوا لَا تَنْزِلْ
الْمَنَكُومَ وَلَا تَنْزِلْ وَدَّاعًا وَلَا سَوَاعَا وَلَا يَنْفُوتَ وَيَعُوقُ وَنَشْرًا
﴿٢١﴾ وَقَدْ أَسْلَمُوا كَيْتَارًا وَلَا تَزِدِ الظَّالِمِينَ إِلَّا ضَلَالًا ﴿٢٢﴾ مِمَّا
خَطَبَتْ إِلَيْهِمْ أَغْرَفُوا قَوْمًا خَلُوتًا رَأً فَلَمْ يَجِدُوا لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِ
اللَّهِ أَنْصَارًا ﴿٢٣﴾ وَقَالَ نُوحٌ رَبِّ لَا تَذَرْنِي فَرْدًا وَلَا تَجْعَلْ لِي فِيهِمْ
دُعَايَا ﴿٢٤﴾ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ ذُو الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٢٥﴾ وَتَبَّ عَلَى السَّيِّئِينَ ﴿٢٦﴾
وَلَقَدْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ أَخْرَجَهُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ
الْمَوْسَىٰ ﴿٢٧﴾ وَتَبَّ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٢٨﴾

earth like a plant (in a mode of growth particular to you).⁶

18. 'Thereafter He will return you into it, and He will bring you forth from it in resurrection.

19. 'God has made for you the earth a wide expanse,

20. 'So that you may move on it along the ways through mountains and valleys.' "

21. Noah (turned to his Lord, and) said: “My Lord! They have disobeyed me and followed those whose wealth and children⁷ have increased them only in loss and self-ruin.

22. "And they have made tremendous schemes (to prevent my call and people's acceptance of it).

23. "And they have said: 'Do not abandon your deities; do not ever abandon (in particular) Wadd, nor Suwā', nor Yaghūth, and Ya'ūq, and Nasr!'

24. “And they have indeed led many astray. And (O God,) increase not these wrongdoers in anything but further straying (by way of just punishment for all that they have done).”

25. And because of their (unforgivable) sins, they were drowned (in the Flood), and were made to enter a (punishing) Fire; and so they found none who could help them against God.

26. Noah also said: “My Lord! Do not leave on the earth any from among the unbelievers dwelling therein!

27. "If You do leave them, they will lead Your servants astray, and they will beget none but shameless and dissolute thankless unbelievers."⁸

28. “My Lord! Forgive me and my parents, and everyone who joins my household as a believer, and all the believing men and believing women, and do not increase the wrongdoers in anything but ruin.”⁹

11. 'He will release (the rain-bearing clouds in) the sky over you, with abundance of rain;

12. 'And will strengthen you by increasing you in wealth and children, and make for you gardens, and make for you running waters.'³

13. 'What is the matter with you that you do not want to see majesty in God (to worship Him),

14. 'Seeing that He has created you in different, successive stages?'⁴

15. ‘Do you not see how God has created the seven heavens in harmony?’

16. 'And He has set up within them the moon as a light (reflected), and has set up the sun as a lamp.'⁵

17. 'And God has caused you to grow from

2. The Prophet Noah, upon him be peace, is one of the first five greatest Messengers (*sūrah* 42: 13, note 6). He stayed among his people for 950 years and conveyed God's Message to his people (*sūrah* 29: 14).

3. Turning to God with sincere repentance and asking for forgiveness is a door that opens on God's blessings. Whoever complains of anything – such as drought, a lack of wealth or children, or barren fields, etc. – is advised by Hasan al-Baṣrī to repent and ask God for forgiveness for their sin. They then must do whatever (lawful) they must in order to attain to their goal.

4. See *sūrah* 22: 5, and *sūrah* 23: 12–14.

5. It is worth noticing that the verse mentions the moon and the sun not as in a (single) heaven, but in or within the seven heavens. This may be a clue to what the Qur'ān means by *seven heavens*. However, some hold that there is no difference between the moon being mentioned in a single heaven or within seven heavens, since what is meant is that all the heavens are of the same substance and in full harmony with each other.

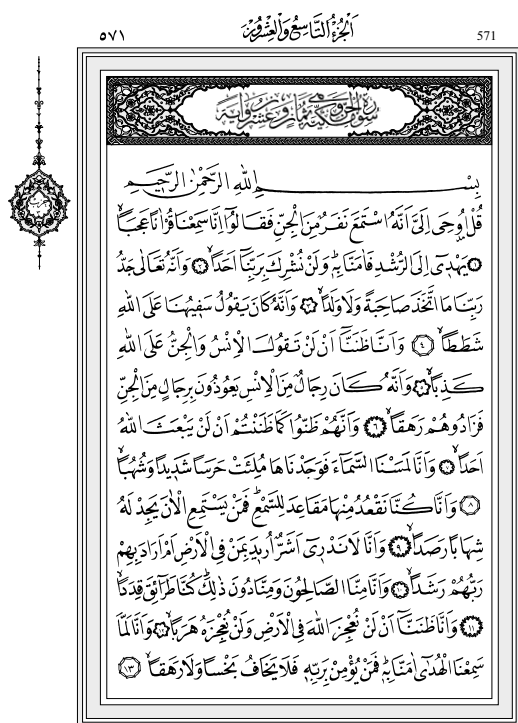
6. The verse alludes to the first origin of the father of humanity from the elements of the earth – soil, air, and water – and also the material origin of every human being, which are the same elements that are made into particular biological entities in human body. As Hamdi Yazır points out in the interpretation of this verse, the word *nabātan*, which comes at the end of the verse as an adverbial complement to “grow,” denotes the particular way of human creation and growth. So, the verse al-

lows no room for any inclination toward the Darwinian theory of evolution.

7. There is no direct link between faith and worship and God's allocation of provision in the form of income or children. The granting of wealth and children is quite different from His opening the door of His blessings as a result of one's repentance and asking for forgiveness, as mentioned in note 3 above. As pointed out in several places before, besides His laws in the form of the Religion, God also has laws of life. Prosperity in both worlds requires obedience to both of these laws. Obedience to the former (the Religion) adds to the success which comes as a result of obedience to the latter (Divine laws of life). So if believers obey the latter in addition to sincere adherence to the Religion, they always and inevitably prevail over unbelievers. In any case, we should always bear in mind that whatever blessing we are given, it is a means of testing us and requires certain things, such as thanking God, spending wealth on religiously lawful things and in God's cause, for the needy, and for educating our children so that they can be good servants of God.

8. The words of this prayer of a Messenger who had been calling his people to Divine guidance for 950 years, show how obstinately wicked, ungrateful and misled those unbelievers were who were drowned in the Flood.

9. For other accounts of the story of Noah, upon him be peace, and his people, in all its diverse aspects, see *sūrah* 7: 59–72; *sūrah* 10: 71–73; *sūrah* 11: 25–48; *sūrah* 23: 23–30; *sūrah* 26: 105–122; *sūrah* 29: 14–15; *sūrah* 37: 75–80; *sūrah* 54: 9–16, and the corresponding notes.



SŪRAH 72

AL-JINN (THE JINN)

Makkah Period

This sūrah of 28 verses was revealed in Makkah. It takes its name from the word *al-jinn* (the jinn) in the first verse and recounts how some of the jinn heard God's Messenger reciting the Qur'ān and came to believe. The sūrah also emphasizes God's absolute Oneness and the Messengership of Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, and those jinn's acceptance of both.

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful,
the All-Compassionate.

1. Say (O Messenger): "It has been revealed to me that a company of the jinn gave ear (to my recitation of the Qur'ān),¹

then (when they returned to their people) they said: 'We have indeed heard a wonderful Qur'ān,

2. 'Guiding to what is right in belief and action, and so we have believed in it; and we will never associate any as partner with our Lord.

3. 'And He – exalted is the majesty of our Lord – has taken neither consort nor child,

4. 'Whereas, the foolish among us uttered an enormity against God.

5. 'And (we were mistaken when) we thought that humankind and the jinn would never speak a falsehood against God.

6. '(But we have come to see that) there have indeed been men from among humankind who took refuge in some men from among jinn, and so (the former) increased them (the latter) in conceit, rebellion and wrongdoing.²

7. 'And they (those men) have thought, as you have thought, that God would never raise anyone (as Messenger from among them).

8. 'But now when we sought to reach heaven, we found it filled with stern guards and flaming fires (shooting-stars).³

9. 'We used to be established in position to overhear (its inhabitants); but now whoever attempts to listen finds a flaming fire in wait for him.

10. 'We (being prevented from overhearing) did not know whether evil is intended for those who live on the earth, or their Lord wills for them right guidance and good.⁴

11. 'There are among us such as are righteous (in conduct and apt to believe), and there are those who are otherwise. We have been sects with divergent paths.

12. 'We have come to know that we can by no means frustrate God (in His will on the earth), nor can we frustrate Him by flight.

13. 'And when we heard the guidance

(embodied in the Qur'ān), we (immediately) believed in it. Whoever believes in his Lord has no fear of loss (of being wronged in return for his faith and for the good deeds required by faith), or disgrace.

1. While God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, was returning from Ṭā'if to Makkah in great sorrow, God caused some jinn to hear his recitation of the Qur'ān, and they believed and returned to their people as bearers of its message. This is narrated in *Sūrat al-Ahqāf*, 46: 29–32. Another time, when the Messenger was going to the fair at 'Uqaz with a few Companions, another company of the jinn heard his recitation during the Early Morning Prayer. This latter incident is the one being related here. The other group of the jinn (who listened to the Messenger during his return from Ṭā'if) belonged to the nation of Moses, upon him be peace. As can be understood from the following verses, the jinn who heard the Messenger's recitation during the Morning Prayer were polytheists who attributed to God a wife and children. They too became believers and, like the other jinn, returned to their people and conveyed the Qur'ān's message.

For the nature of the jinn, see *sūrah* 46, note 10.

2. Men, in particular from among the Arab people of the (pre-Islamic) Age of Ignorance, used to take refuge from any possible evil in men from among the jinn, whom they supposed to have authority over the valleys or the ruins where they stopped on their journeys. Moreover, both men and women would appeal to the jinn to cure some diseases or to prophesy their future or plans. There have always been people who have been able to make some type of contact with the jinn, and there are

people who appeal to the jinn. This causes the jinn to be over-proud and to mislead those who appeal to or contact them.

3. As mentioned in *sūrah* 15: 17–18, note 5, and *sūrah* 67: 5, note 4, shooting stars are fired to prevent the jinn from reaching the heaven or to repulse them from its doors.

Contact between fortune-tellers and the jinn and/or devils has a certain function in certain sorts of fortune-telling. The spying devils, who are the representatives of the foulness and wickedness on the earth, attempt to soil the clean and pure realm of the heavens that are inhabited by pure beings, and spy on the talk of their inhabitants to mislead people, particularly through sorcerers, and ill-willing mediumship, and soothsayers. God allowed them to grab some snatches of information from their talks before the advent of His Last Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. However, just prior to his advent, He shut the gates of the heaven to them completely. When they try to reach the heaven, they find it filled with strong guards who hurl missiles at them. If anyone from among them is able to grab something, they are pursued (and destroyed) by a shooting star dispatched by the angels on guard there.

4. The verse suggests: "But now, seeing that the Recitation which we heard guides to right, we have come to know that their Lord wills good and right for the inhabitants of the earth by shutting the gates of the heaven to us."

وَأَنَّا إِنَّا الْمُسْلِمُونَ وَمِنَّا الْقَائِمُونَ فَمَنْ أَسْلَمَ فَأُولَئِكَ تَحَرُّوا
رَشَدًا ۖ وَأَمَّا الْقَائِمُونَ فَكَأَنَّهُمْ كَطَبِئًا ۖ وَأَن كُو
سِتِفًا مَوَالِي الطَّيْرِ لَأَسْقَيْنَهُمْ مَاءً عَذًّا ۖ لَنَفْتِنَهُمْ
فِيهِ ۖ وَمَنْ يَعْزِضْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ رَبِّهِ يَسْلُكْهُ عَذَابًا صَعَدًا ۖ وَأَنَّا لَمَسَاجِدَ
لِلَّهِ فَلَا سَدَّ عِوَامِعَ ۖ اللَّهُ أَحَدًا ۖ وَأَنَّهُ لَمَّا قَامَ عَبْدُ
اللَّهِ يَدْعُوهُ كَذُوًّا يَكُونُ عَلَيْهِ لَبًّا ۖ قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَدْعُوا
رَبِّي وَلَا أُشْرِكُ بِهِ أَحَدًا ۖ قُلْ إِنِّي لَا أَمْلِكُ لَكُمْ ضَرًّا وَلَا رَشَدًا
ۖ قُلْ إِنِّي لَنُجِيبُنِي مِنَ اللَّهِ أَحَدًا وَلَنُجِيبَنَّ مِنْ دُونِهِ مَمْلُوكًا
ۖ إِلَّا بَلَاغًا مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرِسَالَاتِهِ ۖ وَمَنْ يَعْصِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ
قَالَ لَهُ تَارَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدًا فِيهَا أَبَدًا ۖ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا رَأَوْا مَا يُوعَدُونَ
فَسَبَّحُوا مِنْ أَضْعَافٍ نَاصِرًا ۖ وَقُلْ عَذَابُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ ۖ قُلْ إِنَّا أَدْرَىٰ أَقْرَبُ مَا
نُوعِدُونَ أَمْ يَجْعَلُ لَهُ رَبِّي أَمْسًا ۖ عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ فَلَا يُظْهِرُ عَلَى
غَيْبِهِ أَحَدًا ۖ إِلَّا مَنِ ارْتَضَىٰ مِنْ رَسُولٍ فَإِنَّهُ يَسْلُكُ مِنْ بَيْنِ
يَدَيْهِ وَيُؤَيِّنُ خَلْفَهُ ۖ رَسَدًا ۖ يَعْلَمُ أَن قَدْ أَبْلَغُوا رَسُولَاتِ
رَبِّهِمْ وَأَحَاطَ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ وَأَخْصَىٰ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عَدَدًا ۖ

14. ‘And among us are some who have wholly submitted to God, just as there are among us some who have deviated into disobedience to God. Whoever has submitted to God wholly, then such have sought and attained to right guidance (in belief and action).

15. ‘But as for those who have deviated into disobedience to God, they have become firewood for Hell.’”

16. If they (humankind and the jinn) followed the (Right) Road (of submission in Islam, without deviation), We would certainly grant them water (and provision) in abundance;⁵

17. We try them in that (which We grant them). Whoever turns away from his Lord’s Reminder (His Book of instruction), He will drive him into an ever-growing punishment (enveloping him in its severity).

18. All places of worship (and all parts of the body with which one prostrates⁶) are for God, and all worship is due to Him alone; so do not worship anyone along with God.

19. Yet, when God’s servant rises to pray, they (the polytheists) are all but upon him in swarms (with loud, derisive shouting to prevent his recitation of the Qur’ān being heard).

20. Say: “I worship only my Lord and I do not associate anyone as partner with Him.”

21. Say: “It is not in my power to cause you harm or bring you good by guiding you (to the Straight Path).”

22. Say: “No one could ever protect me from God (if I were to disobey Him), nor could I find a refuge except in Him.

23. “(What I can and must do is) only to convey (the truth) from God and His Messengers.” And whoever disobeys God and His Messenger, for him there is surely the fire of Hell, to abide therein forever.

24. (Let them continue to see you as few in number and weak and therefore belittle you, but) when they see what (the Fire) they are promised, they will come to know who is really weaker in helpers and fewer in number.

25. Say: “I do not know whether (your coming face to face with) what you are promised is near, or whether my Lord sets for it a distant term.”⁷

26. (He alone is) the Knower of the Unseen (what lies beyond human sense-perception), and He does not disclose His Unseen to anyone,

27. Except to a Messenger whom He has chosen (and is well-pleased with – He informs him of the Unseen as much as He wills); and He dispatches a watchful

guard before him (between him and his audience), and a watchful guard behind him (between him and the origin of the Revelation),

28. In order that He may establish that

they (the Messengers) have, for certain, conveyed the messages of their Lord. He encompasses all that they have (of the Revelation), and He has recorded everything one by one.⁸

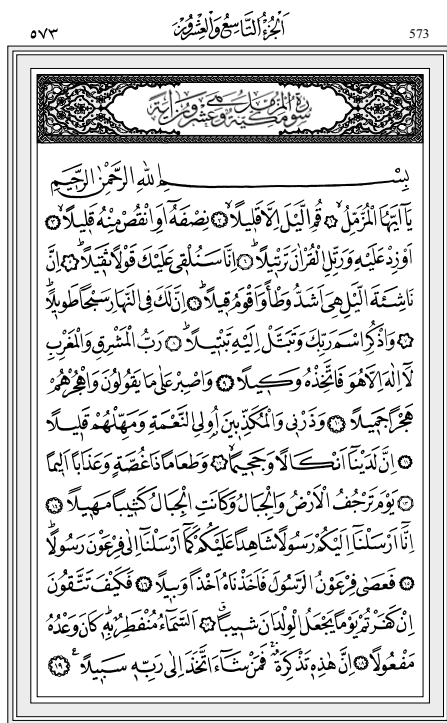
5. This verse has almost the same meaning as (7: 96): *If the peoples of those townships had but believed and, in order to deserve His protection, had kept from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety, We would surely have opened up for them blessings out of heaven and earth.*

6. Imam Bukhārī relates (“Adhān,” 133, 134, 137) that God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, enumerated the parts of the body that must touch the ground during prostration: “I have been ordered to prostrate on seven bodily parts: the forehead (and he also pointed to his nose), the hands, the knees, and the ends of the feet.”

7. Like verse 71: 25, this verse establishes the punishment or reward in the intermediate world (of the grave); here it is done decisively. What is promised for the obstinate enemies of God is Hellfire, as stated in verse 23 above. The exact time of Judgment Day is known exclusively to God and never changes. But this verse particularly refers it to God’s Will, which

emphasizes the fact that the unbelievers will encounter the punishment promised to them when they die.

8. This same fact is also indicated in the initial verses of *Sūrat al-Sāffāt* (37). Angels accompanied the Archangel Gabriel when he conveyed the Revelation to God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. They aligned themselves in ranks along the route by which Gabriel carried the Revelation to him, and some of them drove away the devils that were trying to grab something of the Revelation. Among those angels were also those who stood around the Messenger while other angels were conveying to him God’s messages concerning the invisible world or the future. These three last verses also emphasize the fact that the Revelation which came to the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, and which he conveyed to the people was perfectly preserved from the time it was entrusted to Gabriel by God until it was conveyed to the people (er-Rāzī, al-Qurṭubī, at-Ṭabatabāī).



SŪRAH 73

AL-MUZZAMMIL
(THE ENWRAPPED ONE)

Makkah Period

This sūrah of 20 verses, revealed in early period in Makkah, takes its name from the word *al-muzzammil* (the enwrapped one) in the first verse. However, there are some reports that its last verse was revealed in Madinah, although some scholars are of the opinion that it came at some later date in Makkah. It strongly advises Prayer at night, patience, and reliance upon God. It warns the unbelievers against the Day of Judgment.

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful,
the All-Compassionate.

1. O you enwrapped one, (under the heavy responsibility of Messengership)!¹
2. Rise to keep vigil at night, except a little;
3. Half of it, or lessen it a little,
4. Or add to it (a little); and pray and recite the Qur'an calmly and distinctly (with your mind and heart concentrated on it).
5. We will surely charge you with a weighty Word (and with applying it in your daily life and conveying it to others).
6. Rising and praying at night impresses (mind and heart) most strongly and (makes) recitation more certain and upright.
7. For by day you do have extended pre-occupations.
8. And keep in remembrance the Name of your Lord (and mention It in your Prayer), and devote yourself to Him whole-heartedly.
9. The Lord of the east and the Lord of the west; there is no deity but He, so take Him alone for one to rely on and to entrust your affairs to.
10. And endure patiently all that they say (against you), and stay aloof from their way (and part from them) in a becoming manner (not as they treat you; rather with forbearance and good advice).
11. And leave Me to deal with those who enjoy God's worldly blessings and yet obstinately persist in denying (Our Revelations), and grant them respite for a little while.
12. We have (in store for the likes of them) heavy fetters and a Blazing Flame,
13. And food that chokes, and a painful punishment.²
14. On that Day, the earth and the mountains will be violently shaken, and the mountains will be as a heap of slipping sand.

15. Surely We have sent to you (O people) a Messenger, a witness against you (one who will testify in the Hereafter as to your deeds in response to God's Message), just as We sent a Messenger to the Pharaoh.

16. But the Pharaoh rebelled against the Messenger, and so We seized him with a calamitous grasp.

17. Then how will you, if you persist in unbelief, guard yourselves against a Day which will turn the children gray-headed?

18. The sky will cleft open thereby. His promise (of Resurrection and Judgment) is certainly to be fulfilled.

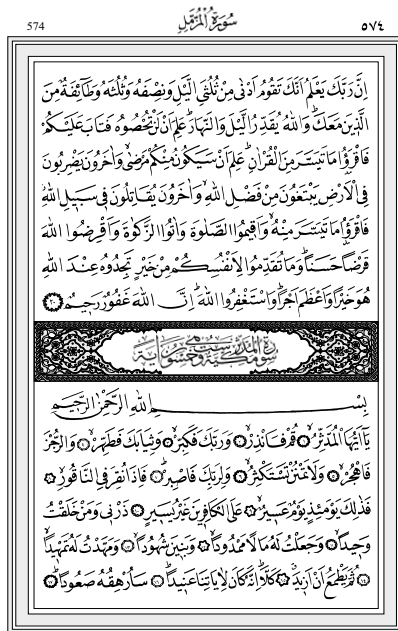
19. This is a reminder and admonition, and so let him, who wills, take a path to his Lord.

1. This address is directed to God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. This verse was revealed when he was lying down in his house enwrapped in his cloak or blanket. Although the verse expressed a physical reality, the figurative meaning it attached to that reality is more important. That is, the Messenger greatly suffered because of the deviations of his people, and fully felt the overwhelming responsibility of his mission. So, the verse implies the responsibility with which he was charged.

2. Concerning the kinds of torment in the Hereafter mentioned in the last two verses, Fakhru'd-Dīn ar-Rāzī says: "These four kinds of torment can well be interpreted as spiritual torments. Fetters symbolize the carnal soul's remaining shackled to its physical attachments and bodily pleasures. Since the carnal soul has acquired acquaintance with such pleasures and loved them in the world, when it departs from the body, it increases in agonies and worries, and its former acquaintance with and attachment to these become obstacles preventing it from entering the realm of peace and purity. Then those spiritual shackles generate spiritual fires, burning to the degree that the carnal soul was inclined towards such pleasures, along with the impossibility of attaining them; all this gives rise to a sensation of spiritual burning. This is the second step in the torment, which the verse describes as 'a blazing flame.'

Then the carnal soul tries to swallow the choking agonies of deprivation and the pangs of separation (from the objects of its worldly enjoyment). This is the 'food that chokes.' And, finally, it remains deprived of being illuminated by the Divine light and joining the community of the blessed ones. This is the greatest torment and is depicted as the 'painful punishment.' (The translation of ar-Rāzī's explanations up to that point belongs to Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'ān*,) But these explanations of mine should not be misunderstood. I do not mean that the meaning of these verses is restricted to what I have stated. Rather, I mean that these verses mention four steps of torment in the Hereafter which will be suffered both spiritually and physically."

It is a fact that both the blessings the people of Paradise will enjoy and the torments the people of Hell will suffer will be the consequences of their faith and deeds in the world. But they are not restricted to spiritual torment. Where the human self or soul (*nafs*) exists, things are not only spiritual. When we consider that even in the world it is the human soul which suffers from what happens to the body, not the body itself, we can easily understand that the pleasure and torment in the Hereafter cannot be thought of as being only spiritual. But we cannot know the exact nature of physical or bodily existence there.



20. Surely your Lord knows that you (O Messenger) rise and keep vigil sometimes nearly two-thirds of the night or (other times) a half of it or a third of it, and so do

some of those who are in your company as believers. God determines the measure of the night and day (which He has created). He knows that you (O believers) are unable to sustain this (such long vigils every night) and He has turned to you in mercy: so recite (when you do the Prayer) from the Qur'ān what is easy for you (to sustain as regular practice). He knows there will be among you those who are sick, and others going about the land seeking of God's bounty, and still others fighting in God's cause. Recite from it, then, as much as is easy (for you).³ But establish the Prayer in conformity with its conditions as prescribed, pay the Prescribed Purifying Alms (*the Zakāh*), and lend God a good loan (by spending in His cause and for the needy). Whatever of good you forward (to your future, eternal life) for your own selves, you will find it with God, better and greater in reward (than all that you have left behind in the world and much increased in value). And seek God's forgiveness (in all circumstances and eventualities).⁴ God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate (especially toward His believing, penitent servants).

3. The Night Prayer (*aṣ-Ṣalāt at-Tahajjud*) was enjoined on the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, in the early years of his Messengership. He kept such long vigils that his feet swelled up. Some of the believers followed him in keeping long vigils, although it was not obligatory upon them. But it was difficult for them to pray for two-thirds of the night, or half the night, or even one-third of the night, and so in Madinah God eased this burden. Although the *Tahajjud* Prayer is not obligatory upon Muslims, it is a highly recommended Prayer. It is sometimes said that those who have dedicated themselves to God's cause should observe it.

4. This verse draws attention to, and emphasizes the importance of, observing the prescribed

commandments of Islam. Due observance of these may compensate for the loss that is caused by some faults or minor sins and the faults that come from negligence in the recommended religious acts. The verse *sūrah* 58: 13, *Is it that you are afraid of offering something in charity before your consultation (with him)? (If so) and you have not done it, and God has turned to you in forgiveness, then establish the Prayer in conformity with its conditions, and pay the Prescribed Purifying Alms, and obey God and His Messenger. God is fully aware of all that you do*, is of the same import. And as pointed out in *sūrah* 71, note: 3, asking for God's forgiveness is a door that opens on almost every blessing of God. As we are fallible in nature, we should always seek His forgiveness.

SŪRAH 74

**AL-MUDDATHTHIR
(THE CLOAKED ONE)**

Makkah Period

Being one of the earliest Revelations to the Messenger, this *sūrah* has 56 verses and derives its name from the word *al-muddaththir* in the first verse, meaning “the cloaked and solitary one.” It outlines almost all the fundamentals of faith and the basic truths pertaining to humankind with which the Qur’ān is closely concerned.

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful,
the All-Compassionate.

1. O you cloaked one (who has preferred solitude)!¹
2. Arise and warn!²
3. And declare your Lord’s (indescribable and incomparable) greatness!
4. And keep your clothing clean!³
5. Keep away from all pollution!

6. Do not consider your fulfillment of these orders as a kindness (to God and people).

7. And for the sake of your Lord, be patient (in fulfilling your duty toward God and people).

8. Then, when the Horn is sounded,

9. That Day will be a day of hardship,

10. For the unbelievers – not easy.

11. Leave Me (to deal) with him whom I created alone;

12. And I enabled for him abundant wealth,

13. And children around him as means of power;

14. And I have granted him all means and status for a comfortable life.

15. And yet, he desires that I should give more.

16. By no means! Surely he has been in obstinate opposition to Our Revelations.

17. I will oblige him to a strenuous climb.⁴

1. After the first Revelation in the Cave of Hiraḥ, the Revelation did not come for some time. During this break, God’s Messenger usually preferred solitude in his home, and waited for the new Revelation to come. One day, when he was walking outside, he saw Gabriel in his original form, “sitting between the heaven and the earth.” This marked the end of the intermission and the Revelation that began to come with this *sūrah* continued without cessation.

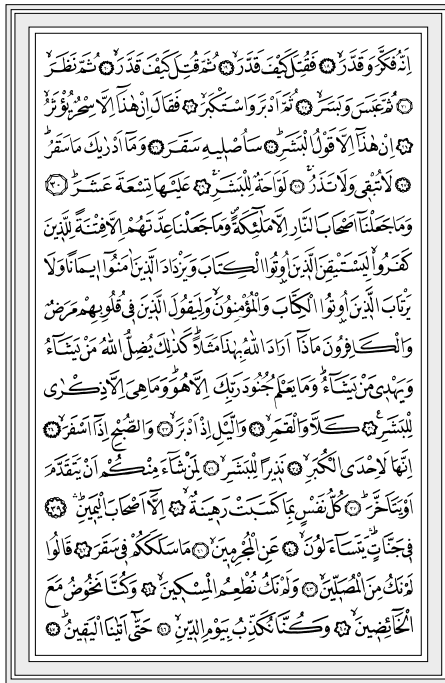
2. God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, was both a warner (against all kinds of misguidance and transgression) and one who gave good tidings in return for correct belief and good deeds. So the command “warn” also suggests giving glad tidings. However, especially in the beginning, warning took priority.

3. This verse is about the absolute purity of

the garments and should be considered together with the third verse as a preparation for the Prayer, which is ordered in the following verses. Or, if we take into account that the Qur’ān likens righteousness and piety to a garment (7: 26), in addition to its outward meaning, this verse may also signify deepening or growing in devotion to God.

However, these orders should not be regarded as only pertaining to the Messenger; they are directed to all believers.

4. This refers to the difficulties that this man would encounter in the world and the torment awaiting him in the Hellfire. The man (Walid ibn Mughīrah) mentioned here did not cease to lose his wealth and children after the revelation of these verses until he died, though the verse is not limited historically and can also apply to any one of us who acts like him.



18. He pondered and he calculated (how he could disprove the Qur'an in people's sight).

19. Be away from God's mercy, how he calculated!

20. Yea, be away from God's mercy,⁵ how he calculated!

21. Then he looked around (in the manner of one who will decide on a matter about which he is asked).

22. Then he frowned and scowled.

23. Then he turned his back and (despite inwardly acknowledging the Qur'an's Divine origin), grew in arrogance,

24. And he said: "This is nothing but sorcery (of a sort transmitted from sorcerers) from old times.

25. "This is nothing but the word of a mortal."

26. I will make him enter a pit of Hell.

27. What enables you to perceive what that pit is?

28. It leaves none (but entirely burns everyone of those thrown into it), nor does it spare anyone (so that they might die and escape).

29. It scorches up the skin.

30. Over it there are nineteen (keepers).

31. We have appointed none but angels as keepers of the Fire, and We have not caused their number to be anything but a trial for those who disbelieve, that those who were granted the Book before may become certain (that Muḥammad, who explains everything revealed to him without any hesitation in the face of all antagonism and derision, is God's Messenger), and those who believe may grow firmer in faith; and that both they who were granted the Book before and the believers may feel no doubt at all; and those in whose hearts there is a disease and the unbelievers may say: "What does God mean by this description?" Thus, God leads astray whom He wills, and guides whom He wills. None knows your Lord's hosts except He. All this is but a reminder to the mortals (so that they may take heed and act accordingly).⁶

32. No, indeed (the Qur'an is not as the unbelievers claim)! By the moon,

33. And by the night when it retreats,

34. And by the morning when it shines forth,⁷

35. Surely it (the Qur'an) is of the greatest (of God's signs);

36. A warning for humankind -

37. For everyone of you, whether he goes forward (by choosing faith and good deeds), or hangs back (because his choice of unbelief and sin pulls him away from the Straight Path).

38. Every person is held in pledge for what he earns (through his deeds),

39. Except the people of the Right (the people of happiness and prosperity who receive their Records in their right hands. God will forgive them and reward them with much more than they earned).⁸

40. Dwelling in Gardens (whose beauty cannot be perceived while in the world), they will put questions to one another,

41. About the disbelieving criminals, (and convey the answers they give):

42. "What has brought you into the pit?"

43. They will reply: "We were not of those who prayed (who turn to God in sincere worship);

44. "Nor did we use to feed the destitute.

45. "We used to plunge (in falsehood and sin) together with those who plunged (in it).

46. "And we used to deny the (coming of the) Day of Judgment.

47. "Until what is certain to come did come upon us."

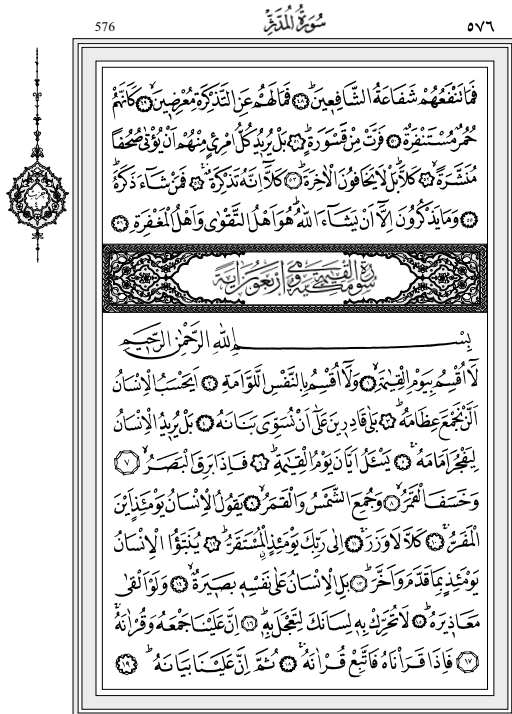
5. The original of the initial phrases in the last two verses interpreted as, *Be away from God's mercy!*, and *Yea, be away from God's mercy!*, is *QuTiLa*. It also has a figurative, derisive meaning, which is: *May God preserve him from the evil eye!* This figurative meaning, which, in fact, is used to say, "How badly he did it, but in an affected manner as if he knew everything and did well whatever he does!," seems to be more apt in the second case.

6. The unbelievers who rejected the afterlife and therefore any fact or Qur'ānic expression concerning it, scoffed at the idea that there are 19 keepers over the Fire, saying that they could easily defeat such a number. So God explained that these 19 are angels, not human beings. However, those unbelievers considered angels as "the daughters of God" and therefore did not hold their power in awe. Another verse (66: 6) describes them: *Over it are angels stern and strict (in executing the command to punish), who do not disobey God in whatever He commands them, and carry out what they are commanded (to carry out)*. So this otherworldly fact became a means of trial for them. God has many other hosts about which we do not know. The Qur'an mentions such facts, in addition to some other purposes, as a reminder and explanation for humans, especially unbe-

lievers, who tend to perceive God and the facts concerning Him in human terms.

7. Swearing by *the moon and the night when it retreats* and *the morning when it shines forth* implies that the daylight and the sun of God's guidance are about to replace the moon and the night in the history of humanity.

8. Believing in God and obedience to Him in His commandments are among God's rights upon human beings, so everyone is held in pledge by God as they are duty-bound to fulfill this right of God upon them. Those who fulfill this duty are released, while others are kept in Hell. The Qur'an classifies people into three groups, according to whether they have fulfilled this duty or not, and according to the degree of its fulfillment (see *sūrah* 56: 7-10). In addition to the two groups mentioned in this *sūrah* (namely, the people of the Right and the disbelieving criminals [the people of the Left]), there are those foremost in faith and good deeds, and in serving God's cause; they will be the foremost (in receiving and enjoying God's mercy). Since they are the nearest to God and constant in faith and good deeds – and as they will therefore be exempt from being tried in the Supreme Court in the Hereafter (*sūrah* 37: 128) – they are not mentioned in the verses discussed.



48. And so, of no benefit to them will be the intercession of any who are entitled to intercede, (even if they are allowed to intercede).

49. What, then, is the matter with them that they turn away in aversion from the Reminder (the Qur'ān),

50. As though they were frightened wild donkeys,

51. Fleeing from a lion?

52. Indeed, every one of them desires that he should be given a Book (particular to him) opened out.

53. By no means! Indeed, they do not (believe in and, therefore, do not) fear the Hereafter.

54. By no means! This (Qur'ān) is a reminder and admonition (sufficient for all).

55. So, whoever wills receives admonition and takes heed.

56. Yet they will not receive admonition

and take heed unless God wills; He is the Lord of righteousness and piety, and the Lord of forgiveness.⁹

9. That is, all success depends on God's absolute Will and forgiveness. But He wills success and forgiveness for those who revere Him and act righteously and piously.

SŪRAH 75

AL-QIYĀMAH (RESURRECTION)

Makkah Period

This sūrah of 40 verses is concerned with death as the “doom” of every individual, and with events that will take place during the final overall destruction of the world and revival of all the dead. It was revealed in Makkah. It takes its name from the word *al-qiyaamah* (Resurrection) in the first verse.

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful,
the All-Compassionate.

1. I swear by the Day of Resurrection;
2. And I swear by the self-accusing human soul;¹
3. Does human think that We will never assemble his bones (to resurrect him)?
4. Yes indeed, We are able to make complete his very fingertips.²
5. But human (by willful choice) denies what lies ahead of him (the other life, because he desires to live only as he pleases).
6. He asks: “When is the Day of Resurrection?”
7. When the eyesight is confounded (through fear),
8. And the moon is darkened,
9. And the sun and the moon are joined together,
10. On that Day, human will say: “Where is the escape?”
11. By no means! No refuge (to flee to)!

12. To your Lord the journey's end will be on that Day.

13. Human will be made to understand on that Day all (the good and evil) that he forwarded (to his afterlife while in the world), and all (the good and evil) that he left behind.³

14. Indeed, human will be an eye-witness (providing evidence) against himself,

15. Even though he puts forth his excuses.⁴

16. O Prophet! Move not your tongue to hasten it (for safekeeping in your heart).

17. Surely it is for Us to collect it (in your heart) and enable you to recite it (by heart).

18. So when We recite it, follow its recitation;

19. Thereafter, it is for Us to explain it.⁵

1. For the meaning of the human soul (*nafs*), see *sūrah* 3, note 37; *sūrah* 21, note 5.

Self-training, or the training of the soul, has been accepted as an extremely important element of the Divine Religion. This training, according to some schools in Islam, has ten stages, and according to others and some Qur'ānic allusions seven stages:

If the soul lives only a life of ease in the swamp of carnal appetites, it is the evil-commanding soul (*nafs al-ammārah*); if it falters time and again while following the way of the Religion to attain piety and righteousness, but each time that it falters it criticizes itself and turns to its Lord, then it is the self-accusing soul (*nafs al-lawwāmah*). The soul which always resists evil in devotion to God and is favored with certain Divine gifts in proportion to its purity is called the soul receiving inspiration (*nafs al-mulhimah*). When it reaches the point where it has a relation with its Lord in perfect devotion and sincerity, such that its consciousness is at rest, it is the soul at rest (*nafs al-muṭmainnah*). If it has reached the station where it abandons all its choices and is a representative of Divine will, it is the soul pleased with God (*nafs ar-rāḍiyah*). When its greatest aim is acquiring God's good pleasure and approval, such that it is always acting with this end in consideration of, "I am pleased with You, so be pleased with me," then it is the soul with which God is pleased (*nafs al-marḍiyyah*). Finally, the soul which has been perfectly purified of all sins and evil morals and has the capacity to be completely adorned with the full manifestations of Divine Qualities and Prophetic will-power and reso-

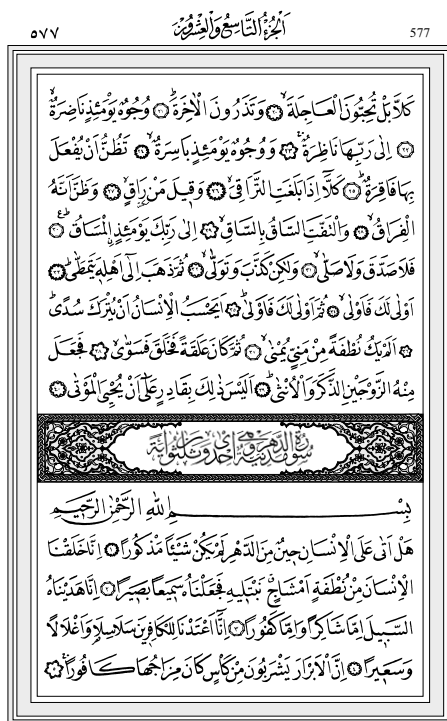
lution is called the soul perfected or the soul pure (*nafs az-zakiyyah* or *nafs aṣ-ṣāfiyyah*).

2. The fingertips are the physical extremities of the body, and it is also important that the identity of a person can be determined through his or her fingerprints. So what this verse is saying is that every human being will be revived in all his or her particularities, down to the fingertips. Yet the uniqueness of the fingertips of each human being became widely known only centuries after the revelation of the Qur'an.

3. On the Day of Resurrection, people will rejoice in the good they did and the evil they did not do while in the world, and they will regret the evil they did and the good that they left undone.

4. That is, as pointed out in *sūrah* 32: 20 and *sūrah* 36: 65, on the Day of Resurrection, the parts of the human body will testify as to what they saw, heard or experienced.

5. The last four verses seem to have no relation with those before or after them. They are concerned with the revelation of the Qur'an to God's Messenger and his manner of receiving it. The Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, showed great concern in receiving and committing to heart the Qur'an during its revelation, and therefore tried to repeat and memorize it. He was also very concerned about fully understanding the meaning. These verses, like 20: 114, which is almost of the same import, assure him that God will enable him to memorize it and understand its meaning. As for the reason why these verses exist between the verses concerning the Day of Resurrection, the Messenger may have shown special care in memorizing them during their revelation.



20. Yes indeed! (We are able to make complete his very fingerprints to resurrect him,) but you (people) love and prefer what is before you (the present, worldly life),⁶

21. And abandon that which is to come later (the Hereafter).

22. Some faces on that Day will be radiant (with contentment),

23. Looking up toward their Lord.

24. And some faces on that Day will be despondent,

25. Knowing that a crushing calamity is about to be inflicted on them.

26. No indeed! (No doubt remains for the meaning of the present, worldly life, which you prefer to the Hereafter) when it (the last breath) comes up to the throat –

27. And it is said, “Is there a wizard (that could save him)?” –

28. While he (who is dying) is certain that it is the (moment of) parting,

29. And (in the agony of death) one leg is intertwined with the other.

30. To your Lord is, on that Day, the driving.

31. He did not affirm the truth (of the Divine Message conveyed to him), nor did he do the Prayer;

32. Rather, he denied and turned away.

33. Thereafter he went back to his family in gleeful conceit.

34. So, well have you deserved (this doom), well have you deserved (it).

35. Again, well have you deserved it and well deserved.

36. Does human think that he is to be left to himself (to go about as he pleases)?

37. Was he not once a mere drop of semen poured forth?

38. Then he became a clot clinging (to the womb wall), and He created and fashioned (him) in due proportions;

39. Then He made of him a pair, male and female.

40. Is not He (Who does that, equally) able to bring the dead back to life?

6. This is another passage to follow, *Does human think that We will never assemble his bones (to resurrect him)?* (verse 3), and so

means, “Yes indeed, We are able to make complete his very fingertips, (reviving him wholly), but you”

SŪRAH 76

AL-INSĀN (HUMAN)

Makkah Period

This *sūrah* of 31 verses was revealed in Makkah and takes its name from the word *al-insān* (human) in the first verse. It is about human perfectibility, the virtues of good believers and the reward they will get in the Hereafter. It also contains advice for the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, and hence for the believers dedicated to his cause.

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful,
the All-Compassionate.

1. Did there pass (and surely there did pass) over human a stretch of time when

he was a thing not mentioned and remembered (as human)?¹

2. We have surely created human from a small quantity of mingled fluids, moving him from one state to another, and (finally) We have made him one hearing and seeing (so that he may hear God's Message and see His signs).

3. And We have shown him the right way, whether he be grateful (and follow this way) or ungrateful (and follow the way opposed to the right one).²

4. We have surely prepared for the thankless unbelievers chains, and fetters, and a Blaze.

5. The virtuous and godly will surely drink from a cup with heavenly wine flavored with heavenly additives.

1. This does not mean that humans did not exist at all during that stretch of time. Rather, as implied in *sūrah* 2: 28 and explained in the note 27, each member of humankind has some sort of existence in the world of atoms or particles. In other words, since it has already been evident in God's Knowledge and determined by Destiny which particles among the innumerable particles of the world will constitute the body of which person, those particles, however widely distributed in air, water, and earth, had long been appointed to constitute the body of the particular individual, even though that individual was not known or mentioned as (a) human being.

Humankind is the fruit of the Tree of Creation and therefore contained its seed. So the Tree of Creation has grown out of the seed of humankind. In other words, as a tree is the developed form of its seed, each human being carries in his or her body and self the entire nature and original elements of oth-

er forms of existence. Thus, what meaning a seed bears with respect to a tree, humankind has it with respect to the universe. Science should concentrate on this point while investigating how life began on earth and how humankind originated.

2. God has created human with a disposition and capacity to believe in God and follow His way, and endowed him or her accordingly with the necessary faculties. This is His guidance based on or originating in His creation, as pointed out in *sūrah* 30: 30: *So set your whole being upon the true religion (of Islam) as one of pure faith (free from unbelief, polytheism, and hypocrisy). This is the original pattern belonging to God on which He has originated humankind. No change can there be in God's creation. This is the upright, ever-true Religion, but most of the people do not know.* (See also Appendix 13.) Out of His special compassion, He also sent us Messengers and showed us His way. Further than that, He

made following His way very easy for humankind through the character and leadership of those Messengers. He declares: *Messengers (have been sent as) bearers of glad tidings and warners, so that people might have no argument against God after the Messengers (had come to them). And God is All-Glorious with irresistible might, All-Wise* (sūrah 4: 165). This is His showing of His right way. However, He has created humankind as distinct from other creatures and endowed us with free will, and so He does not compel us to choose and follow His way. He has left it to free choice – such that we can be grateful and choose His way, or be ungrateful and choose other ways than His. But He has also informed humankind explicitly of the consequence of our choices.

So, humankind divides into two main groups after God's guidance is conveyed to them: those who accept God's guidance and follow it, and those who reject it. Every one of them will be treated in the Hereafter accord-

ing to their choice. However, there is another group made up of those to whom the Divine guidance has not been conveyed or who have not been able to find it due to certain circumstances. They are the ones mentioned in 4: 98-99: *Except those truly oppressed among the men, and the women, and the children altogether without means and not guided to a way (to emigrate, and including those who, in their lifetime, have not had a means to be guided to faith.) For those (while their circumstances are unchanged, it is expected that) God will not hold them accountable and will excuse them. Assuredly God is One Who excuses much, All-Forgiving.*

God will treat them in the Hereafter as He wills. However, it is greatly hoped that He will not punish particularly those among them who believe in God and do not oppress others, nor commit certain major sins such as murder, adultery, and the usurpation of others' rights, that are abhorrent to human conscience.

سُورَةُ الْإِنشَانِ

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عَيْنًا يَشْرَبُ بِهَا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ يُفَجِّرُونَهَا تَفْجِيرًا ۖ يُؤْفُونَ بِالنَّذِرِ وَيُخَافُونَ
يَوْمًا كَانَ سُوءٌ مُسْتَعْدِدًا ۖ وَيُظِلُّونَ الظَّلَامَ عَلَىٰ عُنُقِهِمْ مَكَانًا وَبَسِيرًا ۖ
إِنَّمَا تُطْعَمُهُمْ لَوْ سِوَهُ اللَّهِ لَا يَزِيدُهُمْ جُرْأَةً وَلَا يُنْكَرُوكَ ۖ إِنَّا خَافُ مِنْ
رَبِّنَا يَوْمَاعْبُوسًا فَفُطِّرْنَا ۖ فَوْقَهُمُ اللَّهُ سَتْرَ ذَٰلِكَ الْيَوْمِ وَلَقِيَهُمْ
نَصْرَةٌ وَمُسُورًا ۖ وَجَزَيْنَهُمْ بِمَا صَبَرُوا جَنَّةً وَجَرًّا ۖ مُتَّكِئِينَ
فِيهَا عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ لَا يَرَوْنَ فِيهَا شَمْسًا وَلَا زَمْهَرِيرًا ۖ وَدَائِبَةٌ عَلَيْهِمْ
ظِلَالُهَا وَذَٰلِكَ فُطُوْفُهَا تَذْلِيلًا ۖ وَيُطَافُ عَلَيْهِمْ بِرَائِيَةٍ مِنْ فِضَّةٍ
وَأَكْوَابٍ كَانَتْ قَوَارِيرًا ۖ قَوَارِيرٌ مِنْ فِضَّةٍ قَدَّرُوهَا تَقْدِيرًا ۖ
وَيَسْقُونَ فِيهَا كَأْسًا كَانَ مِزَاجُهَا زَنْجَبِيلًا ۖ عَيْنًا فِيهَا شَتَّىٰ سَلْسَبِيلًا
ۖ وَيَطُوفُ عَلَيْهِمْ وِلْدَانٌ مُخَلَّدُونَ إِذَا رَأَيْتَهُمْ حَسِبْتَهُمْ لُؤْلُؤًا مَنُورًا
ۖ وَإِذَا رَأَيْتَهُمْ رَأَيْتُ عِيسَىٰ وَمَلَكًا كَرِيمًا ۖ عَلَيْهِمَا ثِيَابٌ مُسْنَدِينَ
خُضْرًا أَسْتَبْرَقَ وَحُلَاهُمُ اسْكَاوَرٌ مِنْ فِضَّةٍ وَنَسْفُهُمْ زُهُورٌ مُنِيرًا
ۖ إِنَّ هَٰذَا كَانَ لَكُمُ جَزَاءً وَكَانَ سَنِيْعُكُمْ مُنْعُورًا ۖ إِنَّا نَحْنُ
نَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ تَنْزِيلًا ۖ فَاصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ وَلَا تُطْغِ
مِنْهُمْ إِنَّمَا أَهْوَاهُ ۖ وَأَذْكُرْ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ بُحْرَةً وَاصِيلًا ۖ

6. A spring from which God's (virtuous and godly) servants will drink (their fill), causing it to gush abundantly.³

7. (They are those who) fulfill the vow (the promises and responsibilities that they undertake), and who fear a Day whose evil is extensive and encompassing (everyone that deserves it).

8. They give food, however great be their need for it, with pleasure to the destitute, and to the orphan, and to the captive, (saying):⁴

9. "We feed you only for God's sake; we desire from you neither recompense nor thanks (we desire only the acceptance of God).

10. "We are surely fearful of a Day from our Lord, (a Day) of frowning and severity (toward the guilty)."

11. So God will surely preserve them from the evil of that Day and enable them to find radiance and joy.

12. He will reward them for all that they endure: a Garden (of Paradise) and garments of silk.

13. Reclining therein on thrones; they will find therein neither (burning) sun nor severe cold.

14. And its shade will come down low over them, and its clusters of fruit hang down low within their reach.

15. And they will be served with vessels of silver and goblets like crystal –

16. Crystal-clear, made of silver; they themselves determine the measure of the drink (as they wish).⁵

17. And there they will be given to drink of a cup flavored with ginger (of Paradise),

18. (Filled from) a spring therein called *Salsabīl* (as it flows smoothly and continuously as they wish).

19. There will go round them youths of perpetual freshness;⁶ when you see them, you would think them scattered pearls.

20. And wherever you have a look therein, you will see unimaginable delight and a great kingdom.

21. Upon those (servants) will be garments of fine green silk and brocade, and they will be adorned with armbands of sil-

ver;⁷ and their Lord will favor them with the service of a pure drink:

22. “This is what has been (prepared) for you as a reward, and your endeavor has been recognized and accepted.”

23. It is We Who send down the Qur’ān on you (O Messenger) in parts,

24. So wait patiently for your Lord’s judgment, and pay no heed to (the desires and caprices of) any of them who is a willful sinner or a thankless unbeliever.

25. And remember and mention the Name of your Lord (in worship) in the early morning and in the afternoon;

3. The last two verses may be considered together with *sūrah* 37: 45–47; *sūrah* 47: 15, and *sūrah* 56: 18–19.

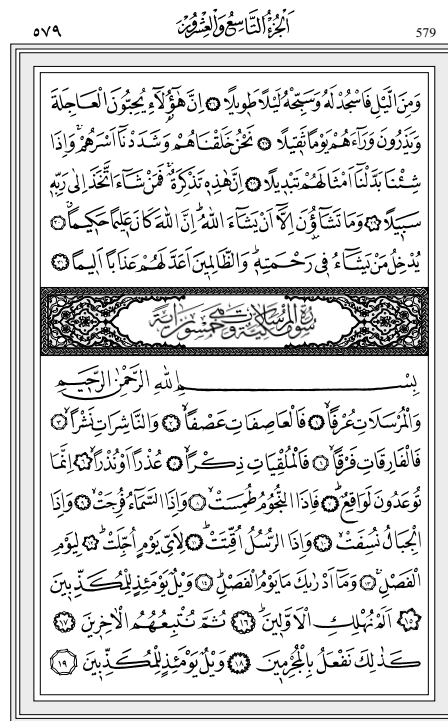
4. This virtue is essential and common to godliness and true piety. See *sūrah* 2: 177; *sūrah* 3: 92.

5. That is, therein will be for them everything

that they desire, and in God’s Presence there is yet more (*sūrah* 50: 35).

6. On these youths, see *sūrah* 56, note 3.

7. On these garments and armbands, see *sūrah* 18, note 18.



26. And during part of the night prostrate to Him, and glorify Him a long part of the night.⁸

27. Those (sinful unbelievers) love and prefer that which is in advance (the present, worldly life), and neglect a grievous Day ahead of them.

28. It is We Who have created them and made firm their composition; and whenever We will, We can change their structure and character entirely.

29. All this is an admonition and reminder; and so, let him who wills take a path to his Lord.

30. You cannot will unless God wills.⁹ Surely God is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

31. He admits whom He wills into His mercy; and as to the wrongdoers, He has prepared for them a painful punishment.

8. In many verses (e.g., *sūrah* 11: 114; *sūrah* 17: 78; *sūrah* 20: 130), the Qur'an orders mentioning God or His Name, glorifying Him, and prostrating to Him. These orders are generally understood and interpreted as commanding prayer to God. Accordingly, in the last two verses in this *sūrah*, it orders mentioning His Name in the early morning (meaning the Dawn Prayer), and from noon until the evening (meaning the Noon/Afternoon Prayer). And it orders prostrating before Him *during part of the night* (meaning the Evening, the Late Evening or Early Night Prayer), and glorifying Him *a long part of the night* (meaning the *Tahajjud* Prayer). Five daily services of Prayer were ordered during the Ascension

in the 11th year of the Makkan period of Islam. Until then, as it is understood from the relevant verses, the Prayer was performed at three times – in the morning before the sunrise, at any time from noon until the evening, and in the early part of night. The *Tahajjud* Prayer (the Prayer in the second part of night before dawn) was also stressed.

Understanding mentioning our Lord's Name as meaning the Morning and Afternoon Prayer, and prostration as meaning the early night Prayer, and glorification as meaning the *Tahajjud* Prayer may indicate that we should prolong *qirā'ah* (recitation of the Qur'an) in the Morning and Noon/Afternoon Prayers; that prostration is more important in the Evening

and Late Evening Prayers; and that glorification is more highly recommended in the *Tahajjud Prayer*. God knows best.

9. For the meaning of this statement and the relation between God's absolute Will and human free will, see: *sūrah* 2, notes 10, 23; *sūrah* 3, note 30; *sūrah* 4, note 18; *sūrah* 6, note 9; *sūrah* 11, note 1; and note 2 on this *sūrah*, and Appendix 7. To summarize what has been said so far:

God's Will is absolute and encompasses human free will. From one perspective, the Divine Will is identical with Divine Knowledge. God knows (beforehand) what people freely will to do and all that they do is within God's Knowledge. The actions of humankind are within God's Knowledge and Wisdom. That is, in or-

der for their will to be a cause of their deeds, God's all-encompassing Wisdom also has a part in it. This verse's concluding with mentioning God as All-Knowing and All-Wise, points to this fact. It is God Who has endowed humankind with free will, and human beings always need God to be able to use their free will and accomplish what they will. God has designed human life and established the reality of deeds and all that a person meets in consequence of their deeds. No one can go beyond this encompassing design. God never compels a person to do a particular deed; the human experience of free choice of action is quite real, and it must be so, for everyone is responsible and accountable for their actions.

SŪRAH 77

AL-MURSALĀT
(THE COMPANIES SENT)

Makkah Period

Revealed in the early years of the Makkan period of the mission of God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, this *sūrah* of 50 verses takes its name from the word *al-mursalāt* (the companies sent) in the first verse. It mentions the functions of some classes of angels in certain universal events, focusing attention on the Power of God, the truth of the Resurrection and the afterlife, and warning against the denial of this truth.

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful,
the All-Compassionate.

1. By the companies (of angels) sent one after another for some good results,
2. And then moving as fast and forcefully as tempests;
3. And by those enfolding the Scrolls of Revelation,
4. And serving (for right and wrong) to be separated with all clarity,
5. And so bringing down the Revelation,
6. In order that some may have the means

to ask for forgiveness and that some may be warned –

7. Surely what you are promised is bound to take place:¹
8. When the stars are effaced,
9. And when the sky is rent asunder,
10. And when the mountains are blown away (as dust),
11. And when the time for the Messengers (to bear witness for or against their communities) is appointed.
12. For what day has the term (of all this) been set?
13. For the Day of Judgment and Distinction (between people according to how they believed and acted in the world).
14. What enables you to perceive what the Day of Judgment and Distinction is?
15. Woe on that Day to those who deny (the Day)!
16. Did We not destroy the ancient peoples (who denied)?
17. So do We make the later generations (of the same standing) follow them (in being destroyed).
18. For thus do We deal with the disbelieving criminals.
19. Woe on that Day to those who deny!

1. Angels have very important functions or duties in both our lives and the operation of the universe around them. The Qur'ān mentions the angels with the duties they fulfill and in the groups that fulfill those duties. For example, see *sūrah* 37: 1–3; *sūrah* 79: 1–5. However, we usually live unaware of either them and their universal duties. In these initial verses,

God focuses our attention on them, particularly those of them conveying the Revelation to the Messengers, thus playing a role in the separation of right from wrong, and the separation of those who serve right from those who serve wrong. God concludes the oaths He makes by those angels by emphasizing that the Day of Resurrection will most certainly come.

اَلَمْ نَخْلُقْكُمْ مِمَّا مَاءٍ مَّهِينٍ ۝ جَعَلْنَاهُ فِي قَرَارٍ مَّكِينٍ ۝ اِلَىٰ قَدَرٍ
 مَّعْلُومٍ ۝ قَدَرًا نَّفَعْنَا الْاِنْدَادُونَ ۝ وَبَلَّوْا مِزْلَ لُبَّكَدِّينَ ۝
 اَلَمْ نَجْعَلِ الْاَرْضَ كِفَاتًا ۝ اَنْحَاءً وَاَمْوَاتًا ۝ وَجَعَلْنَا فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ
 تَجَاوَزُهَا سَبْعًا مَّائَةً اَوَّاتًا ۝ وَبَلَّوْا مِزْلَ لُبَّكَدِّينَ ۝
 اِنْطَلِقُوا اِلَىٰ مَا كُنْتُمْ بِهِ تُكَذِّبُونَ ۝ اِنْطَلِقُوا اِلَىٰ ظِلِّ ذِي تِلْكَ
 شُعْبٍ ۝ لَا ظَلِيلٍ وَلَا يُغْنِي عَنْكُمْ مِنَ الْاَلْهَبِ ۝ اِنَّهَا تَرْمِي بِشَرَرٍ
 كَالْقَصْرِ ۝ كَاَنَّهُ جِبَالٌ تَابُوتٌ ۝ وَبَلَّوْا مِزْلَ لُبَّكَدِّينَ ۝
 هَذَا يَوْمُ لَا يَنْطَفِقُونَ ۝ وَلَا يُؤْتُونَ عَمَلَهُمْ فِعْلًا رُوتَ ۝
 وَبَلَّوْا مِزْلَ لُبَّكَدِّينَ ۝ هَذَا يَوْمُ الْفَصْلِ جَمْعًا كَرَاهًا وَلَا اُولَئِكَ
 ۝ فَاَن كَانْ لَكُمْ كَيْدٌ فَكِيدُوا ۝ وَبَلَّوْا مِزْلَ لُبَّكَدِّينَ ۝
 اِنَّ النَّفْتِينَ فِي ظِلَالٍ وَعُيُونٍ ۝ وَقَوَّاهُ بِمَا يَنْشَهُونَ ۝ كَلُوا
 وَاشْرَبُوا هَنِيئًا بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْمُلُونَ ۝ اِنَّا كَذَّبْنَا نَجْمِي الْحُسَيْنِ ۝
 وَبَلَّوْا مِزْلَ لُبَّكَدِّينَ ۝ كَلُوا وَتَمَتَّعُوا قُلُودًا تَكْفُرُونَ ۝
 وَبَلَّوْا مِزْلَ لُبَّكَدِّينَ ۝ وَاِنَّا قَبْلَ هَٰذَا لَكُنَّا لَآرَ كُفْرًا ۝
 وَبَلَّوْا مِزْلَ لُبَّكَدِّينَ ۝ فَاَسَىٰ حَبِثَ بَعْدَهُ يَوْمُ مَنُوتَ ۝

20. (How and why do you dare to deny?) Did We not create you from a humble fluid?

21. Then We placed it in a firm, secure place (to remain),

22. For a known, pre-ordained term (of gestation).

23. Thus have We determined (everything related to your existence): how excellent We are in determining!

24. Woe on that Day to those who deny!

25. Have We not made the earth a receptacle,

26. Both for the living and the dead?

27. And We have set therein mountains firm, lofty in stature, and given you to drink the sweet water (gushing out of them).

28. Woe on that Day to those who deny!

29. "Move towards that (Fire) which you used to deny!

30. "Move towards the shadow (of black smoke ascending) in three columns.²

31. "It will neither give (cooling) shade, nor will it be of any avail against the flame."

32. It (the Fire) will throw out sparks like castles,

33. (Scattered abroad) as if they were yellow camels.³

34. Woe on that Day to those who deny!

35. This will be a Day when they (the deniers) will not utter a word;

36. Nor will they be allowed to offer excuses.⁴

37. Woe on that Day to those who deny!

38. "This is the Day of Judgment and Distinction (between people, according to how they believed and acted in the world). We have assembled you and the earlier ones (from earlier communities who were also deniers).

39. "So if you have a scheme (to save yourselves from My punishment), then apply it (against Me)!"

40. Woe on that Day to those who deny!

41. Surely the God-revering, pious will be amidst pleasant shade and springs;

42. And fruit of whatever kinds they desire.

43. "Eat and drink to your hearts' content for all that you used to do (in the world)."

44. Thus do We reward those who are devoted to doing good, aware that God is seeing them.

45. Woe on that Day to those who deny!
 46. Consume (the riches of the world) and enjoy your life but for a little while, for you are criminals, committed to accumulating sins!
 47. Woe on that Day to those who deny!

48. When they are told, "Bow down (before God in humility and worship Him)!" they do not bow down.
 49. Woe on that Day to those who deny!
 50. In what other Word, beyond this (Qur'ān), will they believe?

2. It is worth attention that the smoke of Hellfire will ascend in three columns. This becomes more meaningful when we consider that the Qur'ān uses light in singular and darkness in plural as depths or veils of darkness (in Arabic the smallest number of the plural form is three). This may be an indication to the fact that in history, the association of partners with God and systems of oppression have usually been based on three "columns." While describing the deeds of unbelievers, the Qur'ān says, that *their deeds are like veils of darkness covering up an abysmal sea down into its depths, covered up by a billow, above which is a billow, above which is a cloud: veils of darkness piled one upon another so that when he stretches out his hand, he can hardly see it* (sūrah 24: 40). It may also allude to the result of misuse of the three cardinal faculties given to humans – namely intellect, anger, and lusts; or of the three powers upon which a government is based – namely execution, judgment, and legislation; or, from another perspective, power, capital, and knowledge or education; or power, justice, and law (see sūrah 57: 25, note 15). For example, the Qur'ān says that the Prophet Moses, upon him be peace, was sent to the Pharaoh, Korah, and Hāmān (sūrah 29: 39; 40: 24). This must be one of the reasons for, as an instance of wisdom, the fact that during the

Hajj, the pilgrims throw stones at three "devils" arranged in columns (the major, the middle, and the minor).

3. The sparks of Hellfire being as big as, or being likened to, castles and camels may be an allusion to the worldly things that those condemned to Hellfire love passionately. What is most valuable for desert people is camel, while those who live in towns lost in pleasures are addicted to having lofty castles.

4. According to several verses, the people condemned to Hell will utter words of different import. For example, from Hell, they will address God and the believers in Paradise (sūrah 23: 105–106); and they will address the chief guard of Hell (Mālik) (sūrah 43: 77); on their way to Hell, they will also address the believers in order to try to get some of their light (sūrah 57: 13–14); they will reproach themselves in the Place of Supreme Gathering (sūrah 36: 52; sūrah 37: 20); they will dispute among themselves (sūrah 34: 31–33); etc. So it can be concluded that everything will not take place in the same strain on the Day of Judgment. It will be a Day during which there will be many other "days;" thus, this verse mentions one of the scenes of the other world where the unbelievers will not utter a word, nor be allowed to offer excuses.