

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

A Concise Explanation of the
Short Sūras of the Qur'ān

Sūrat al-Fātiḥa and Sūras 99–114

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Transliteration Key

Arabic has been transliterated in this book according to the system of Turath Publishing, set out below.

ء	’	ض	ḍ
ب	b	ط	ṭ
ت	t	ظ	ẓ
ث	th	ع	‘
ج	j	غ	gh
ح	ḥ	ف	f
خ	kh	ق	q
د	d	ك	k
ذ	dh	ل	l
ر	r	م	m
ز	z	ن	n
س	s	و	w
ش	sh	ه	h
ص	ṣ	ي	y

Short vowels are rendered a, i and u; the long vowels ā, ī and ū. The diphthongs are written *aw* and *ay* (not *au* or *ai*): thus *ṣawm* and *Shaykh*. *Tā’marbūṭah* is shown as *-a* (Fāṭima), and as *-at* in construct phrases (Sūrat al-Fāṭiḥa); words that have entered the English dictionary keep their common spelling (Ummah, Sunnah). The sign ‘ represents the letter ‘ayn, and ’ the *hamza*.

Arabic terms not found in the English dictionary are set in italics, with the English sense given as the primary expression where the context allows. The definite article is written *al-* throughout for names and titles; in the

transliterated recitation of the Sūras (see the Appendix), it is joined and assimilated as pronounced — *ar-Raḥmān, wa'ṣ-ṣayf* — so that the reader may recite correctly. The honorific ﷺ (ṣalla'llāhu 'alayhi wa-sallam) follows mention of the Messenger of Allāh, and ﷲ (jalla jalāluh) the name of Allāh.

Author's Introduction

Reformation. Enlightenment. Guidance. Just a few words used to describe the effect of the Qur'ān on the hearts of humankind. The Qur'ān reformed the lives of the disbelievers of the Arabian Peninsula in the era which, until today, is known as the era of ignorance [*jābiliyya*]. It transformed a leaderless nation such, that every individual of the reformed Arabs became a shining guiding light for those who came after him.

The Qur'ān is a book like no other. Its eloquence left the Arabs dumbfounded, forcing them to claim that they were words of a magician and did not belong to man. Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Kathīr رحمه الله writes so eloquently in his commentary of the Qur'ān, at the beginning of Sūra Yūsuf عليه السلام:

أنزل أشرف الكتب بأشرف اللغات، على أشرف الرسل، بسفارة أشرف الملائكة، وكان ذلك في أشرف بقاع الأرض، وابتدئ إنزاله في أشرف شهور السنة وهو رمضان، فكمل من كل الوجه

*The most noble of books was revealed in the most noble of languages [Arabic], on the most noble of Messengers [Muḥammad ﷺ], by means of the most noble angel [Jibrīl عليه السلام], on the most noble part of the earth [Makkah], and its revelation was initiated in the most noble month of the year [Ramaḍān], so it has been perfected from all angles.*¹

The Qur'ān's effect was no greater than on the second Caliph of Islām, Sayyidunā 'Umar, who left his house with the intention of committing the most heinous of crimes; murdering the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, only to come face-to-face with the beauty of the Qur'ān, causing him to fall at the feet of the same man he had intended to kill. Such is his status now, that Allāh ﷻ blessed him with the closeness of his beloved Messenger during his life and after his death, as he lies to the side of Allāh's final Messenger ﷺ, and with him, he will be resurrected.

¹Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm, 4/365

It was the opinion of Shaykh al-Hind, Maulānā Maḥmūd al-Ḥasan رحمه الله, that the decline of the Muslims, and its remedy, came back to two things: internal unity and the Ummah's connection with the Book of Allāh ﷻ. The Ummah had grown distant from the Qur'ān, no longer reciting it with understanding, no longer ordering their lives by it, no longer holding it as their authority. His counsel was that the Ummah should return to the Qur'ān, learn it, understand it, and live by it. It is in the light of this advice that I have indulged on this humble effort, hoping only to help the reader understand a portion of what he recites, and thereby to draw a little nearer to Allāh ﷻ.

For there is much to reflect upon in the state of our ṣalāh. A believer stands before his Lord five times a day, reciting Sūrat al-Fātiḥa in every *rak'a*, year after year, and yet many amongst us, if asked, could not translate the very words we utter. It is a shame, that we open our conversation with Allāh ﷻ *in words whose meaning we have never been taught. This is no fault of the ordinary worshipper, who was simply never shown; but it is a matter worth putting right, for understanding transforms the prayer. When a person knows that he is saying, "You alone we worship, and You alone we ask for help," the words begin to carry their weight, and the standing before Allāh ﷻ becomes what it was always meant to be.*

This, then, is the aim of this book: to improve our ṣalāh through an understanding of what we recite. The prayer is the meeting of the servant with his Lord, five times each day, and the Qur'ān is the speech of that meeting. When it is understood, the prayer comes to life; when it is left unopened, ṣalāh is in danger of becoming the heedless routine of which Sūra Mā'ūn warns. If this humble work helps but a few readers to stand in prayer aware of what their words mean, its purpose will have been served.

This is also the reason I have chosen these particular Sūras. The Fātiḥa and the short Sūras at the end of the Qur'ān are the portion that every Muslim carries with him. They are the first we memorise as children, the ones oft-recited in the optional prayers, and usually in Maghrib; the ones an imām leads the congregation in night after night. A person may pass his

whole life without reciting the longer chapters in his ṣalāh, yet he will recite these thousands upon thousands of times. It seemed to me, therefore, that if understanding were to be offered anywhere first, it ought to be offered here, amongst the words already upon our tongues, so that the benefit might reach the greatest number in the place they need it most. I have sought to provide a companion to the prayer that a beginner may actually use, rather than a lengthy *tafsīr* that few would complete.

I do not present this as a work of scholarship for the learned, for abler hands than mine have written those, and I have leaned upon them throughout. I offer it, rather, as a small service to my own community, and to the ordinary worshipper who wishes simply to know what he is saying to his Lord. To keep the reader engaged and informed, I have summarised the theme of each Sūra and offered a short background before translating the *āyahs*, followed by an easy-to-read translation explaining any ambiguous words, and then a flowing commentary. There is a particular joy in serving people with something of genuine use: not a book to be admired and set aside, but one to be picked up before Fajr. If a parent is able to explain to his child why we say *al-ḥamdu li'llāh*, or a young person comes to feel the meaning of *Qul huwa'llāhu aḥad* as he recites it, or a single distracted worshipper is brought back to focus, then this small effort will have been well rewarded. *May Allāh ۞ accept it. Āmīn.*

I have paid due diligence in opting for the mainstream opinion of the 'Ulamā, thus using the most reliable traditional books of *Tafsīr*, while also benefiting from more contemporary works on the explanation of the Qur'ān, in Arabic, Urdu and English. A list of the material I have used can be found in the bibliography at the end of this book. In addition to the numerous books I have used, I benefitted greatly from the lectures of Shaykh Riyāḍ al-Ḥaqq, of Al-Kawthar Academy, Leicester, whose commentary of the second half of Juz' 'Ammā can be found on YouTube, and also from the great online resource, 'Qur'ān Wiki', which I found to

be a great research tool. May Allāh reward all those who are committed to serving his Dīn. Āmīn.

I had given lessons on the final 12 Sūrahs of the Qur’ān, along with Sūrat al-Fātiḥa, at Maṣjid e Umar in Gloucester, which was well-received by the public. Upon the request of some friends, I then sought help in Allāh for this task and was given assistance in the form of the students from my evening class of 2017-18, who diligently transcribed the audio recordings, thus easing my workload. I thank also my wife who made time in her hectic schedule to check and edit the grammar and was a constant support by my side. May Allāh reward them all for their sincere efforts and keep us steadfast on *īmān*. Āmīn.

I have started with the *Tafsīr* of Sūrat al-Fātiḥa, then with Sūrat al-Zilzāl, finishing with Sūrat al-Nās. My intention was to keep the explanation concise, and relevant to the 21st Century, although no commentary of Allāh’s Majestic word can ever claim to be comprehensive. I have concluded the book with a short explanation of the different Arabic statements we utter in ṣalāh, to help the readers focus in every posture.

As humans, we are imperfect in all aspects. If you notice an error, please do correct me, and forgive my oversight. Anything I have written of benefit is the result of the favour of Allāh, and the attention [*tawajjuh*] and du’ās of my parents, teachers and elders. May Allāh ﷻ accept this small effort of mine, grant me sincerity and acceptance, and use this work as a means of the Qur’ān bearing testimony in my favour on the day of resurrection. Āmīn.

3rd Ramaḍān Mubārak 1439, corresponding to 19th May 2018

An Introduction to the Qur'ān and its Tafsīr

The revelation

The Qur'ān is *wahy* — divine revelation from Allāh ﷻ, brought by Jibrīl عليه السلام directly upon the heart of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, and transmitted to the Ummah in such overwhelming numbers, generation upon generation, that no doubt can attach to a single letter of it. Revelation is a special connection between Allāh and His Messenger which passes beyond the reach of human intellect; and yet Allāh has enabled us to receive and understand it through His Prophet ﷺ and his Companions. Nor is the Qur'ān a created thing among Allāh's creations: it is His own speech, eternal as He is eternal.

The first of it descended when the Messenger ﷺ was forty years of age, in the cave of Ḥirā, where he would retreat for devotion. Jibrīl عليه السلام came to him in the form of a man, pressed him three times, and he was given to recite. He returned home trembling; and it was Khadija رضي الله عنها who steadied him with her famous words — Allāh would never disgrace one who joins ties of kinship, bears the burdens of others, and honours the guest — before taking him to her cousin Waraqa ibn Nawfal, who recognised in the encounter the same angel who had come to Mūsā عليه السلام, and foretold what his people would do to him.

Something of the weight of revelation can be measured from its effects. Allāh ﷻ declares that had this Qur'ān been sent down upon a mountain, the mountain would have been seen humbled and split apart from the fear of Allāh. When revelation descended upon the Messenger ﷺ, he would perspire even on the coldest of days; Companions upon whose lap he happened to rest at such a moment describe a weight that seemed to crush the bones. Our hearts could never have borne the Qur'ān in its raw majesty; so Allāh revealed it first to His Prophet ﷺ, who bore its weight for his Ummah — the majesty [*jalāl*] of the Book meeting the beauty [*jamāl*] of the Messenger — and then, through him, gently, to us.

The Qur'ān has a special bond with Ramaḍān: "The month of Ramaḍān, in which the Qur'ān was sent down as guidance for mankind, and as clear signs of guidance and the Criterion," and again, "Indeed We sent it down in the Night of Power." Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنهما relates that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, the most generous of men, was at his most generous in Ramaḍān, when Jibrīl عليه السلام would come to him every night and study the Qur'ān with him.

What *tafsīr* is

Tafsīr, in the language, means to open, to explain, to lay bare. As a science, it is the discipline through which the meanings of the Qur'ān are expounded and its rulings and wisdoms set out clearly — the continuation of the very task for which the Messenger ﷺ was sent: "Surely Allāh conferred a great favour on the believers when He sent among them a Messenger from themselves, reciting to them His verses, purifying them, and teaching them the Book and the Wisdom." Studying it is not a luxury. The Qur'ān itself asks, "Do they not reflect upon the Qur'ān?" — and the Messenger ﷺ said, "The Qur'ān is a proof for you or against you," and, "The best of you are those who learn the Qur'ān and teach it." On the plainest practical level: when we understand even the general message of what we recite, our concentration in ṣalāh is transformed, and the Book begins to have upon our hearts the effect for which it was sent.

The sources of *tafsīr*

The first source is the Qur'ān itself, for one passage expounds another — and no explanation outranks Allāh's explanation of His own words. We ask in al-Fātiḥa to be guided on the path of "those You have favoured"; and in Sūrat al-Nisā' (4:69) Allāh names them: the prophets, the ṣiddīqīn, the martyrs and the righteous — and excellent are they as companions.

The second is the Sunnah, in word and practice, for Allāh says: "We revealed to you the Reminder so that you may explain to the people what has been sent down to them." When the verse of fasting spoke of eating and

drinking “until the white thread becomes distinct from the black thread”, ‘Adiyy ibn Ḥātim رضى الله عنه took two literal threads and watched them; the Messenger ﷺ smiled and explained that it is the whiteness of dawn against the darkness of night.

The third is the explanation of the Ṣaḥāba, who received their education directly from the Messenger ﷺ and stood present as the verses descended, witnessing the very circumstances of revelation. Where they are agreed upon a meaning, no later reader may depart from it; where they differ, the later commentators weigh their statements by the established principles of the sciences of ḥadīth and *tafsīr*. Their manner of study explains their authority: those who learned the Qur’ān formally from the Messenger — such as ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān and ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd — *relate that they would take ten verses and not move to the next ten until they had mastered all the knowledge and practice those verses contained. “We learned the Qur’ān, knowledge and action all together,” they said. Thus ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar رضى الله عنهما spent eight full years upon Sūrat al-Baqara; and Anas رضى الله عنه relates that the one among them who had learnt al-Baqara and Āl ‘Imrān rose enormously in their estimation.*

The fourth is the generation of the Tābi‘īn, who took their *tafsīr* from the Companions. Mujāhid said: “I went through the *muṣḥaf* with Ibn ‘Abbās, pausing at every verse and asking him about it” — which is why Sufyān al-Thawrī said that if the *tafsīr* of Mujāhid reaches you, it suffices you, and why Imāms al-Shāfi‘ī and al-Bukhārī relied upon it. What a Tābi‘ī reports from a Companion stands as proof; his own independent view, if the other Tābi‘īn agree, is likewise followed, and otherwise it is weighed by the later scholars.

The fifth is the Arabic language itself, for “We never sent a messenger except with the tongue of his people, to make things clear for them.” Every language carries expressions opaque to outsiders — an English speaker who tells a learner to “wrap your head around” an idea will have some explaining to do — and the Qur’ān’s precision rests on grammatical subtleties that only

mastery of Arabic unlocks: the very order of iyyāka na'budu, "You alone do we worship", carries in its syntax the exclusivity that a translation must spell out.

The sixth is deliberation and deduction. The subtleties of the Qur'ān are an ocean without a shore, and the more a person of insight reflects, the more he discovers. The commentators therefore record the fruits of their own reflection — but with an iron condition: any subtle point or derived judgement is acceptable only while it contradicts none of the five sources above, nor any established principle of the Sharī'a. The moment an "insight" collides with the Qur'ān, the Sunnah, consensus, the language, or the statements of the first generations, it is discarded.

A word is needed on the *isrā'iliyyāt* — narrations entering the Ummah from Jewish sources, present since the earliest times. Some are authentic and have been verified by the scholars of ḥadīth and *tafsīr*; these we accept. Some contradict the Sharī'a or are established fabrications; these we reject. And many can be neither confirmed nor disproven; concerning these we follow the guidance of our Messenger ﷺ: we neither believe nor disbelieve them, and we build nothing upon them.

Finally, a warning that this age has made urgent. Some, without mastering Arabic or its sciences, take it upon themselves to expound the Qur'ān; worse, some imagine that access to a translation has made them commentators, and feel no shame in criticising *mufasssīrūn* of towering stature. Allāh ﷻ counts among the gravest sins "that you say about Allāh what you do not know"; and the Messenger ﷺ said, "Whoever speaks about the Qur'ān without knowledge, let him take his seat in the Fire," and, "Whoever speaks about the Qur'ān by his own opinion, even if he happens to be correct, has erred." We must be careful in whose hands we place our understanding of the Book of Allāh — and more careful still with our own tongues.

The Isti‘ādha and the Basmala

أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ

I take refuge in Allāh, from Shayṭān, the outcast

Before starting recitation of the Qur’ān, Allāh commands us to take refuge in him, to protect the reader from the whispers of Shayṭān: “*So when you want to recite the Qur’ān, take refuge in Allāh from Shayṭān, the outcast*”². It is only after protecting ourselves from Shayṭān and his whispers that we can benefit from the guidance the Qur’ān has to offer. It is only after ridding the heart of Shayṭān’s filth we can utter the beautiful name of Allāh.

He is the outcast because he was cast from the company of the angels after having been given this high status as a reward for his worship on the earth before the creation of humankind.

Why must the recitation begin with refuge? Consider where safety lies when arrows are flying: there is no safer place than beside the archer who commands them — and there is no refuge from Shayṭān more complete than with Allāh , his Creator. Consider, too, the vessel: our rusted hearts need cleansing before they can be filled with the Qur’ān, for no one serves a fine meal upon an unwashed plate. And Imām al-Rāzī adds a subtle danger: the reciter of the Qur’ān is earning immense reward — and if vanity and pride creep in as he recites, the reward is stripped away. The *isti‘ādha* shields him from the whisper without and the whisper within.

The name al-Shayṭān itself means the one far removed — far from the mercy of Allāh, far from all good. He was of the jinn, not of the angels, as Sūrat al-Kahf makes explicit; and his ruin began not with an act but with an attitude: self-conceit, and the arrogance that refused the command to bow to Ādam عليه السلام. Compare his response to his fall with that of Ādam

²al-Naḥl, 16:98

— عليه السلام one blamed his Lord and demanded respite, the other confessed and sought forgiveness — and the two roads of all their descendants are already drawn. And note the irony that even Iblīs, banished from the divine court, knew there is only one door at which requests are granted: his final petition — respite until the Day of Resurrection — he addressed to Allāh.

Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Kathīr sums up the meaning: I take refuge with Allāh from the accursed devil, that he be prevented from harming me in my dīn or my *dunyā*, from hindering me in what I have been commanded, and from luring me to what I have been forbidden. The *isti‘ādha* is thus at once a request for help, a confession that only Allāh can supply it, and an admission of our own weakness before an enemy we cannot see — for the servant cannot see Shayṭān, but Shayṭān sees him; so he takes shelter with the One who sees Shayṭān, and whom Shayṭān cannot see.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allāh, the All-Merciful, the Especially Merciful

The *basmala* is one of the symbols of the faith, recited at the start of any good action, bringing with it Allāh’s help and divine blessings. There is no better way to start reciting Allāh’s word than by taking refuge in him from Shayṭān, then seeking His assistance in recitation and understanding. Reciting the *basmala* on any occasion is an admission from man that he is weak, he is unable, and that he is totally dependent and reliant on Allāh’s mercy and help. This explains why it is so beloved to Allāh . ﷺ

Bi’smi’llāh can carry three senses at once: I begin with the name of Allāh; I begin with the help of Allāh’s name; I begin with the blessings of Allāh’s name. Notice that no verb is attached — not “I recite” nor “I eat” nor “I write” — and this omission is deliberate: the phrase is left open so that it may crown any action whatsoever. Unlike the isti‘ādha, which belongs to recitation, the basmala is recited before every undertaking, religious or worldly; the Messenger ﷺ said that any matter of importance not begun with the name of Allāh is cut off from blessing. Each time we say it, our

negligent souls are made to pause, remember Him, and ask His help before we move.

A few rulings complete the picture. It is Sunnah to recite the *basmala* at the beginning of every Sūra — with the single exception of Sūrat al-Tawba. It appears as part of a verse of the Qur’ān within Sūrat al-Naml, at the head of the letter of Sulaymān عليه السلام to the Queen of Sheba. And as to whether it constitutes the first verse of al-Fātiḥa: according to Imām Abū Ḥanīfa, it does not — it is an independent verse of the Qur’ān, placed before each Sūra to mark where one ends and the next begins.

Maulana Idrīs Kāndhlawi writes that Allāh ﷻ has brought these 3 words together [Allāh - Raḥmān - Raḥīm] because He is referring to the 3 different stages of a person’s life, and how we are dependent on Allāh on every one of these three occasions:

- Creation – From nothing into existence. We are dependent on His quality of creation for us to exist. This is found within the word *Allāh*.
- This worldly life – keeping us alive. If we are to survive and succeed in this life, we are dependent on His all-enveloping mercy, His being *al-Raḥmān*, due to which He does not discriminate on religion when deciding who to feed, clothe and grant wealth.
- The after-life – where we will face judgement. If we wish to attain Janna and avoid Jahannam, we require His special mercy, which is a manifestation of *al-Raḥīm*.³

According to the majority of the ‘Ulamā, the *basmala* is not the first *āya* of the Fatiha, rather it is used to introduce a new Sūra, as is indicated by an authentic hadith of Sunan Abī Dāwūd, in which Sayyiduna Abdullah b. ‘Abbās said: “*The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ would not recognise the end of a Sūra until bismi’l-lāhi’l-Raḥmāni’l-Raḥīm* was revealed*”.⁴ It is also reported by Sayyida ‘Ā’isha in a hadith of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim that the

³Kāndhlawi, Ma’ārif al-Qur’ān, 1:10

⁴Abū Dāwūd, Sunan Abū Dāwūd, H 788

Messenger of Allāh ﷺ used to start ṣalāh by reciting the Takbīr [Allāhu Akbar] and would then recite *al-ḥamdu*... This also remained the practice of the 4 Caliphs of Islām. The *basmala* appears in Sūrat *al-Naml* (Qur'ān, 27:30) as a part of an aya, which means it is a part of the Qur'ān, just not a part of every Sūra.

سُورَةُ الْفَاتِحَةِ

1 – The Opening

Alternative names:

- *Fātiḥat al-Kitāb*: The opening of the book, because it is an introduction to the Qur’ān.*
- *Fātiḥat al-Qur’ān*: The opening of the Qur’ān, for the same reason.*
- *Umm al-Kitāb*: The mother of the book, because it contains the major messages of the Qur’ān.*
- *Umm al-Qur’ān*: The mother of the Qur’ān, for the same reason*
- *Al-Sab‘ al-Mathānī*: The seven oft-repeated verses, as Allāh says “*And We have certainly given you, seven of the often repeated [verses] and the great Qur’ān.*” (15:87)*
- *Sūrat al-Ṣalāh*: The Sūra of ṣalāh, because it is recited in every ṣalāh.*
- *Sūrat al-Shifā*: The Sūra of cure, because it provides cure from illnesses*
- *Sūra al-Kanz*: The Sūra of treasures, because it contains a treasure of knowledge of Allāh*
- *Sūrat al-Ḥamd*: *The Sūra of praise, because it starts with the praise for Allāh , ﷻ which is theme for the first half of the Sūra*
- *Sūrat al-Du‘ā*: *The Sūra of supplication, because Allāh ﷻ teaches us how to ask from him; first praise him; then confess to your dependence on Him; then ask Him for your needs. This is the best method for du‘ā, taught to us by Allāh Himself!*

A short introduction

This is the first Sūra of the Qur’an, although it is not the first in the order of revelation. The majority of ‘Ulamā opine that the first verses

revealed were the initial five verses of Sūrat al-'Alaq (96), but the first sūra to be revealed in its entirety is Sūrat al-Fātiḥa. It was revealed to our Messenger ﷺ in Makkah in the early period of his mission. The Sūra has seven *Āyāt* and is both a du'ā [supplication] and an introduction of the Qur'an. It teaches the basic principles of the Islamic faith. The Sūra contains mention of the qualities of Allāh, as well as affirming our status as his slaves, and our dependence on him. It concludes with us praying to Allāh to guide us to the path of those whom he loves.

Theme of this Surāh

Sūrat al-Fātiḥa is placed at the very beginning to teach the reader that if he sincerely wants to benefit from the Qur'an, he should offer this prayer to the Rabb of the Universe. Al-Fatiha teaches that the best thing for a man is to pray for "Guidance towards the right way" and to study the Qur'an with the attitude of a seeker of truth and to recognize that the Rabb of the Universe is the source of all knowledge. They should, therefore, begin the study of Al-Qur'an with a prayer to Allāh for guidance.

It is important to know that the real relation between Al-Fatiha and the Qur'an is not just that of an introduction to a book, but that of a prayer and its answer. Al-Fatiha is the prayer from the devotee and the rest of the Qur'an is the answer from Allāh. The devotee prays to Allāh to show the "right way" and Allāh places the whole of the Qur'an before him in answer to his prayer, as if to say: "This is the Guidance that you have asked for".

It can also be said the Qur'an is the *Tafsīr* [explanation] of al-Fatiha, explaining the ideas and themes in detail throughout the chapters.

Virtues of the Sūra

- Sūrat al-Fātiḥa is the greatest Sūra in the Qur'an. This is established by the Messenger Muḥammad ﷺ himself when he told one of the

companions, *“Shall I not teach you the greatest Sūra in the Qur’an before you leave the Masjid?”* He ﷺ then recited Sūrat al-Fātiḥa⁵

- Nothing like Sūrat al-Fātiḥa was ever revealed in any of the previous scriptures. The Messenger ﷺ said, *‘Shall I not teach you a Sūra which was not revealed in the Torah, Injīl, the Zabūr nor in the Furqān and has any equivalent?’*⁶ then He told them about al-Fatiha.
- Sūrat al-Fātiḥa is Light. In the narration of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, the Angel عليه السلام told the Messenger ﷺ, *“Glad tidings to you with two Lights given to you and not given to any Messenger before you, [Sūra] Fatiha al-Kitāb and the end [last 2 verses] of al-Baqara. None recites [even a] letter from it except that he will be granted it.”*⁷
- Sūrat al-Fātiḥa is a cure, a treatment for illness – be they spiritual, physical or otherwise, as understood from the story of Sayyiduna Abū Sa’īd al-Khudrī⁸
- No Ṣalāh (prayer) is valid with reciting Sūrat al-Fātiḥa. The Messenger ﷺ is reported to have said, *“There is no Ṣalāh for the one that does not recite al-Fatiha of the Book [Qur’ān]”*⁹

If we inspect the Sūra carefully, we recognise that Allāh ﷻ has split the Fatiha into 7 *Āyāt*, which are separated based on the message therein. The first 3 *Āyāt* speak of the glory of Allāh ﷻ, whilst the middle aya is a confession of man. The final 3 verses contain a *du’a* [supplication] from the slave to his Master, requesting guidance. This division has been beautifully explained in a Ḥadīth collected by Imām Muslim, narrated by Sayyidunā Abū Hurayra, who says:

⁵ Al-Bukhārī, 4474

⁶ Al-Tirmidhī, 2875

⁷ Muslim, 1339

⁸ Al-Bukhārī, 2276; Muslim, 2201

⁹ Al-Bukhārī, 756; Muslim, 394

“I heard the Messenger say, “Allāh Almighty said: I have divided prayer between myself and my servant into two halves, and my servant shall have what he has asked for. When the servant says,

At a glance

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (١)	<i>All praises and gratitude are for Allāh, the Rabb of the worlds</i>
الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ (٢)	<i>The All-Merciful, the Especially Merciful</i>
مَلِكُ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ (٣)	<i>Master of the day of judgement</i>
إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ (٤)	<i>You alone do we worship and from You alone do we seek help</i>
أَهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ (٥) صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ (٦) غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ (٧)	<i>Guide us to the straight path: The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favour, not of those upon whom there is wrath [the Jews], nor those astray [the Christians]</i>

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (١)

All praises and gratitude are for Allāh, the Rabb of the worlds
 Allāh ﷻ replies: “My servant has praised me”.

الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ (٢)

The All-Merciful, the Especially Merciful
 Allāh ﷻ replies: “My servant has exalted me”.

مَلِكُ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ (٣)

Master of the day of judgement

Allāh ﷻ replies: “My servant has glorified me, and my servant has submitted to me”.

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ (٤)

You alone do we worship and from You alone do we seek help

Allāh ﷻ replies: “This is between me and my servant, and my servant will have what he has asked for.”

أَهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ (٥) صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ (٦)

غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ (٧)

Guide us to the straight path: The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favour, not of those upon whom there is wrath [the Jews], nor those astray [the Christians]

Allāh ﷻ replies: “This is for my servant, and my servant will have what he has asked for.”¹⁰

This Ḥadīth signifies the love Allāh has for it, and subsequently, for the person who recites it. Allāh starts the Sūra with the words:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (١)

All praises and gratitude are for Allāh, the Rabb [the Lord, Master, Creator, Sustainer, Nurturer] of the worlds [and whatever they contain]

Allāh ﷻ starts the Qur'an with His praise, which is the best opening. It is reported in a Hadith narrated by Sayyiduna Abū Huraira that our Messenger ﷺ said: “Every matter which is not initiated with the name of

¹⁰Muslim, 395

Allāh ﷻ is deficient".¹¹ This hadith has been narrated with numerous wordings, all with similar meanings, and has been graded as 'sound' by the experts of hadith.

Al-ḥamd - The Arabic word translated as "praise and gratitude" is ḥamd. It encompasses both meanings and carries other connotations as well. We give praise on account of some particular praiseworthy achievements or qualities; we feel gratitude for some particular good done. In relation to Allāh , ﷻ ḥamd affirms that Allāh ﷻ is eternally worthy of praise and gratitude because He is the eternal God, the eternally Merciful and He is the Lord of all creation.

Imām Muḥammad Amin al-Shinqiti ﷻ writes that Allāh ﷻ has kept the word *al-ḥamd* free from any time and place because Allāh 's praise is due everywhere, all the time. In other Sūrahs, Allāh mentions his *ḥamd* is in the heavens and on the earth, and at the beginning as well as the end. The *al-* [ال] before the word *ḥamd* adds the meaning of 'all', making the meaning 'all praises and gratitude'.¹²

Shaykh Idrīs Kāndhlawi explains why Allāh ﷻ chose to use the word *ḥamd* [حمد] *as opposed to the word *madḥ* [مدح], which can also be used to mean praise. He writes that the word *madḥ* is voluntary praise, whereas *ḥamd* in involuntary praise due to the nature of Allāh's being. Whether man praises Him or not, He is still worthy of praise. Another reason he cites is that *madḥ* can be used to praise somebody who is not worthy, and the praise could very well be pretentious. Therefore, on some occasions, our Nabi ﷺ has prevented us from *madḥ*, praising others lavishly, though they may not be deserving of it. However, *ḥamd* *of any individual means genuine, deserving praise, which carries no hint of pretention, or divine prevention.

Every time somebody praises any quality of the creation, this is in fact praise of Allāh , ﷻ because it is Allāh ﷻ Himself who has designed it, and

¹¹Musnad al-Imām Aḥmad, 14:329; Sunan Ibn Māja 1894; Sunan Abi Dāwūd 4840

¹²Al-Shinqīṭī, Aḍwā al-Bayān, 1:47

granted the creation its beauty. Allāh ﷻ is the source of all perfection found in the world and beyond, and thus, even in man does not directly praise Allāh , ﷻ to Him belongs all praise. All good which is present in the world, is only because of Allāh , ﷻ and to Him we are indebted. No amount of human praise is enough to fulfil His divine right.

Allāh ﷻ Himself has mentioned three different types of people with regards to *shukr* [gratitude]:

- Those who show no gratitude at all, or very rarely,
- Those who show gratitude only in good times,
- Those who show gratitude in both good times and in bad times.

In a hadith narrated by Imām Muslim, our Nabi ﷺ is reported to have said, “*the phrase ‘al-ḥamdu li’llāh’ fills the scale [of good deeds]*”¹³, such is its power and value in the eyes of Allāh . ﷻ In another hadith, our beloved Messenger ﷺ is reported to have said, “*The best form of supplication is ‘al-ḥamdu li’llāh’*”¹⁴, from which we understand that the best way of supplicating to Allāh ﷻ is by praising and thanking Him.

Allāh - The word Allāh is the primary name for our creator because every other of his qualities is used as a secondary adjective to the word Allāh. The word Allāh itself carries with it all the meanings of his descriptive names, which makes it the most comprehensive name. The word ‘God’ does not replicate the sentiments of the word Allāh. A Muslim is rewarded for just saying the word Allāh, but no such reward is expected for repeating the word ‘God’.

Ali Unal writes:¹⁵ Allāh, translated as God, is the proper name of the divine Being who creates and administers His creatures, individually and as a whole; who provides, brings up, sustains, protects, and guides each and all; who causes to perish and revives each and all; who rewards or punishes,

¹³Muslim, 432

¹⁴Tirmidhī, 3383

¹⁵Unal, A., The Qur’ān with annotated interpretation in Modern English, p. 50

etc. All His Attributes are Attributes of absolute perfection, and He is absolutely free from any and all defects. He is unique and single, having no like or resemblance, and nothing is comparable to Him. He is absolutely beyond any human conception: eyes comprehend Him not, but He comprehends all eyes [6: 103]. God is the unique, single Being with the exclusive right to be worshipped and to be made the sole aim of life.

He is loved in and of Himself. everything is dependent on Him and subsists by Him. every truth has its source in Him. His existence is so manifest that one may doubt one's own existence, but one cannot and should not doubt His. Eyes cannot see Him because of the density and plenitude of His manifestations. His Light is a veil before the eyes. He is worshipped because He is worthy of it as God— not the other way around; that is, He is God because He is the object of worship. without [belief in] God, life is torment within torment, intellect is pure retribution, ambitions are pure pain, attainments are losses, union is separation, love is suffering, pleasure is distress, and knowledge is whim. He is the cure for the afflicted, and the remedy for wounded hearts. Hearts attain peace and come to rest by remembering and mentioning Him. whoever has found Him has found everything; whoever has lost Him has lost everything.”

Rabb – Although commonly translated as ‘Lord’, Rabb carries multiple connotations, based on the Arabic verb rabbā – yurabbī – tarbiyatan, meaning ‘to nurture something until it reaches perfection’. It is for this reason that Rabb is a title exclusive to Allāh , ﷻ because it is only Allāh ﷻ who can nurture perfectly, and who Himself is not in need of being nurtured.

Our parents also nurture us, but they themselves rely on Allāh ﷻ to nurture them, and for Allāh ﷻ to provide for their children, which is why although their nurturing is referred to as *tarbiya*, it is a secondary form of *tarbiya*, and is not comparable to the perfect *tarbiya* of Allāh . ﷻ

Rabb also carries the meaning of ‘Master’, which is also true of our relationship with Allāh . ﷻ We are His slaves, He is our Master.*

Al-'Ālamīn – meaning 'the worlds'. What is meant by 'the worlds'? Allāh ﷻ explains it in Sūrat al-Shu'arā:

قَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ وَمَا رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٢٣) قَالَ رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ
وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِنَّ كُنْتُمْ مُوقِنِينَ (٢٤)

“Fir’awn asked: What is the Rabb al-'Ālamīn? He [Mūsā عليه السلام] replied: The Rabb of the heavens and the earth and everything in between, if only you had conviction”.^{16}*

The word 'ālam itself is derived from the word 'alāma, meaning sign. The entirety of Allāh's creation is a proof for humanity of Allāh's existence and His might. Every type of creation, in every form of existence, Jinn, animal, or man, in every dimension, of every size, falls under 'ālamīn. The smallest granules of sand and the largest of the stars all indicate one *Rabb* and give us knowledge of our Master. It is said regarding the Bedouins of the past, that when asked what makes them believe, they would respond: “Camel faeces indicates camels, donkey faeces indicates donkeys and footprints indicate travel. So, the sky, with its constellations and the seas with its waves, do not these indicate the All-Knowing, the All-Powerful?” How simple, yet how profound a statement of the signs of the Rabb in this world, if only we opened our eyes and pondered on His magnificent creation.

The 'worlds'* could also refer to the different types of worlds which exist, namely the 'seen' world and the 'unseen' world, or the different kingdoms of the earth. It could also refer to a multitude of universes, which exist beyond the scope of man's limited knowledge. It is not beyond our imagination, keeping in mind modern scientific discoveries and theories, that other universes could very well exist, and Allāh ﷻ nurtures them all. Pondering over the vastness of his dominion, it is evident why all praises and thanks belong only to Him.

^{16*}The Qur'ān, 26:23-24

الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ (٢)

The All-Merciful, the Especially Merciful

Ar-Rahmān ar-Rahīm – Both words are derived from the term *rahma*, the special mercy of Allāh ﷻ, and are in their superlative forms, indicating the vastness and magnitude of Allāh’s mercy. Both words are also derived from *rahim*, meaning ‘womb’, because the foetus is fully reliant on the mother’s mercy during its time in the womb, just as the creation are fully reliant on Allāh’s mercy for their existence.

It is not permissible for one to call himself *Rahmān*, because it is a unique quality of Allāh ﷻ. As for *Rahīm*, Allāh ﷻ himself has described his beloved Nabi ﷺ with the same word, in Sūrat al-Tawba:

لَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ عَزِيزٌ عَلَيْهِ مَا عَنِتُّمْ حَرِيصٌ

عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ (١٢٨)

Surely, there has come to you, from your midst, a Messenger who feels it very hard on him if you face a hardship, who is very anxious for your welfare, and for the believers he is very kind, very merciful.^{17*}

What is the difference in both words? Some ‘Ulamā have said that they mean the same thing and have been repeated for emphasis. Others have said there is a nuanced difference between both:

- *Ar-Rahmān* is the possessor of vast mercy, whilst *Ar-Rahīm* is the One who shows mercy. Allāh ﷻ says of himself “and the most-Merciful [*ar-Rahmān*] has taken control of the ‘arsh”, and it is well-known that the ‘arsh encompasses all the creation. Allāh ﷻ also says of himself, “and My Mercy encompasses everything”. Therefore, Allāh ﷻ has taken control of the vastest creation [the ‘arsh] with His vast

¹⁷Qur’ān 9:128

Mercy, the consequence of which is that Allāh's mercy is all-encompassing of His creation.”*

- *Ar-Raḥmān* refers to Allāh's mercy which encompasses all humankind, believers or not, whilst *Ar-Raḥīm* reserves special mercy for the good believers.*

مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ (٣)

Master of [all affairs on] the day of judgement

In this Āya, Allāh ﷻ is reminding his slaves, that although Allāh ﷻ is the most-merciful, we should not become complacent in our pursuit for success. Maulana Idrīs Kāndhlawi beautifully comments that Allāh ﷻ brings the verse of mercy before the verse of reckoning to affirm the fact that Allāh's unlimited mercy precedes his wrath.

Mālik implies that Allāh ﷻ is the owner of the last day, who has full sovereignty on that day. The owner of any object has full control of their possession and cannot be influenced or forced into treating it in a certain way. They are free to do with it as they wish. Allāh is telling us that he is the Master, in whose hands lie all the affairs of the hereafter. In another Āya, Allāh ﷻ declares who has full control of the last day,

يَوْمَ هُمْ بَارِزُونَ لَا يَخْفَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ مِنْهُمْ شَيْءٌ ۚ لِمَنِ الْمُلْكُ الْيَوْمَ

لِلَّهِ الْوَاحِدِ الْقَهَّارِ (١٦)

“The day they will be exposed. Nothing will be hidden from Allāh of their deeds. To whom belongs the kingdom today? To Allāh , ﷻ the one, the dominant!”.

**Of course, we believe Allāh ﷻ is just, will rule according to his principles of mercy and justice and He never lies, but we also understand that Allāh ﷻ is independent of us and can do as He likes. In another form of recitation [*Qirā'a*], this word is recited as *Malik*, meaning ‘King’. The

king is also the Master and has total control over his dominion. Allāh ﷻ is not only a king, but the ‘King of all kings’, the ruler of every empire and the dominant over every dominion. He will take the kings of the world to account in his divine court. His decision cannot be vetoed, and his ruling cannot be appealed against. His word is final, and none can question his decree. Maulana Idrīs Kāndhlawi goes into detail on the difference in *malik* and *mālik* in *Ma‘ārif al-Qur‘ān*, vol. 1, pg. 18.*

We learn of His ownership on the final day in the hadith of *Musnad al-Imām Aḥmad*, and by Imām Hākim in *al-Mustadrak ‘alā ṣ-Ṣaḥīḥain*, in which Nabī ﷺ relates the story of a man who worshipped Allāh ﷻ for 500 years and was given death in the state of *sujūd* [prostration]. When he will finally face Allāh ﷻ on the day of judgement, *Allāh will tell the angels to enter him into Janna through His divine mercy. The man will ask: “Not by virtue of my actions?” Allāh ﷻ will then ask the angels to measure the value of his 500-year worship against His blessings, and the slave will soon realise that his worship was not even worth the blessings of his eyes. The angels will be asked to drag him into the hell-fire, upon which the man will plead, “Oh Allāh! Enter me into Paradise only through Your mercy.” The hadith ends with the man finally admitting that it was only Allāh’s tawfīq and divine inspiration which allowed him to worship for 500 years. This hadith highlights the independence of Allāh ﷻ and his ownership of the last day. He can do as He wishes, and there is nobody who can question His judgement.*

And what is *yawm al-Dīn*? Allāh ﷻ poses the question himself in *Sūrat al-Infīṭār*, and also provides the answer:

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا يَوْمُ الدِّينِ (١٧) ثُمَّ مَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا يَوْمُ الدِّينِ (١٨)

يَوْمَ لَا تَمْلِكُ نَفْسٌ لِّنَفْسٍ شَيْئًا وَالْأَمْرُ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلَّهِ (١٩)

“And what will tell you what the day of judgement is? (17) Then what will tell you what the day of judgement is? (18) The day no soul will come of use to another, and the affairs [of that day] will belong to Allāh ”

In Sūra Ghāfir, Allāh explains it thus:

الْيَوْمَ تُجْزَىٰ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ لَا ظُلْمَ الْيَوْمَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعٌ

الْحِسَابِ (١٧)

“Today, every soul will be recompensed according to what they did. There will be no injustice today. Indeed, Allāh is swift in reckoning”

Dīn literally means recompense; to be rewarded or punished based on your actions. It is derived from dayn, meaning ‘debt’. As if to say, we give our deeds to Allāh , ﷻ who holds them for us, and returns our debt to us in the hereafter. Or in the sense that Allāh ﷻ has blessed us with so many favours and blessings, that we are indebted to him. In the hereafter, Allāh ﷻ will want to see how we repaid this debt of favours.

It is the day of reckoning and judgement, when Allāh ﷻ will return our deeds to us. The good servants will receive their deeds in their right hands and will rejoice, ready to be rewarded. The bad servants will receive their book of deeds in their left hands and will wish they never received them, knowing they are destined for punishment. The day of judgement will be when every man will be for himself. The day man will flee from his brother, his mother, his father, his wife and his children, to protect his own deeds, and will come of no use to anybody else, except for those whom Allāh ﷻ has willed.

Looking carefully at the first three Āyāt, it is clear to see that in each Āya, Allāh ﷻ has praised himself for a specific reason. In the first Āya, He reminds us of His favours in the past, for creating us and nurturing us. In the second Āya, He reminds us of his favours upon us in the present, by showing us mercy. In the third Āya, He reminds us that we are reliant on

Him for ultimate success in the hereafter. These three *Āyāt* are a display of how dependent we are on Allāh ﷻ in every stage of our lives. After praising Himself in this manner, He goes on to say what the requirement is: submit only to Him and ask only from Him.

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ (٤)

You alone do we worship and from You alone do we seek help

Until now, the first 3 *āyahs* were addressing Allāh in third person. Allāh ﷻ changes the focus to the reader, who now speaks to Allāh ﷻ in first person and in the imperfect tense, causing the interaction to become personal, as if he is addressing Allāh directly. This *Āya* serves as the ideal divider between praising Allāh ﷻ, and asking from Him [as we will read later], because it is the servant confessing to Allāh ﷻ of his lowly status and his dependence on Him, in order to draw Allāh’s compassion and mercy before asking from Him.

The *Āya* indicates that the duty of worship on humankind is due always and is due both individually and collectively. His necessary reaction to Allāh’s praise is to fall in His worship. This *Āya* affirms the principle of tawhid, rejecting the worship of everything apart from Allāh ﷻ and submitting only to one Allāh ﷻ, as He wants us to. Therefore, Allāh ﷻ brings the word *iiyāka* [only you] at the start of the sentence, to remove all doubts of who we worship.

The primary objective of our Messenger’s ﷺ Prophethood was to remove man from the worship of Gods, to the worship of Allāh ﷻ alone. This was articulated beautifully by Sayyiduna Rab’ī bin ’Āmir, when he met the Persian leader on the occasion of the Battle of al-Qādisiyya, “we invite people from the servitude of false deities to the servitude of one Allāh

, ﷻ from the suffocation of the world to its vastness, and from the darkness and oppression of false religions to the justice of Islam”.¹⁸

Na'budu – worship means to submit yourself with total humility, borne out of intense respect and love for the subject of worship, acknowledging their greatness and their favours and blessings upon you. It has also been translated as: 'Only to you do we show servitude', which is slight different to worship. The 'Ulamā of taṣawwuf [tazkiya] have mentioned that: 'worship [ʿibāda] is to do those things which please our Rabb, whilst servitude [ʿubūdiyya] is to be pleased with whatever our Rabb does. ¹⁹ What a beautiful nuance.

Ibn 'Āshūr also quotes Imām Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī as saying: “There are 3 stages of worship:

The manifestation of the highest level of worship, namely 'ubūdiyya, is in the answer of our Messenger ﷺ when questioned by our mother Sayyida 'Ā'isha as to why he spent his nights in worship if Allāh ﷻ had already given him guarantees of forgiveness and acceptance. He ﷺ replied: “Should I not be a grateful servant?” *Allāhu Akbar. How far we are from this stage today!*

Nasta'in – It is as if Allāh ﷻ is reminding us, that 'I have blessed you with favours your entire life, now submit yourself to Me, and I have cared for you your entire life, continue to seek help only from Me'. How foolish is the person who is unable to recognise the favour of his benefactor, and thus neglects his rights? We should seek help from Allāh ﷻ for all our affairs, related to the Dīn or to the dunya. We are making an admission that 'O Allāh ﷻ, we owe you admiration and worship, but are unable to fulfil this without Your divine help'. How beautiful is this request of the servant to his Lord, almighty.

The proof that we really love Allāh ﷻ and have humbled ourselves for Him is in the fact that we trust Him enough to ask for assistance in all our

¹⁸Ibn Kathīr, Al-Bidāya wa'l-Nihāya, 7:39

¹⁹Ibn 'Āshūr, Al-Taḥrīr wa'l-Tanwīr, 1:180

affairs. We only tend to ask those who we are convinced will help us. And there is no better being to ask than the One in Whose hands lies our affairs, Who knows the solutions to our problems and holds the keys to all our locked doors. Therefore, despite our unworthiness, Allāh ﷻ demands that we ask from Him, and becomes angry when we don't ask! Allāh ﷻ repeats the commands to worship him and trust him in Sūra Hūd:

فَاعْبُدْهُ وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَيْهِ

Worship only him, and put your trust in him

By admitting that we require His assistance in worship, we are also removing the element of pride from our worship, confessing that we, as His slaves, cannot truly fulfil His praises, nor worship Him as He likes, but require His divine assistance in doing so.

The relationship between Allāh ﷻ and his servants is a unique one. We have just praised Him with the highest praise and have lowered ourselves in front of Him by declaring: 'Only You do we worship'. To help us understand the impact of this *Āya*, the reader should visualise his lowly status and Allāh's lofty status. Despite this contrast, Allāh ﷻ offers to help His servant, although He is not obliged to help anybody or anything. A lowly person within a big company would have little or no exposure to the company's CEO and would have no courage to ask him for help. Yet, Allāh ﷻ, with his divine wisdom and love for us, notwithstanding the fact that we are the lowest of the low, and He is the Highest of the high, demands that we seek help from Him, and assists us in our quest to please Him.

Another point of note in the *Āya* is that Allāh ﷻ does not specify what we are meant to be asking help with. It could be his praise, his worship, or with guidance. It could be anything, whether a matter of Dīn or *dunyā*, we must ask only Him, such that our beloved Ḥabīb ﷺ has mentioned: "Man should call upon Allāh alone to provide for all his needs, so much so that even if a shoe-lace is broken, he should pray to Allāh to provide a shoe-lace, and if

he needs salt, he should beseech Allāh to send it to him.” What humility and dependence we are being taught!

Of course, this *Āya* does not mean that we cannot ask for worldly help from anybody apart from Allāh ! When we are unwell, we are permitted to visit the doctors. If we are in a legal dispute, we can consult lawyers. This *Āya* is referring to seeking help from anybody apart from Allāh ﷻ to the extent that we think they are not just the means of our solutions but are the ultimate cause of our solutions too, making us independent from our Creator. This is the gravest sin: associating partners with Allāh . ﷻ

Ḥāfiẓ Ibn al-Qayyim has written a 3-volume book by the name of ‘*Madārij al-Sālikīn*’ [the stages of a person seeking guidance] solely focused on explaining and expounding on this beautiful *Āya*, such is its depth.

أَهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ (٥)

Guide us to the straight path

A natural question follows the previous *Āya*: ‘what should we ask for?’ Allāh ﷻ offers a reply in all 3 *Āyāt* until a Sūra end, a du‘ā He is teaching man; a du‘ā for divine guidance. Although we are encouraged to ask Allāh ﷻ for help in all our affairs, the most vital gift he can grant us is guidance. Allāh ﷻ has kept the success of man in guidance and in nothing else. Wealth can be a great blessing but is not a sign of success. Power can be a great blessing but is not a sign of success. Consider the examples of Fir‘awn [pharaoh], Qārūn, and their likes. They had everything except guidance, and are thus remembered for their evil. Now consider the likes of Sayyiduna Bilāl al-Ḥabashī, Sayyiduna Muṣ‘ab bin ‘Umair, and their likes, who gave up the glamour and glitter of the dunya for the sake of guidance, and have been given such a lofty status, that today we remember them with the words *raḍi-Allāhu anhu* [May Allāh be pleased with them]. This is the effect of divine guidance.

It is Allāh’s guidance itself which has allowed us to recite the Sūra and pray our ṣalāh, so naturally the question arises, that if we already have some sort of divine guidance, why do we continue to ask for it? The answer is simple. We ask Allāh ﷻ for complete guidance, and then steadfastness on this path. No human is ever independent of divine guidance.

Ihḍinā – like the previous Āya, this is also in plural first-person, because a du‘ā for guidance is better done collectively than alone. We are as desperate for guidance as each other. It is this desperation which causes us to recite it dozens of times a day in ṣalāh. Only a desperate person repeats the same request dozens of times in a single day, every day, because he knows that it is Allāh ﷻ alone who guides, as He mentions in Sūra Yūnus [10:35]: “Say! [O Muḥammad] ﷻ Only Allāh guides to the truth”.

Hidāya is of two types. *Hidāya* literally means ‘to guide’ or to show the way. There are two types of *hidāya*. The first type is that somebody a person asks for directions, and he is given vague instructions, for example, he is told to ‘turn left, turn right’, and is assured that he will reach his destination. The other type of *hidāya* is that the person offering directions takes hold of his hand and helps him reach his destination. The du‘ā the slave of Allāh ﷻ makes now, is for the second type of *hidāya*. We are not saying, “O Allāh , ﷻ show us the path and leave us to it,”. Rather, we are asking our Guide to show us the path, take us to it, and keep us on it.*

Ṣirāt - Hafiz Ibn al-Qayyim has written²⁰ that a ṣirāt has 5 features:

- It is straight by nature,
- It takes you directly to your destination,
- It is the shortest path,
- It is a wide path,
- There is no other path than this one to take you to your destination.

This sentiment is echoed in Sūrat al-An‘ām [6:153]:

²⁰Ibn al-Qayyim, Madārij al-Sālikīn, 1:10

وَأَنَّ هَذَا صِرَاطِي مُسْتَقِيمًا فَاتَّبِعُوهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا السُّبُلَ فَتَفَرَّقَ بِكُمْ
عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ ۚ ذَٰلِكُمْ وَصَّاكُم بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

*And this is My path, straight, so follow it; and do not follow [other] ways,
for you will deviate from His way. This is what He has instructed you, so
that you become righteous.*

*Mustaqīm – a perfectly straight path with no crookedness, which makes it
the best path, because the straightest path is always the shortest path, and
contains no surprises. The sālik [walker] can see what is in front of him, be
it his destination or any obstacle which could distract him., ensuring there is
no opportunity for him to stumble or lose himself. This is the kind of path we
are required to walk on. We can see both our destination: the hereafter, and
the obstacles in our path: Shayṭān, our nafs, and this lowly dunyā.*

A couple of beautiful du'ās to read to thank Allāh ﷻ for guidance, then
for steadfastness, are:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي هَدَانَا لِهَٰذَا وَمَا كُنَّا لِنَهْتَدِيَ لَوْلَا أَنَّ هَدَانَا اللَّهُ

*Allāh praises and thanks are for Allāh ﷻ, the One Who has guided us to
this, and we would have found guidance if Allāh ﷻ would not have guided
us*

رَبَّنَا لَا تُزِغْ قُلُوبَنَا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَيْتَنَا وَهَبْ لَنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ رَحْمَةً إِنَّكَ
أَنْتَ الْوَهَّابُ

*O our Lord ! Do not make our hearts crooked [misguided] after You have
guided us, and grant us special mercy from You. Indeed, You are the ever-
giving.*

May Allāh ﷻ also grant us complete *hidāya* and keep us steadfast until
our deaths. Āmīn.

صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ (٦)

The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favour [the prophets, the ṣiddiqīn, the martyrs, and the pious]

What is the straight path? Whose is the straight path? As deficient humans, we cannot provide the answer. Allāh ﷻ provides the answer in the final 2 Āyāt of al-Fātiḥa by directing us to the people of Allāh: “the path of those upon whom You have bestowed favour”. Allāh ﷻ provides clarity of the identity and qualities of these special individuals in Sūrat al-Nisā [4:69], as if to inform us that these groups of people have an acceptable level of faith:

وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَالصِّدِّيقِينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِينَ وَحَسُنَ أُولَٰئِكَ رَفِيقًا

*And whoever obeys Allāh and the Messenger ﷺ, will be in the company of those on whom Allāh has bestowed His Grace: of the Prophets, the sincere believers, the martyrs, and the righteous. And how excellent these companions are!**

‘Ulamā have written that whosoever walks on the *al-ṣirāṭ al-muataqīm* in this life, Allāh ﷻ will keep him on the *al-ṣirāṭ al-muataqīm* in the hereafter, so that he walks straight into Janna. And whoever treads on the *ṣirāṭ* of the pious saints, Allāh will unite him with them in the hereafter. We must always make a conscious effort to follow the righteous ‘Ulamā, those who are friends of Allāh ﷻ. Even if we are unable to replicate their piety, maybe because of our love for them, Allāh also has mercy on us. Imām Shāfi‘ī has written so beautifully:

أحب الصالحين ولست منهم وأرجو أن أنال بهم شفاعاة

*I love the pious although I am not from them I have hope I can attain
salvation through them*

وأكره من تجارته المعاصي وإن كنا سواء في البضاعة

*And I dislike the person who trades in sins even though we are equal in stock
[I too, am a sinner]*

The *Ṣiddīqīn* are those who sincerely believed initially with no doubt in their hearts; saints and sages like Sayyiduna Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, who was given this title by our Ḥabīb ﷺ. Allāh ﷻ publicises whom he has favoured to establish the fact that if we also wish for guidance and Allāh's favours, we need to follow not books, not theories, but people who He is pleased with. If books were sufficient for the guidance of mankind, Allāh ﷻ would not have sent prophets! Even in this worthless dunya, a person cannot master a skill or become fully qualified just by reading books. They require human knowledge, experience and guidance to assist them. If this is the case with the lowly dunya, then surely the Dīn of Allāh ﷻ will have higher standards. The 'Ulamā say: "Allāh ﷻ is found in the hearts of the people of Allāh". When we sit with the people of Allāh ﷻ, we feel our levels of *īmān* rising, and an innate attachment to such pious individuals.

Therefore, to conclude, we will say that we require a combination of two things to earn Allāh's pleasure: His people, and His books. Allāh ﷻ will go on to describe those people who dedicated themselves only to His books, and then those who had value only for His people, both of whom earned the anger of Allāh ﷻ.

غَيْرِ الْمَعْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ (٧)

*Not of those upon whom there is wrath [the Jews], nor those astray [the
Christians]*

Allāh ﷻ tells us to avoid being like two types of people: “those upon whom there is wrath, and those astray”. Who are the people of anger? Who are those who are stray? They are all those who commit major wrongs against Allāh ﷻ, ﷻ and those who stray from His path. Allāh ﷻ does not restrict the interpretation to Jews and Christians, to include all those who commit the same crimes against Allāh ﷻ within the warning.

Al-maghḍūbi ‘alayhim - The Jews of the Banū Isrā’īl and those in the time of our Messenger ﷺ had common evil traits, like rejecting the truth although it was evident to them, using their knowledge to misguide others, and killing those who tried to guide them, namely, the Prophets of Allāh ﷻ. ﷻ These actions incurred the anger of Allāh, who says as a result of their evil actions: “and they returned with anger upon anger”. Interestingly, Allāh ﷻ does not specify who is angry with them, rather he just says: “upon whom there is wrath”, as an indication that it is not only Allāh ﷻ who is angry with them, but the angels too, and the believers, and all those whom they have wronged.

Why are the Jews subject to divine anger? The Jews of the past had all the means available to them to believe: they had knowledge of the books and access to their scholars, but still, they did not take heed. This type of knowledge is better known as information. True knowledge [ilm] guides a person to the truth. The Jews of the past had a habit of lecturing and advising others, but tended to forget themselves. Allāh paints this picture in Sūrat al-Baqara [2:44]:

أَتَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبِرِّ وَتَنْسَوْنَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ تَتْلُونَ الْكِتَابَ ۚ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ

You order people to do good deeds and forget to do them yourselves, even though you read the Book [Torah]? Why do you not think?

Wa la’ddāllīn – commonly understood as being the Christians, whose disbelief and misguidance was not caused by arrogance but rather by

ignorance. They lost themselves in their faith, forgetting their purpose in life. They over-celebrated the status of their Prophet 'Isā عليه السلام, making him the son of God, and then equating him with God! They invented acts of worship which were not prescribed upon them, assuming it showed greater devotion. They were committed to worship, but lacked sufficient knowledge of Allāh's book which caused them to go astray.

Hafiz Ibn Kathīr writes that Allāh ﷻ is guiding man, telling us that we need to combine both 'ilm and 'amal, knowledge and action. 'Ilm alone isn't enough, nor can we expect Allāh's pleasure through pure amal without the required knowledge. Allāh ﷻ mentions the arrogant before the ignorant, as if to tell us that arrogance is the greater sin.

An interesting note made by Shaykh Idrīs Kāndhlawi with regards to al-Fātiḥa is that in Āya 6, Allāh makes a direct attribution between himself and his pious servants, as if to say that 'I have blessed you without you deserving it', but in Āya 7, Allāh ﷻ doesn't explicitly mention that He is angry with them, or that He has led them astray, as if to say 'you have become the cause of your own downfall'. Everything good should be explicitly and directly attributed to Allāh, and everything evil should be attributed to man.²¹

آمين

Āmīn

Meaning, 'O Allāh! Accept our supplication'. It is not part of the Qur'anic words and is better to be recited with a slight delay after al-Fātiḥa to make clear that it is not part of the Sūra. It is sunnah to recite Āmīn after al-Fātiḥa, whether prayed inside or outside ṣalāh. According to the 'Ulamā from the Ḥanafī school, it is better recited quietly in ṣalāh. The 'Ulamā of the other schools of thought consider it better to recite it aloud. This is not a major difference and is no reason to create disunity between Muslims.

²¹Idrīs Kāndhlawi, Ma'ārif al-Qur'ān, 1:62

— *End of Sūrat al-Fātiḥa* —

سُورَةُ الزَّلْزَالِ

99 – The [Final] Earthquake

This is a Madanī Sūra, consisting of 8 Āyāt

Link with the previous Sūra

In Sūra Bayyina, Allāh spoke about the rebellious nature of the disbelievers, as well as the goodness of those who do good. In Sūrat al-Zilzāl, Allāh mentions the punishment lying in wait for them, as well as mentioning how he will reward us for every little good we do. It is as if Allah is answering the hidden question from Sūrat al-Bayyina: ‘when will recompense occur?’ at the start of Sūrat al-Zilzāl.

At a glance

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

إِذَا زُلْزِلَتِ الْأَرْضُ زِلْزَالَهَا (١)

يَأْتِيهَا النَّاسُ انْفِقُوا رَبَّكُمْ إِنَّ زِلْزَلَهُ
السَّاعَةِ شَيْءٌ عَظِيمٌ (١) يَوْمَ تَرَوْنَهَا
تَذْهَلُ كُلُّ مُرْضِعَةٍ عَمَّا أَرْضَعَتْ
وَتَضَعُ كُلُّ ذَاتِ حَمْلٍ حَمْلَهَا وَتَرَى
النَّاسَ سُكَرَىٰ وَمَا هُمْ بِسُكَرَىٰ وَلَٰكِنَّ
عَذَابَ اللَّهِ شَدِيدٌ (٢)

وَأُخْرِجَتِ الْأَرْضُ انْفِقَالَهَا (٢)

In the name of Allāh, the All-Merciful, the Especially Merciful.

When the earth will be shaken [violently], a terrible shaking

“O people! Fear your Lord. The earthquake of Judgment Day is a tremendous thing indeed. The day when you will witness it, every nursing mother will forget her suckling infant and every pregnant woman will abort. And you will see people in a drunken stupor although they will not be drunk, but Allah’s punishment is severe.”

And when the earth will throw out its burdens [dead bodies, secrets and riches].

وَقَالَ الْإِنْسَانُ مَا لَهَا (٣)

*And when man will exclaim,
"What is the matter with it [Why
is the earth doing this]?"*

يَوْمَئِذٍ تُحَدِّثُ أَخْبَارَهَا (٤) بِأَنَّ رَبَّكَ
أَوْحَىٰ لَهَا (٥)

*That Day, it [the earth] will report
all its happenings [every action
that was done on it]. [It will speak]
Because your Lord has inspired it
[commanded it to do so]*

يَوْمَئِذٍ يَصْدُرُ النَّاسُ أَشْتَاتًا لِّيُرَوْا
أَعْمَالَهُمْ (٦)

*On that Day, people will come
forward in separate groups to be
shown [the consequence of] their
deeds*

فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ (٧)

*So, whoever does an atom's weight
of good, will see it [his reward]*

وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ (٨)

*And whoever does an atom's weight
of evil [without attaining Allāh's
forgiveness], will see it [his
punishment]*

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allāh, the All-Merciful, the Especially Merciful.

A short introduction

Consisting of 8 *āyāt*, the *sūra* is a comprehensive description on key aspects of the hereafter. It describes how the earth will shake violently as a result of an enormous earthquake when the trumpet is blown to signal the end of this worldly life and the start of the hereafter. It also talks about the life after death, and that humans will come out in their varied groups from all corners of the earth. On that day, all deeds will be exposed, such that every person will be shown their deeds and works, and the presentation of

their deeds will be so complete and detailed that not an atom's weight of any good or evil act will be left unnoticed or hidden from his eyes.

Virtues of the Sūra

مَنْ قَرَأَ (إِذَا زُلْزِلَتْ) عُدِلَتْ لَهُ بِنِصْفِ الْقُرْآنِ وَمَنْ قَرَأَ (قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْكَافِرُونَ) عُدِلَتْ لَهُ بِرُبْعِ الْقُرْآنِ وَمَنْ قَرَأَ (قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ) عُدِلَتْ لَهُ بِثُلُثِ الْقُرْآنِ ”

Sayyidunā Anas bin Mālik narrates that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said: “Whoever recites ‘Ithā Zulzilat’, it equals half of the Qur’an.

Whoever recites: ‘Qul Yā Ayyuha’l-Kāfirūn’, it equals a quarter of the Qur’an. And whoever recites: ‘Qul huwa’llāhu Aḥad’, it equals a third of the Qur’an.”²²

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو، قَالَ أَتَى رَجُلٌ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالَ أَقْرِنِي يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ . فَقَالَ “ أَقْرَأْ ثَلَاثًا مِنْ ذَوَاتِ الرَّاءِ ” . فَقَالَ كَبُرَتْ سِنِّي وَاشْتَدَّ قَلْبِي وَغَلُظَ لِسَانِي . قَالَ “ فَأَقْرَأْ ثَلَاثًا مِنْ ذَوَاتِ حَم ” فَقَالَ مِثْلَ مَقَالَتِهِ . فَقَالَ “ أَقْرَأْ ثَلَاثًا مِنَ الْمُسَبِّحَاتِ ” . فَقَالَ مِثْلَ مَقَالَتِهِ فَقَالَ الرَّجُلُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَقْرِنِي سُورَةَ جَامِعَةٍ . فَأَقْرَأَهُ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ { إِذَا زُلْزِلَتِ الْأَرْضُ { حَتَّى فَرَغَ مِنْهَا . فَقَالَ الرَّجُلُ وَالَّذِي بَعَثَكَ

²²Jāmi’ al-Tirmidhī, 2893

بِالْحَقِّ لَا أَزِيدُ عَلَيْهَا أَبَدًا ثُمَّ أَدْبَرَ الرَّجُلُ فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ “ أَفْلَحَ الرُّوَيْجِلُ ” مَرَّتَيْنِ

Sayyidunā ‘Abd’ullāh ibn ‘Amr narrates: “A man came to the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ and said: ”Teach me to read the Qur’an, O Messenger of Allāh.” He ﷺ replied: “Recite three Sūrahs which begin with A L R [alif lām rā].” He said: “My age is advanced, my mind has become dull (i.e. memory has grown weak), and my tongue has grown heavy.” So, he ﷺ said: “Then recite three Sūrahs which begin with H M [hā mīm].” He repeated the same words. So, he ﷺ said: ” Recite three Sūrahs which begin with words of Tasbīh [the Glorification of Allāh].” But he repeated the same excuse. The man then said: “Teach me a comprehensive Sūra, O Messenger of Allāh”. ﷺ The Messenger ﷺ taught him Sūra”Ithā zulzilat il-ard...”: “When he finished it, the man said:”By Him Who sent you with truth, I shall never add anything to it.” Then man then went away. The Messenger ﷺ said twice: “The man received salvation.”^{*23}

عَنْ مُعَاذِ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ الْجُهَنِيِّ، أَنَّ رَجُلًا، مِنْ جُهَيْنَةَ أَخْبَرَهُ أَنَّهُ سَمِعَ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقْرَأُ فِي الصُّبْحِ { إِذَا زُلْزِلَتْ الْأَرْضُ } فِي الرَّكْعَتَيْنِ كِلْتَاهِمَا فَلَا أَذْرِي أَنْسِيَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَمْ قَرَأَ ذَلِكَ عَمْدًا

Sayyidunā Mu’āth ibn ‘Abd’ullāh al-Juhānī narrates: “A man of Juhayna told him that he had heard the Messenger ﷺ reciting “Ithā

²³Sunan Abī Dāwūd, 1399

zulzilati'l-ard..." in both rak'āts of the morning prayer, but I do not know whether he ﷺ had forgotten, or whether he ﷺ repeated it on purpose."*²⁴

إِذَا زُلْزِلَتِ الْأَرْضُ زِلْزَالَهَا (١)

When the earth will be shaken [violently], a terrible shaking

The earthquake referred to in this Sūra is the earthquake after the second blowing of the *Ṣūr* [horn] which will signal the commencement of the Day of Judgment. This earthquake shall be so severe, it is incomparable to anything to have come before it. It will shake the earth to its core and cause every inch of the earth to become unstable. Allah describes it in greater detail in Sūra al-Ḥajj,

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُم ۚ إِنَّ زَلْزَلَةَ السَّاعَةِ شَيْءٌ عَظِيمٌ (١) يَوْمَ تَرَوْنَهَا تَذْهَلُ كُلُّ مُرْضِعَةٍ عَمَّا أَرْضَعَتْ وَتَضَعُ كُلُّ ذَاتِ حَمَلٍ حَمْلَهَا وَتَرَى النَّاسَ سُكَرَىٰ وَمَا هُمْ بِسُكَرَىٰ وَلَٰكِنَّ عَذَابَ اللَّهِ شَدِيدٌ (٢)

"O people! Fear your Lord. The earthquake of Judgment Day is a tremendous thing indeed. The day when you will witness it, every nursing mother will forget her suckling infant and every pregnant woman will abort. And you will see people in a drunken stupor although they will not be drunk, but Allah's punishment is severe."

وَأُخْرِجَتِ الْأَرْضُ أَثْقَالَهَا (٢)

²⁴ Abū Dāwūd, 816

And when the earth will throw out its burdens [dead bodies, secrets and riches].

This earthquake will affect the entire earth and all the creation. After the earth's shaking, the dead will be raised from their graves and ushered to the plain of resurrection. On the final day, the earth will throw out all the dead and all the treasures it hides beneath its surface. An authentic Ḥadīth mentions that humankind will see the treasures of the earth being thrown out, realise its insignificance and will distance themselves from it. Due to regret, they will lament about themselves, that how did something so worthless lead me to commit crimes against my Creator.²⁵ The ²⁶*āya*²⁷ could also be referring to the fact that the earth will unveil its secrets and expose man in the hereafter. This is implied in the following ²⁸*āyāt*²⁹.

وَقَالَ الْإِنْسَانُ مَا لَهَا (٣)

And when man will exclaim, "What is the matter with it [Why is the earth doing this]?"

Man will observe the violent tremor and will be baffled, confused and curious as to what is happening.

يَوْمَئِذٍ تُحَدِّثُ أَخْبَارَهَا (٤) يَا أَيُّهَا رَبِّكَ أَوْحَىٰ لَهَا (٥)

²⁵Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, 2210

That Day, it [the earth] will report all its happenings [every action that was done on it]. [It will speak] Because your Lord has inspired it [commanded it to do so]

The earth will speak out on the Day of Judgment “because your Lord will command her to do so.” Just as Allah gave speech to the tongue, Allah will give speech to man’s limbs as well as to the earth so that they may testify in favour of, or against people. With so many witnesses present, man will not be able to lie or even attempt to deceive his Creator.

On one occasion, our Messenger ﷺ asked his companions the interpretation of this verse. They replied: “Only Allah and His messenger know best.” The Messenger ﷺ explained it thus: ‘Indeed its information [*akhbārahā] is that the earth will testify against every servant, male and female. It will say that he did such and such, on such and such a day.’ He said: ‘With this it [the earth] shall be ordered [by Allah]’* ³⁰

يَوْمَئِذٍ يَصْدُرُ النَّاسُ أَشْتَاتًا لِّيُرَوْا أَعْمَالَهُمْ (٦)

On that Day, people will come forward in separate groups to be shown [the consequence of] their deeds

Humankind will be divided into different sects: those who are regretful and those who are happy, those who are commanded to enter Janna and those who are led to the blazing fire.

It is a principle we learn of the Qur’ān that some portions of the Qur’ān are explained by other portions, as if to say the Qur’ān is a *Tafsīr* of itself. Prompting the separation into sects, Allah will declare on the day of judgement, “Separate yourselves today, O criminals!”³¹ In another place, Allāh mentions the divisions on the day of judgement, “[Some] faces on that Day will be bright - laughing, rejoicing at good news. And [other] faces on

³⁰Jami’ al-Tirmidhi, 2429

³¹Qur’ān, 36:59

*that Day will have upon them dust. Blackness will cover them. Those are the disbelievers, the wicked ones.*³²

In fact, themes of this sūra are explained and described in vivid detail in the first rukū' of Sūra al-Wāqī'ah. We will not mention it here due to its length, but readers are recommended to refer to its translation and commentary for further reading.

“to be shown their deeds” – humankind will be shown their deeds, either written in their records or in a physical form, or they will be shown the consequence of their deeds, be it Paradise or the fire.

فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ ۖ (٧)

So, whoever does an atom's weight of good, will see it [his reward]

The 'good' referred to in this sentence means those actions which were done by those who believe in Allāh and in the hereafter. Those who did good actions in the world but

The 'good' referred to in this sentence means those actions which were done by those who believe in Allāh and in the hereafter. Those who did good actions but chose not to believe in Allāh will be rewarded in the world and will have no share of the reward of the hereafter.

The word *tharra*, translated as 'atom' in this *āya* means the smallest imaginable thing, which is also used for ants, grains of sand, and the specks of dust we can see floating in the air when the sun is shining: minute, light and insignificant. On that day there will be justice for even the smallest of acts, good or bad. In Sūra al-Kahf, Allāh says, *“And the book (of deeds) will be placed (before them), then you will see the guilty people scared of its contents and saying, ‘Woe to us! What a book is this! It has missed nothing, minor or*

³²Qur'an, 80:38-42

major, but has taken it into account.’ Thus they will find whatever they did present before them, and your Lord will not wrong anyone.”³³ *

Never underestimate the value of a good deed

As Muslims, we should never underestimate the value of a good deed, even if we consider it to be trivial. Our beloved messenger ﷺ said³⁴: “*Do not underestimate any good act, even if it is offering water from your bucket to one who is seeking a drink or meeting your brother with a cheerful face*”. In another narration, the Messenger ﷺ advised us, “*Give something to the beggar, even if it is a burnt hoof [to cat]*”³⁵. To further emphasise this point, he ﷺ said: “*Guard yourself from the Hellfire even with half of a date in charity. If he cannot find it, then with a kind word.*”³⁶

In another ḥadīth, the Messenger ﷺ said: “*The best action in the eyes of Allāh are those which are consistent, even if they are small.*” We are well aware of the ḥadīth mentioning the promiscuous woman who passed by a thirsty dog, and having mercy on the dog, filled her shoe with water and gave it to the dog. It was this small good deed which Allāh loved and became a means for her forgiveness.

In yet another ḥadīth, our Messenger ﷺ mentioned a man from the Banū Isrā’īl who passed by the branch of a tree which was in the path of passer-by and moved it out of harm’s way. For this small action, Allāh forgave his previous misdeeds. Allah is the Most-Generous who will reward us for every good we do, as small and as big as it may be, as long as we have sincerity and hope for reward. Why then do we hold back from doing good deeds? Why then do we not take advantage of his generosity?

³³ Qur’an, 18:49

³⁴ Musnad al-Imam Ahmad, 20110. For further reading on this topic, consult Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-Aẓīm of Hafīẓ Ibn al-Kathīr’s, under this āya.

³⁵ Jāmi’ al-Tirmidhi, 665; Sunan Abi Dāwūd, 1667

³⁶ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, 6195; Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, 1016

وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ ۖ (٨)

And whoever does an atom's weight of evil [without attaining Allāh's forgiveness], will see it [his punishment]

The 'evil' referred to in this sentence is that evil from which the sinner did not repent. If he repented sincerely and left the evil, then he will certainly find Allāh the Most-Forgiving. Our Messenger ﷺ said, *"The one who repents from sin is like one who did not sin at all."*³⁷

Never underestimate an evil act

Our mother 'Ā'isha narrates that our beloved Messenger ﷺ said, *"beware of minor sins, for they accumulate until they destroy a man"*³⁸ The Messenger ﷺ then gave the example of a person who considers his minor sins as insignificant. He ﷺ said: *"they are like a people who settle in a barren land. Then their leader comes and orders the men to go out one at a time and they each bring back a stick until they have gathered a large number of sticks. Then they kindle a fire and burn everything that they throw into it". Our 'minor' sins will accumulate and if we are not forgiven, could become the fuel of the fire which destroys all of our good actions. We are not to delve into the issues of minor and major sins, because although the sin might be minor, let us look at the Being against whom the sin is being committed. Committing any sin against Allāh Committing any sin against Allāh, knowing his favour on us, is not but a major offence.*

Sayyidunā Abū Hurayra reports that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said: *"A servant may utter a word which pleases Allah without giving it much importance, and because of that, Allah will raise him in rank, and like this, a servant may utter a word (carelessly) which displeases Allah without thinking of its gravity and because of that he will be thrown into the Hell-*

³⁷Sunan Ibn-Māja, 4250

³⁸Musnad al-Imam Ahmad, 3803

Fire.^{39*} *On how many occasions have we uttered something in the spur of the moment and have considered it trivial? Only Allāh ﷻ knows the true value of what we have uttered, both good and evil.

Ḥaḍrat Luqmān عليه السلام was advising his son “*O my son! Even if it is equal to the weight of a grain of mustard seed, and though it be hidden in a rock, or in the heavens or in the earth, Allah will bring it forth. Indeed, Allah is the Subtle, the Informed.*”⁴⁰ Allāh says that day they will all come forth and everything will become apparent, that day nothing will be hidden or veiled from Allāh. A poet says so eloquently when speaking of trivialising smaller sins:

*“Do not consider minor sins to be insignificant,
for mountains are made of pebbles”.*

— End of Sūrat al-Zilzāl —

³⁹Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, 6478

⁴⁰Qur’ān, 31:16

سُورَةُ الْعَادِيَّاتِ

100 – The Charging Steeds [War Horses]

This is a Makkī Sūra, consisting of 11 Āyāt

Link with the previous Sūra

Previously, Allāh ﷻ spoke about the horror of the final day and humankind's condition on that day, and now Allāh ﷻ is giving an example of humankind's condition in this world, '*No doubt, man is extremely ungrateful to his Lord*' which justifies the final earthquake and the account-taking of man. Previously, Allāh promised man that the earth with expose its burdens, and in this sūra Allah reminds us of the day in which the graves will unearth their guests and the secrets residing in the hearts of mankind will be exposed.

A short introduction

Allāh ﷻ takes an oath on different types of war-horses, and explains that, unlike horses, humankind is (generally) ungrateful, caused by a love for the material wealth of this world. Allāh ﷻ then mentions the cure for this illness; remembering death, and the day of judgement. The sūra also reminds us that Allāh is aware of all the hidden secrets of human souls and He will expose them on the final day. It reminds humankind to be grateful to Allāh for his innumerate blessings and favours, from amongst which are the strong Arabic horses they use in battle.

At a glance

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ	<i>In the name of Allāh, the All-Merciful, the Especially Merciful.</i>
وَالْعَادِيَّاتِ ضَبْحًا (١)	<i>[I swear] By the charging steeds [war-horses] that pant [due to fighting in the path of Allāh]</i>

- (٢) فَأَلْمُورِيَّتِ فَتَحًا *and [I swear] by those who strike sparks with their hooves [as they gallop]*
- (٣) فَأَلْمُغِيرَاتِ صُبْحًا *and [I swear] by those who ambush [the enemy by surprise] at dawn*
- (٤) فَأَلْزَرْنَ بِهِ نَفْعًا *causing a cloud of dust*
- (٥) فَوَسَطْنَ بِهِ جَمْعًا *and thus, penetrate into the midst [of the enemy, because of the loyalty towards their masters]*
- (٦) إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لِرَبِّهِ لَكَنُودٌ *No doubt, [unlike these horses] man is extremely ungrateful to his Lord*
- (٧) وَإِنَّهُ عَلَىٰ ذَٰلِكَ لَشَهِيدٌ *and indeed, he [man] is to this [ingratitude] a witness [it is an undeniable fact]*
- (٨) وَإِنَّهُ لَخَبِيرٌ لِّلْخَيْرِ لَشَدِيدٌ *And no doubt, (a cause for this ingratitude is that) His love for good [wealth] is intense (and thus becomes oblivious of Allāh)*
- (٩) أَفَلَا يَعْلَمُ إِذَا بُعْثِرَ مَا فِي الْقُبُورِ *Does he not know that when the contents of graves will be scattered [for resurrection, to face Allāh]*
- (١٠) وَحُصِّلَ مَا فِي الصُّدُورِ *and when the secrets of hearts are revealed [exposed for all to see]*
- (١١) إِنَّ رَبَّهُم بِهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ لَّخَبِيرٌ *No doubt, on that Day, their Lord will be fully aware of them [and their deeds]*

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allāh, the All-Merciful, the Especially Merciful.

The Sūra starts with a scene of war horses running, snorting, striking sparks of fire with their hoofs, launching a raid at dawn and leaving behind a trail of dust, slicing suddenly into the centre of the enemies' camp, taking them by surprise and striking terror and fear in their hearts. Allah swears by the war horses and describes their movements one after the other: running, snorting and neighing.

وَالْعَادِيَاتِ ضَبْحًا (١)

[I swear] By the charging steeds [war-horses] that pant [due to fighting in the path of Allāh]

The letter] *wāw* in Arabic indicates an oath. The oath here is taken by Allah Himself to show the seriousness of the matter and to engage the reader. The Arabs had great love and admiration for horses, especially female war-horses which they would prepare and keep primed if ever they were required for battle.

“charging steeds that pant” – this indicates that the horses are fuelled by animosity, running forcefully, relentlessly, focusing solely on the enemy. The idea of using such graphic language – a trait which is continued in this sūra – is to capture the imagination of the Arabs, as if it were a preview of war.

فَالْمُورِيَّتِ فَدَحًا (٢)

and [I swear] by those who strike sparks with their hooves [as they gallop]

Allah continues taking on oath on the same war-horses whose relentlessness has just been described. These are the same horses which cause sparks of fire to fly as their metal hooves strike violently against rocks. It is as if they are leaving a trail of fire behind them as they charge ahead at speed to confront the enemy. What amazing imagery of the Qur'an! The Arabs to whom the Qur'an was recited could relate to this scene due to their experiences on the battlefield.

فَالْمَغِيرَاتِ صُوبًا (٣)

and [I swear] by those who ambush [the enemy by surprise] at dawn

In the previous two *āyahs*, Allah mentioned how they are targeting the adversary for the sudden attack. These are the same horses which stay awake at night for their masters, so they can ride them at dawn to ambush the enemy. The Arabs considered it an act of cowardice to attack their enemy at night, so to display their bravery, they would wait for the crack of dawn before attacking the enemy.

فَأَثَرَنَ بِهِ نَفْعًا (٤)

causing a cloud of dust

As the group of war-horses close in on the enemy, the striking of their hooves causes dust to rise, such that it blinds the enemy, causing the fighters and horses to raise their voices. Dust does not usually fly in the mornings due to morning dew, so the reader is being made to imagine the force of their galloping which has caused the dust to rise so violently.

فَوَسَطْنَ بِهِ جَمْعًا (٥)

and thus, penetrate into the midst [of the enemy, because of the loyalty towards their masters]

Taking advantage of the enemies being blinded by the rising dust, the horses penetrate through the centre of the enemy lines, caring not about their own welfare, determined to cause the enemy a heavy defeat. They ambush together, advancing at speed, not knowing if they will escape the battlefield with their lives intact. And then...? This is the moment the reader is looking forward to. The battle has been previewed, the reader is

off his seat, and the story is about to reach its pinnacle. How does Allah continue the story?

إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لِرَبِّهِٖ لَكَنُودٌ (٦)

No doubt, [unlike these horses] man is extremely ungrateful to his Lord

Allah takes advantage of the reader's attention and his love for female war-horses to send a message to humankind. The Arabs of the past admired the female war-horses for their bravery, their loyalty, their obedience and their fearless nature. In contrast to these brave, loyal horses, humankind is weak, disloyal, and extremely ungrateful. In this context specifically, Allāh is reminding man to be grateful for these horses, who if they wished, could kill man with a single kick, could throw the rider off with one buck, and could easily trample him. Yet, Allāh has made them subservient to humankind, such that we ride them as we wish, load them with our luggage and weight, whip them and enjoy total control of them.

Their war-horses possessed all these desirable human qualities even though they were given very little in return by their owners. The horses would be given fodder to eat by their masters which in fact was provided by Allah, and were made to sleep outside, exposed to the notorious extremes of the Arab heat. They were trained and worked, ready for battle, and if they slacked, they would be whipped by their riders. Despite this treatment, upon the command of their masters, they were prepared to give up their sleep, undergo the hardships of training, and were ready to fight the enemy, putting their own lives on the line, never turning back, even when faced with inevitable death.

Consider the horses, who humiliate themselves for their owners, who allow us to ride them, load them and whip them, and after this show of subservience, are prepared to sacrifice themselves for their masters with no resistance or complaint. Imagine the scene of the horses lined up, waiting for battle, seeing the artillery and the weapons of the enemy in their faces,

knowing they are at the mercy of their owners and the opposition. All this in exchange for grass which grows on the earth, and water which falls from the sky.

Being grateful

A true sign of gratitude is that we undergo and bear hardships for our Benefactor, like the horses. Compare what they are given to what Allah has blessed humankind with. The horses were made to sleep outside without shelter, but Allah has given us homes to protect us from the harsh extremes of winter and summer. They are given just simple fodder to eat and water to drink, and our Sustainer has blessed us with numerous varieties of foods, bitter and sweet, hot and cold, different meals for different parts of the day. If ever the horses fall slow or become lazy, they are whipped by their riders to get them up, but remember the grace of our Master, Allāh , ﷻ who does not send angels to beat us when we become lazy. He is patient with us and accepts our repentance when we repent. If these war-horses repay their masters with such obedience and loyalty for such little gain, imagine the loyalty and obedience we owe to our Master!

This *āya* is a wake-up call for us, as if Allah is saying: ‘You are the slave, and you have a Master to whom you owe loyalty and obedience’. Our imagination was captured, and the advices struck our hearts, such was the power of these *āyāt*.

“Indeed, man is extremely ungrateful to his Lord” – the word kanūd signals that the ingratitude and unloyalty is severe, extreme. Kanūd refers to the person who counts all his misfortunes and forgets the favours he has been blessed with. If we have one thing to complain about, we have another million things to be grateful for! When we complain, we forget the good we have been blessed with. When we are always looking at those who have been blessed more than us, we become ungrateful and complain of our condition. However, the reality of our affairs is that we have it better than most, and Allāh has never promised for our lives to be perfect. Perfection and ultimate happiness is reserved for the hereafter only.

Kanūd is also a person who misuses the blessings of Allāh ﷻ, for example, he uses his eyes to look at what Allāh has prohibited for him and allows his feet to take him where Allāh has prohibited. How many of us sinful servants would fall under this category? May Allah protect us.*

The law of Allāh is very simple: ‘show gratitude, you will be given more. Be ungrateful, I will take away whatever you have.’ A blessing from Allah is like a trust he gives to us. If we use the trust well and prove ourselves to be trustworthy, he continues to bless us. If we abuse this trust, we have shown we are not worthy of it. In Sūra Luqmān, Allāh ﷻ mentions his independence, “*Whoever is grateful, then he is grateful only for himself, and whoever is ungrateful, then indeed, Allāh is independent, worthy of praise*”⁴¹. It is a rule of life, that a blessing is only appreciated when it is lost. Only a blind person knows the true value of eyes, and only the deaf person can articulate just how fortunate those are who can hear clearly. The benefits of gratitude are reserved not only for the hereafter. In fact, mental health experts also believe that practicing gratitude improves mental health and well-being and is a prevention for depression, if only we knew.

If ever we want to thank someone, we go the extra mile to make them happy, especially when they are beloved to us. We spoil our children, gift our spouses, help our parents, yet in all this, we forget the One who has the greatest favour of all on us, our Creator. How can we claim to love Him if our actions fall short of His expectations? Most Muslims are unable to even manage the bare minimum requirements of His, and even those of us who do carry them out, how many are sincere in worship? We just about do the bare minimum and have little inclination to do more. We limit our best worship to one month of the year and go missing thereafter. We may go missing after Ramadhān, but Allah’s mercy does not. He continues to bless us and have mercy on us. This is not how a grateful servant behaves with his Master.

⁴¹Qur’an, 31:12

This gratitude was shown to us by our beloved Messenger ﷺ, who would spend his nights in the worship of his Master, to the extent that his feet would swell up. When asked by his wife, ‘Ā’isha why he would persist with worship if he was already guaranteed forgiveness, our leader ﷺ replied: “*Should I not be a grateful servant?*” He ﷺ was not commanded to worship to this degree but rather it was a complete act of devotion and thankfulness to Allah for the blessing of forgiveness, amongst other blessings.

Allāh ﷻ explains our fickle relationship with Him in Sūra al-Ma‘ārij, “*Indeed, man has been created intemperate; fretful when touched by evil, and stingy when touched by good*”⁴². In other words, man is unrestrained, uncontrolled, a victim of moving to opposite extremes very hastily. This is outlined in another āya, in which Allah says: “*When We bestow Our favour upon man, he avoids (to appreciate it) and distances himself (from obedience), and when some evil touches him, he becomes one of lengthy prayers.*”⁴³ In yet another āya, Allāh ﷻ says, “*When man is afflicted by a hardship, he prays to Us (at all times), when reclining or sitting or standing. But when We remove his hardship, he just passes by as though he had never prayed to Us for any hardship that afflicted him. This is how their deeds appear beautified to the transgressors.*”⁴⁴ What a selfish relationship we have with our Master. When things are going our way, we forget Him, and when we suffer some misfortune, we expect great things from Him. This is not the attitude a slave has with his Master. These prayers are insincere. We do not want the love of Allāh, or to do His service and worship, but we simply require relief from our calamities. When this goal is achieved, rather than thanking the One who granted us relief and ease, we discard and dispense of our Master, as if we are independent from Him, and He is no longer of any use to us. How ungrateful and selfish is man!

⁴²Qur’ān 70:20-22

⁴³Qur’ān 41:51

⁴⁴Qur’ān 10:12

Consider two āyāt of the Qur’ān, in which Allāh ﷻ starts with the same statement, then explains the difference between our attitude as slaves, and His as our Master. In one place, Allāh ﷻ says, “*And if you attempt to count the favours of Allāh, you will be unable to enumerate them. Indeed, humankind is surely unjust, ungrateful.*”⁴⁵ In another place, Allāh ﷻ describes His attitude to us, “*And if you attempt to count the favours of Allāh, you will be unable to enumerate them. Indeed, Allāh is the Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful.*”⁴⁶ Compare the ingratitude of the slaves to the mercy of Al-Raḥmān!

There are three ways to thank Allāh for His favours:

- Acknowledging the favour with our hearts and minds, knowing that He alone continues to bless and favour us,
- Gratitude with our tongues, through His remembrance [*dhikr*] and speaking of His favours,
- Fulfilling the rights of His favours, for example, using our feet to walk to the Maṣjid, and not towards ḥarām; using our wealth to donate to charity, not in ḥarām investments. These are all methods of showing gratitude to our Benefactor.

May Allāh ﷻ also grant us such thankfulness and forgive us for our shortcomings. Āmīn.

وَإِنَّهُ ۖ عَلَىٰ ذَٰلِكَ لَشَهِيدٌ (٧)

and indeed, he [man] is to this [ingratitude] a witness [it is an undeniable fact]

Man is a witness that he is ungrateful to Allah, all the time. So, man is the biggest proof against himself. In Sūrat al-Qiyāma, Allah explains it thus, “*Rather, man, against himself, will be a witness*”. How? Allāh ﷻ will enable

⁴⁵Qur’ān 14:34

⁴⁶Qur’ān 16:18

each person's limbs to speak out and testify against him, ignoring his pleas for respite and relief. In reality, man needs not any other witness, neither human, nor the skies or the seas, because man will speak against himself of his own evils, such will be the justice served on that day.

The pronoun 'he' in this *āya* could also be referring to Allāh ﷻ himself, that He is a witness to our ingratitude, because His rights are those which we so shamelessly violate and dismiss.

وَإِنَّهُ لِحُبِّ الْخَيْرِ لَشَدِيدٌ (٨)

And no doubt, (a cause for this ingratitude is that) His love for good [wealth] is intense (and thus becomes oblivious of Allāh)

The 'good' referred to in this *āya* is wealth, as mentioned by most of the commentators of the Qur'ān. Wealth is translated as 'good' because foolish man, to justify his pursuit of it, deems all wealth to be good, as if it is the best commodity of this world. Man feels he doesn't have enough, and because he doesn't have how much he wants, he sees no reason to be grateful.

The word *shadīd* literally means to be tied up and is preceded by a 'ل' [*lām*] which emphasises its meaning, as if Allāh is telling man, 'your love for wealth is so severe, you are tied up in its pursuit, unable to detach yourself from it.' Having wealth is not a bad thing in itself. Consider Prophet Sulaymān عليه السلام who was blessed with the kingdom and wealth of the entire world! Excessive desire and love for wealth however, has the potential to destroy a person, even if he himself is. not wealthy

أَفَلَا يَعْلَمُ إِذَا بُعْثِرَ مَا فِي الْقُبُورِ (٩)

Does he not know that when the contents of graves will be scattered [for resurrection, to face Allāh]

Allāh ﷻ is reminding man that this pursuit will end with man in the grave, and one day, he will have to present himself to his Lord. If he is running after wealth because he is planning ahead, fearful of poverty in the future, Allāh ﷻ challenges him to look further forward: plan ahead for when your corpse will be unearthed! The sūra started with Allāh ﷻ awakening man, and this theme repeats itself here.

وَحُصِّلَ مَا فِي الصُّدُورِ (١٠)

and when the secrets of hearts are revealed [exposed for all to see]

All the secrets and hidden matters of the heart are apparent to Allāh, though man may be oblivious of this. Allāh ﷻ promises to open the secrets of our hearts on the final day, against the will of man, when he will wish whatever he had in his chest remained there, unexposed. If gratitude was only on our tongues but the heart was ungrateful, then on that day, our inner secrets will be made public and our reality will be unveiled. Allāh ﷻ warns us of this in Sūra al-Ṭāriq, “*On a day when the secrets will be searched out*”⁴⁷. May Allāh ﷻ save us from disgrace on that day and hide our faults like he does in the world. Āmīn.

إِنَّ رَبَّهُمْ بِهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ لَّخَبِيرٌ (١١)

No doubt, on that Day, their Lord will be fully aware of them [and their deeds]

Again, Allāh ﷻ is making man aware that He is fully informed of what they think, let alone what they do. It is not enough for them to hide their crimes from humanity, because the Master knows what occurred in the darkness of the night, and in the privacy of their homes.

⁴⁷Qur'an, 86:9

Whereas these horses are prepared to give up their lives for their masters because of the care they receive despite their harsh treatment, man refuses to obey Allāh's commands even though Allāh has created him and provides everything he needs.

Concluding remarks

- Man will do well to learn gratitude from his own horse
- Excessive love for worldly wealth leads to ingratitude
- The cure for these illnesses is in remembering death and the hereafter.

— *End of Sūrat al-ʿAdiyāt* —

سُورَةُ الْقَارِعَةِ

101 – The Striking Calamity

This is a Makkī Sūra, consisting of 8 Āyāt

Link with the previous Sūra

Sūra al-Qāri'ah follows the messages and themes of the previous 2 Sūrah's, enabling the reader to understand the different stages of the hereafter. In Sūra al-Zilzāl, Allāh mentioned that humankind will see each and every action of theirs – good and bad – and the Sūra makes no mention of the person's intentions, or their acceptance in the court of Allāh ﷻ. In Sūra wal-'Ādiyāt, Allāh ﷻ continued this theme by stating that He will open the hearts of the people, to extract everything inside, from man's dark secrets to the intentions for the deeds he had performed in the world. In this āya of Sūra al-Qāri'ah, Allah continues the sequence of the hereafter by discussing the scales of deeds, and the outcome of the scales, based on the actions and intentions of man.

A short introduction

Its theme is Resurrection and the Hereafter. At the outset, the people have been awakened and alarmed, saying: "The Great Calamity! What is the Great Calamity? And what can make you know what the Great Calamity is?" Thus, after preparing the listeners for the news of the dreadful calamity, Resurrection has been depicted before them in two sentences, saying that on that day, people will be running about in confusion and bewilderment just like so many scattered moths around a light, and the mountains uprooted, will their cohesion and will fly about like carded wool. Then, it has been said that when Allāh's Court is established in the Hereafter, the people are called upon to account for their deeds. The people whose good deeds are found to be heavier than their evil deeds, will be blessed with bliss and happiness, and the

people whose good deeds are found to be lighter than their evil deeds, will be cast into the deep pit full of burning fire.

At a glance

- بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ *In the name of Allāh, the All-Merciful, the Especially Merciful.*
- الْفَارِعَةُ (١) *The striking calamity [the terror of the final day]*
- مَا الْفَارِعَةُ (٢) *What is the striking calamity?*
- وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الْفَارِعَةُ (٣) *What will explain to you what the striking calamity is?*
- يَوْمَ يَكُونُ النَّاسُ كَالْفَرَاشِ الْمَبْثُوثِ (٤) *The day when people [after being raised from their graves] will be like scattered [dispersed, vulnerable and terrified] moths and [even] the mountains shall be like coloured tufts of wool [floating around in the air despite their size and weight]*
- وَتَكُونُ الْجِبَالُ كَالْعِهْنِ الْمَنْفُوشِ (٥) *Then as for one whose scales are heavy [with good deeds]*
- فَأَمَّا مَنْ نَقَلَتْ مَوَازِينُهُ (٦) *He will be in a pleasant life [in an everlasting Janna]*
- فَهُوَ فِي عِيشَةٍ رَاضِيَةٍ (٧) *Then as for [the evil] one whose scales [of good deeds] are light*
- وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَفَّتْ مَوَازِينُهُ (٨) *His home will be a bottomless pit [an abyss]*
- فَأُمُّهُ هَاوِيَةٌ (٩) *What will explain to you what it [this pit] is?*
- وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا هِيَ (١٠) *It is a blazing fire*
- نَارٌ حَامِيَةٌ (١١)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allāh, the All-Merciful, the Especially Merciful.

الْقَارِعَةُ (١)

The striking calamity [the terror of the final day]

The word *al-Qāri'ah* is used when two things crash together and create a loud, disturbing sound. The word itself literally means: the striking one, the blow, and in the wider sense, it can mean a huge misfortune, a calamity. It is also used to describe the unexpected knocking on somebody's door. All these words refer to the same event; the day of reckoning, the day of judgement. It is as if Allāh ﷻ is telling us that whilst humankind will be busy in their everyday lives, the day of judgement will come knocking on our doors, an unexpected guest. The day of judgement will cause many creations to strike against one another. The waves of the oceans will strike one another, the moon and the sun will crash into one another, and the stars will collide. It is also called *al-Qāri'ah*, because it will knock man's senses, rendering him confused and perplexed.

مَا الْقَارِعَةُ (٢)

What is the striking calamity?

Allah repeats the same word for a second time for dramatic effect, making man really think about it. What is this thing which is knocking at my door?

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الْقَارِعَةُ (٣)

What will explain to you what the striking calamity is?

Allah repeats the same word for a third time to increase the dramatic effect, as if to tell man, 'you will never be able to truly grasp the reality of that terrifying day'. We read about it in the Qur'an and in the ḥadiths, and

have heard stories of its frightening nature, so we have just a glimpse of it, and even this glimpse is enough to make our hairs stand on end. What will our condition be when we finally experience it?

يَوْمَ يَكُونُ النَّاسُ كَالْفَرَاشِ الْمَبْثُوثِ (٤)

The day when people [after being raised from their graves] will be like scattered [dispersed, vulnerable and terrified] moths

The answer to that question is provided in this *āya*. The likening to moths is a description of humankind once the day of judgement will commence, they will be confused, dispersed, scattered, running in different directions, just as moths fly, dispersed. Allah uses this vivid imagery to describe the state of man, because in his pride and arrogance, he considers himself to be stable, mentally strong, intelligent and rational, yet on that terrifying day, Allah is reminding him that this will be lost on humankind. They will be utterly bewildered, dazed and anxious, except those on whom Allah has mercy.

In Sūra al-Qamar, Allah mentions, “*they will come forth from (their) graves, with humbled eyes, as if they were locusts, spread all over*⁴⁸”. The likening to locusts is because locusts generally travel together, in one direction, like humankind will do once they are called towards the plains of reckoning to initiate the final day, after the initial confusion.

وَتَكُونُ الْجِبَالُ كَالْعِهْنِ الْمَنْفُوشِ (٥)

and [even] the mountains shall be like coloured tufts of wool [floating around in the air despite their size and weight]

Allah is again signifying how alarming a day it will be, when ‘normal’ will no longer exist. The creation of Allah which humans associate with

⁴⁸Qur’ān, 54:7

strength, solidity and stability, the impenetrable mountains, which till today man is unable to move or penetrate completely, will become weak and light, floating in the air. Mountains of different colours, which serve as pegs for the earth, and are used as metaphors of firmness, will also become unstable on that day. If they are unable to hold themselves, what of the rest of the creation? These intense descriptions of the final day are adding to the dramatic effect Allah is using to awaken humankind's conscience.

فَأَمَّا مَنْ ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِينُهُ ۖ (٦)

Then as for one whose scales are heavy [with good deeds]

Based on their understanding of hadith, * **Ulamā have suggested the scales will be presented twice in the hereafter. Once to differentiate the believers from the disbelievers, and the second to differentiate the strong believers from the weak believers.

If a person had performed many actions he will see them, as is mentioned in Sūra al-Zilzāl, but seeing good deeds isn't enough. Only if the intentions that motivated the person to carry out the good deeds were pure, will they benefit him in the hereafter, by outweighing his evil. On the other hand, if a person did many good deeds, but the intentions were found to be corrupt when Allāh unveiled the curtains of his heart, then the high quantity of good deeds will mean very little. There is a grave chance that his evil will outweigh his good, even though he came with so much hope.

The scales are true, and although our actions are abstract and intangible, meaning we are unable to see them or touch them, nor do they have a physical form, Allāh ﷻ will present them for man in the hereafter. The scales have been mentioned in detail in both the Qur'ān and in the hadiths. In Sūra al-Anbiyā, Allāh ﷻ says, “*And We will set up scales of justice on the day of resurrection, thus none will be dealt with unjustly with regards*

*to anything. And if it will be the weight of a mustard seed, We will bring it forth. And We are sufficient to take account”.*⁴⁹ *

How will The Judge weigh the seemingly unweighable? ‘Ulamā have offered numerous opinions:

- Allāh ﷻ will give each action a physical body, and each individual body will be weighed. This is supported by a hadith narrated by Sayyidunā Abu’l-Dardā who reports that he heard the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ say, *“There is nothing that will be placed in the balance that will weigh more heavily than good character. The one who has good character will thereby attain the status of one who fasts and prays.”* The weight of each action will be representative of the purity of the intention and the correctness of the action itself. If the intentions were pure and were correct, the deeds will be weighty. If the intentions were corrupt, the actions will be hollow, weighing nothing. We will not be made aware of the quality of our actions until we see them on the scales. Therefore, we can never be proud or arrogant of our own supposed piety, because Allāh ﷻ alone knows the reality of our actions.
- ‘Ulamā have also suggested that Allāh ﷻ will weigh the person himself, gauging his inner intentions and purity and thus determine whether his good deeds were worth anything. A small, pious man may be very weighty on that day, yet a large man could be very light, due to a lack of inner spirituality. It has been narrated from Sayyidunā Abū Hurayra that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said: *“A large fat man will be brought on the Day of Resurrection, and in front of Allāh , he will not weigh more than the wing of a mosquito”.*⁵⁰ This hadith indicates that the person himself will be weighed on the scales.

⁴⁹Qur’an, 21:47

⁵⁰Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, 4729

- Another opinion is that each person's book of deeds will be weighed on the scales. The register of good deeds will be on one pan of the scale, and the register of bad deeds will be on the other pan. Every person's outcome will be determined by whichever register is heavier. An example of this is mentioned in Ḥadīth al-Biṭāqa, the Hadith of the chit, narrated by Sayyidunā 'Abd-Allāh b. 'Amr bin al-ʿĀṣ, who said that the Messenger ﷺ said: *"Allāh will separate a man belonging to my ummah in the presence of all the creation and will spread out ninety-nine scrolls for him, each scroll extending as far as the eye can see (full of bad deeds). Then He will say, 'Do you object to anything in this? Have my recording scribes (the angels who kept note) wronged you?' He will say, 'No, my Master.' He will ask him, 'Do you have any excuse?' He will say, 'No my Master.' Allāh will say, 'On the contrary, you have a good deed We have recorded, and you will not be wronged this Day.' A slip of paper will then be brought out, on the words 'Ash-hadu an lā ilāha ill-Allāh wa ash-hadu anna Muḥammadan 'abduhū wa rasūluh [I bear witness that there is no deity but Allah, and I bear witness that Muḥammad ﷺ is His slave and His Messenger] will be written.' Allāh will say, 'Bring your scrolls (of bad deeds).' The man will say, 'O my Master, what is this slip of paper in comparison to these scrolls?' And He will reply, 'You will not be wronged.' The scrolls will then be put in one side of the scales and the slip of paper in the other. The scrolls will become light and the slip of paper heavy, for nothing could compare in weight to the name of Allāh."*⁵¹

فَهُوَ فِي عِيشَةٍ رَاضِيَةٍ (٧)

He will be in a pleasant life [in an everlasting Janna]

⁵¹Jami' al-Tirmidhi, 2127

The entire purpose of our creation was to please Allāh by performing good actions and showing gratitude by showering him with praise. When these are weighed, and our actions are accepted by the Almighty, humankind's purpose will be fulfilled. We will finally have achieved our goal: Janna. It is narrated by Imam Muslim in his Ṣaḥīḥ, that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said, *"Whoever enters Paradise will enjoy bliss and will not be miserable, his clothes will not wear out and his youth will not fade."*^{52*}

وَأَمَّا مَنْ حَقَّتْ مَوَازِينُهُ ۖ (٨)

Then as for [the evil] one whose scales [of good deeds] are light

The person whose evil will outweigh his good will be the most unfortunate person on that day. How regretful he will be, knowing that each good deed was worth 10, and each bad deed was worth on single evil deed, yet his evil still outnumbered his good. A poet says, 'Wretched is the person whose ones [bad deeds] outweigh his tens [good deeds]'.⁵²

فَأُمُّهُ ۖ هَآوِيَةٌ (٩)

His home will be a bottomless pit [an abyss]

The word *umm* literally means 'mother', and is referring to the hell-fire. Just as a mother clings on to her child, the hell-fire will cling onto its occupants, not allowing them to leave.

Hāwiya literally means an abyss, a bottomless pit. This description of the hell-fire is supported by a hadith narrated by Imām Muslim in his Ṣaḥīḥ on the authority of Sayyiduna 'Utbā b. Ghawzān, who said that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ was sitting with the companions and they heard a sound or a bang of something falling. The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ asked, "Do u know what the sound was?" The companions said, "Allah and His Messenger know best". The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said, "This is a huge rock

⁵²Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, 2836

that was thrown 70 years ago in the hell-fire and it has just landed in the bottom of hell-fire right now”⁵³. To gauge the size of Jahannam, it is worth considering the āya of Sūra Qāf, in which Allāh ﷻ says, “On the Day when We will ask Jahannam: ”Are you filled?” It will say: “Are there any more to come?”⁵⁴ As if to say it has space for many more.

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا هِيَ (١٠)

What will explain to you what it [this pit] is?

This is a repetition of the linguistic effect used at the start of the Sūra, to capture the attention of the reader.

نَارٌ حَامِيَةٌ (١١)

It is a blazing fire

The fire will be of extreme heat, accompanied by a strong flame. It is reported in a hadith that the fire of Jahannam once complained of its own heat to Allāh ﷻ, so Allāh ﷻ permitted it to have 2 breaths in a year. The fire will climb over itself with rage and will continue growing larger as more people are thrown into it, dwellers who will be used as fuel for those coming after them.

— End of Sūrat al-Qāri’a —

⁵³Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim,

⁵⁴Qur’ān, 50:30

سُورَةُ التَّكْوِيْنِ

102 – Rivalry in Amassing [Worldly Goods]

A Makkī Sūra, consisting of 8 *Āyāt*

Link with the previous Sūra

Previously, Allāh ﷻ warned us of the dangers of amassing evil deeds and having few good deeds. In this Sūra, Allāh ﷻ is giving us an example of an evil deed, worthy of blame: competing with one another in amassing wealth to the extent that it makes man negligent of the hereafter and of his obligations to his Master. In the previous Sūra, Allāh ﷻ also spoke about the destruction the last day will cause. In this Sūra, Allāh ﷻ zooms in on the cause for this destruction; humankind's heedlessness with regards to the afterlife, so to awaken man from his slumber.

A short introduction

In this Sūra, humankind have been warned of the evil consequences of world-worship because of which we spend our lives in acquiring more worldly wealth, material benefits, pleasures, position and power, until death. We vie with one another, bragging and boasting about our acquisitions. This one pursuit has so occupied us that we are left with no time or opportunity for pursuing the higher goals in life. After warning us of its evil end, we have been reminded that these blessings which they are amassing and enjoying thoughtlessly, are not mere blessings but are also a means of their trial. For each one of these blessings and comforts, humankind will surely be called to account in the hereafter.

Virtues of the Sūra

The Prophet ﷺ said: “Whoever recited one thousand verses in one night would meet Allah with a smile on his face”. Someone said, ‘O Messenger of Allah, who can recite a thousand verses?’. The Prophet ﷺ then recited Sūrat al-Takāthur and then said, “By He in Whose hand my soul is, it is equal to a thousand verses”.⁵⁵

At a glance

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ	In the name of Allāh, the All-Merciful, the Especially Merciful.
الْهَنَافُكُمُ التَّكَاثُرُ (١)	Rivalry in amassing [the material wealth of this world] has distracted you [from your obligations to your Master]
حَتَّى زُرْتُمُ الْمَقَابِرَ (٢)	[you will remain negligent and heedless] until you visit the grave [you die]
كَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ (٣)	Never! [This rivalry will not benefit you!] You will eventually come to know [you will see the error of your ways]
ثُمَّ كَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ (٤)	Again, never! You will eventually come to know
كَلَّا لَوْ تَعْلَمُونَ عِلْمَ الْيَقِينِ (٥)	Never! If only you knew with certainty of knowledge [about the error of your ways, you would not have let it distract you]
لَتَرَوُنَّ الْجَحِيمَ (٦)	Indeed, you will see the blazing fire [when you enter it]

⁵⁵ Al-Suyūṭī, Al-Durr al-Manthūr, 1/615, referenced to other works

ثُمَّ لَتَرَوُنَّهَا عَيْنَ الْيَقِينِ (٧) *Then you will most certainly see it with the eye of certainty [there will be no room for doubt]*

ثُمَّ لَتُسْأَلُنَّ يَوْمَئِذٍ عَنِ النَّعِيمِ (٨) *Thereafter, on that day [the day of judgement] you will certainly be interrogated about every blessing [you enjoyed in the worldly life]*

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allāh, the All-Merciful, the Especially Merciful.

On one occasion, Sayyidunā ‘Ābd-Allāh b. Shikhkīr observed the Messenger of Allah ﷺ reciting Sūrat al-Takāthur. Upon its completion, he ﷺ exclaimed: “*The Son of Ādam (i.e. man) says, “My wealth, my wealth.” But do you get anything (of benefit) from your wealth except for that which you ate and you finished it, or that which you clothed yourself with and you wore it out, or that which you gave as charity and you have spent it?*”⁵⁶ This hadith is trying to teach man that the wealth which he hoards will inevitably end up in another person’s hands, so it is not truly his wealth. His wealth is only that which he has spent on himself or on others.

الْهٰكُمُ التَّكَاثُرُ (١)

Rivalry in amassing [the material wealth of this world] has distracted you [from your obligations to your Master]

The word alhākum is derived from the Arabic root lahw [لَهْو], meaning entertainment, distraction or diversion. Allāh ﷻ made the world for us so we can dedicate ourselves to him, yet this same worthless world has taken us away from our Creator. Time and again in the Qur’ān Allāh

⁵⁶Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, 2959

mentions that this world is not but a distraction, “Know that the life of this world is only play and amusement, pomp and mutual boasting among you, and rivalry in respect of wealth and children, as the likeness of vegetation after rain, thereof the growth is pleasing to the tiller; afterwards it dries up and you see it turning yellow; then it becomes straw. But in the Hereafter (there is) a severe torment (for the disbelievers, evil-doers), and (there is) forgiveness from Allah and (His) pleasure (for the believers, good-doers), whereas the life of this world is only a deceiving enjoyment.”⁵⁷

In Sūra al-Munāfiqūn, Allāh ﷻ prohibits man from allowing anything to distract him from His worship, *“O you who believe, do not allow your wealth and children to distract you from the remembrance of Allah, and whoever does that, then these are the losers.”*⁵⁸ *Allāh goes on to mention the cure for this worldly love: spending in his path - ṣadaqa. In another place in the Qur’ān, Allāh ﷻ repeats the sentiments that both our wealth and our children are a trial for us.⁵⁹

Allāh ﷻ mentions both wealth and children as trials for man, and warns man not be distracted by them, because in the same way a man uses his wealth and possessions to advance his own interests, he often also uses his children to do the same. A man demands power, prestige and authority based on his worldly material ownership, and demands the same based on his children’s accolades. It is as if he is treating his children as mere possessions to enhance his own worth and value. Have you not seen parents flaunting their child’s achievements, making a great deal in public of their accomplishments? Is the motive to celebrate their child, or to make others take note of their parenting skills? In making his children of such a high calibre, Allāh is warning him that he should not become distracted from his purpose and his objective in life: to please Him.

⁵⁷Qur’ān, 57:20

⁵⁸Qur’an, 63:9

⁵⁹Qur’an, 64:15

Al-Takāthur literally means to compete with one another in having large amounts of something. Allāh ﷻ does not explicitly mention which aspect of this world humankind are competing in. Humankind's love for this world is attached to his wealth, his children, properties, possessions and position, amongst other things, which oblige him to participate in the rat-race of life.

Allāh ﷻ doesn't mention here what this greed for excessive wealth has distracted us from, as if he wishes to keep it open for man to realise himself. The Qur'ānic commentators have offered various opinions, some suggesting we have been distracted from the truth, from our obligations to Allāh, from spending in his path, or from the afterlife itself, as is theme in the previous sūrahs.

Good competition, bad competition

Rivalry in amassing material benefits of this little world is a sign that man has incessant love for it. It is a principle of life, that we only gather, collect and amass those things which we attach value to. This *āya* can easily translate as 'love for this world has made you negligent'.

When we have enough for ourselves, we wish we have more than others. Once we start thinking this way, our inner peace disappears. We will constantly be comparing ourselves to others, making us morally corrupt. For me to prove I have more than my competitor and I am better than him, either I am required to boast of my achievements, or even worse, disparage and disgrace my competitor to make others look down on him. Comparing ourselves to those above us goes directly against the command of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, who said: *"Look at the people beneath you (in wealth and worldly affairs) and do not look at those above you (in this matter). By this, you will not underestimate the bounty of Allah bestowed upon you."*⁶⁰*

*This is evil competition.

⁶⁰Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, 2963

It is important to note here, that a person's intention makes all the difference to determine if the action is worthy of blame or not. If somebody were to host a graduation meal due to genuine happiness at their child reaching a major milestone in life, this would be fine. However, if at any time the intention deviates and becomes so that they can show their child off to the world, this is obviously blame-worthy and would fall under the prohibition of boasting.

Competition with one another is allowed only in good matters, matters of the Dīn. Allāh ﷻ mentions: "*Compete, then, with one another in good actions*"⁶¹ The great successor the noble companions, Hasan al-Baṣrī said, "*If you see anyone competing with you in worldly affairs, compete with him in affairs of the hereafter [good deeds].*"⁶² Some of the great 'Ulamā of the past also said: "*If one hears that there are people who are better than him in obeying Allah, this should upset him.*"⁶³ *The guidance we have been given by our Creator is to abandon our constant pursuit of this lowly world, and afford some time to preparing for our afterlife, because when our eyes close, only these good actions will help us.

In a beautiful hadith, some of the less affluent Ṣaḥāba came to the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ and commented: "*O Prophet of Allah, the rich among us have taken the rewards!*" So, the Prophet ﷺ said: "*Shall I not teach you something whereby you will catch up with those who have preceded you and will get ahead of those who follow you, and no one will surpass you unless he does the same as you do?*" Then he said: "*Say: Subhan-Allah, and Allahu Akbar, and praise Him (by saying Al-hamdu lilla) thirty-three times after every Ṣalāh.*" So, they did that, and the wealthy came to know of this and started doing the same. The poor then came to the Prophet ﷺ and said: "*Our brothers, the possessors of wealth, having heard what we are doing, have*

⁶¹Qur'an, 5:48

⁶²Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī, Laṭā'if al-Ma'ārif, p. 268

⁶³Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī, Laṭā'if al-Ma'ārif, p. 268

started doing the same.” The Prophet ﷺ replied: “This is Grace of Allāh which He gives to whom He wishes.”⁶⁴ *Look at the attitude of the companions, so hungry for the rewards of the hereafter, and such little care for possessions of this lowly world. This competition is not only permitted, but encouraged, for it draws a person closer to Allāh . ﷺ

حَتَّى زُرْتُمُ الْمَقَابِرَ (٢)

[you will remain negligent and heedless] until you visit the grave [you die]

The ‘Ulamā mention the context of this particular verse originating from the time of Nabī ﷺ as narrated by Sayyidunā Ibn Burayda عليه السلام who mentions that this āya was revealed regarding two tribes from the Anṣār: Banū Hāritha and Banū’l-Hārith, who would goad each other about their high-ranking personalities and leaders. It reached the stage once that one of the tribes visited the cemetery to challenge the other to find somebody among their dead who was more noble than their dead leaders. Upon this, Allāh revealed this āya.⁶⁵

An alternative explanation to this āya is offered by the commentators, that addressed to humankind, this āya is referring to death, as if to say, man will continue to compete until he dies. The word ‘visit’ here suggests that the abode of the grave is temporary, and man will inevitably return to his creator one day.

Man will only realise his negligence and foolishness when he dies, when the eyes of this world will close, and the eyes of the hereafter will open, but then, it is too late. Man has enough to survive but having enough is never enough for him. He always wants more. His greed overtakes him, and his life becomes all about increasing his material world. In a ḥadith, the

⁶⁴Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, 595; Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, 843, with a slight variation in wording

⁶⁵Al-Suyūṭī, Al-Durr al-Manthūr, 1/618, referenced to other works

Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said: “*The Son of Adam becomes old, but two things remain young in him: greed and hope*”.⁶⁶

This relentless greed is explained in another hadith, in which the Nabī of Allāh ﷺ said: “*If the son of Adam had a valley full of gold, he would want to have two valleys. Nothing fills his mouth but the dust of the grave, yet Allah will accept whoever repents to him.*”⁶⁷ *This hadith is so powerful and was so oft-recited by the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ that some of his companions assumed it must have been part of the Qur’ān. It was only when Sūra al-Takāthur was recited in its entirety that they realised this hadith merely explained the Qur’anic verses.⁶⁸

Allāh ﷻ and his Messenger ﷺ teach us repeatedly that the greed for this world is damaging to a person’s faith and to his afterlife. We are taught to be content and happy with what we have, as is mentioned in a hadith narrated by Imām Muslim in his Ṣaḥīḥ, “*He is successful who has accepted Islam, who has sufficient provisions and been made contented by Allah with what He has given him.*”⁶⁹ We have discussed the cure for greed: consider those who have less than us, not those who have more than us. This teaches us to be grateful and content and saves us from ingratitude and greed. To attain this beautiful quality, our Messenger ﷺ taught us a du‘ā⁷⁰:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ الْهُدَى وَالتُّقَى وَالْعَفَافَ وَالْغِنَى

“*Allāhumma innī as-aluk al-hudā wa’t-tuqā wa’l-’afāfa wa’l-ghinā*”

(O Allah, I ask You for guidance, piety, chastity and self-sufficiency)

⁶⁶Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī,; Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim,

⁶⁷Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, 6075; Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, 1048

⁶⁸Bukhārī, 6440

⁶⁹Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, 1054

⁷⁰Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, 2721

كَأَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ (٣)

*Never! [This rivalry will not benefit you!] You will eventually come to know
[you will see the error of your ways]*

ثُمَّ كَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ (٤)

Again, never! You will eventually come to know

When the hereafter becomes a reality for man, he will see the error of his ways, and will be regretful over his choices in the world. The eyes of this world will close and the eyes of the hereafter will be opened.* *The repetition of this statement is to create a dramatic effect and to awaken man from his slumber. We will come to know what?

كَأَلَّا لَوْ تَعْلَمُونَ عِلْمَ الْيَقِينِ (٥)

Never! If only you knew with certainty of knowledge [about the error of your ways, you would not have let it distract you]

Yaqīn means to have absolute unshakeable conviction. We often hear the words īmān and yaqīn used together, because true faith is only when we have absolute conviction in Allāh ﷻ, his message and his promise.

There are three levels of *yaqīn*, two of which are mentioned in this Sūra:

- *‘ilm al-yaqīn* – to know of something which offers us conviction, for example, to see smoke and to know that it must be caused by a fire;
- *‘ayn al-yaqīn* – to have seen something which convinces us, for example, to see the fire burning yourself;*
- *Haqq al-yaqīn* – to experience something which gives us the highest levels of conviction, for example, to approach the fire and feel the heat yourself.*

In this life, Allāh ﷻ offers us ‘ilm al-yaqīn through the Qur’an and the hadiths of* our Messenger ﷺ. *When our īmān reaches a very high stage, many people even see the Messenger ﷺ himself in their dreams, offering them ‘ayn al-yaqīn in this life. Otherwise, for most of us, we will only benefit from ‘ayn al-yaqīn in the hereafter, when we finally see Allāh ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ, inshaAllah. Those whose īmān is accepted in this worldly life are even afforded Haqq al-yaqīn, *like the Ṣaḥāba, who would explain that they could feel the īmān running through their veins and they could experience the sweetness of obedience and sacrifice.*

In this āya, ‘ilm al-yaqīn refers to death. When a person dies, he leaves behind all his wealth for his heirs, which do not benefit him in the life after death. Therefore, priorities should be given to performing more righteous deeds over accumulating worldly wealth. The Prophet said: *“Three things follow the deceased person, and two of them return while one remains behind with him. The things which follow him are his family, his wealth and his deeds. His family and his wealth return while his deeds remain.”*⁷¹

لَتَرَوُنَّ الْجَحِيمَ (٦)

Indeed, you will see the blazing fire [when you enter it]

After death, each person is shown his abode, either in Paradise or in the Hell-fire. Even on the day of judgement, whilst crossing the bridge, the good believers will see the fire under them. Every person must pass over the fire, upon which the good believers will thank Allāh for salvation and the evil-doers will fall head-first into it.

In Sūra al-Fajr, Allāh ﷻ describes the sorrow and regret of man: *“And Jahannam (Hell), on that day, will be brought forward, it will be the day when man will realize the truth, but how will he take advantage of such*

⁷¹Bukhāri, 6514; Muslim, 2960

realization? He will say: 'How I wish I had prepared something for my real life (the afterlife)'”⁷²

ثُمَّ لَتَرَوُنَّهَا عَيْنَ الْيَقِينِ (٧)

Then you will most certainly see it with the eye of certainty [there will be no room for doubt]

When man sees the hell-fire, he will know that all the warnings were true. But once the veils of the unseen are withdrawn, it is too late to declare faith, it is too late to repent. The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ has informed us⁷³ that Allāh will accept the repentance of every slave until the sun rises from the west before the day of judgement. The day this happens, man will realise Allāh's message was true, but it will be too late. Similarly, Allāh ﷻ accepts the repentance of a servant until he reaches the final few moments of his life, when the reality of the hereafter is shown to him. It is for this reason Allah refused to accept the repentance of Fir'aun when he was drowning, because he had finally seen the truth of Prophet Mūsā's عليه السلام message.

ثُمَّ لَنَسْأَلَنَّ يَوْمَئِذٍ عَنِ النَّعِيمِ (٨)

Thereafter, on that day [the day of judgement] you will certainly be interrogated about every blessing [you enjoyed in the worldly life]

Allāh ﷻ will deal with people in two different ways. The first type of person will be worthy of mercy and oversight. He will be presented to Allāh , ﷻ who will not interrogate him, but will let him pass through. This is the fortunate person. The other type of person will be presented to Allāh ﷻ who will look through his records. Once Allāh ﷻ demands his records are opened and scrutinised, this person will know his fate is decided.

⁷²Qur'an, 89:23-24

⁷³Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, 2703

Explaining this, our Nabi ﷺ said: “Whoever’s accounts are scrutinised will be destroyed”.

We are taught a du‘ā originally taught by the Messenger ﷺ to his wife, ‘Ā’isha :ﷺ

اللَّهُمَّ حَاسِبْنِي حِسَابًا يَسِيرًا

O Allah make my account easy

The Messenger ﷺ went on to say, “An easy reckoning is that Allah looks into the book of the slave and overlooks his misdeeds, because whoever’s account is scrutinised, will surely be destroyed on that day.”⁷⁴ May Allāh grant us an easy reckoning and protect us from scrutiny. Āmīn.

Accountability in the hereafter

Allāh ﷻ says, “And if you attempt to count the favours of Allāh, you will be unable to enumerate them. Indeed, humankind is surely unjust, ungrateful.”⁷⁵ Every single blessing we have is a blessing we do not deserve. It is only Allāh’s grace that He has given us so much despite our unworthiness. We will be questioned about our faculties, our intellects, our time, our wealth, our families, the honour we were given, our dependants, our youth, about every breath and every second of every day. Imam Tirmidhi narrates an eye-opening hadith in which our Nabi ﷺ said: “Man’s feet will not move on the day of resurrection before he is asked about his life, how did he consume it, his knowledge, what did he do with it, his wealth, how did he earn it and how did he dispose of it, and about his body, how did he wear it out.”⁷⁶

⁷⁴Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, 2876; Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, 103; Aḥmad, 25515

⁷⁵Qur’ān 14:34

⁷⁶Jāmi’ al-Tirmidhi, 407

Sayyidunā Abu Hurayra narrates from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ who said: *“Indeed the first of what will be asked about on the day of judgment – meaning the first favour the slave be questioned about – is that it will be said to him: ‘Did We not make your body healthy, and give you of cool water to drink?’”*^{77*} *How many of us have even considered these favours to be blessings? We live an entitled lifestyle, assuming we deserve everything we have. How wrong are we! Allāh ﷻ owns even our bodies and our souls, so how can we claim ownership over anything else?

No blessing of Allāh is insignificant. Sayyidunā Abu Hurayra reports that Allah’s Messenger ﷺ went out one day or one night, and there he found Sayyidunā Abu Bakr and Sayyidunā ‘Umar. He ﷺ asked them: *“What has brought you out of your houses at this hour?”* They said: *“Allah’s Messenger, it is hunger.”* Thereupon he said: *“By Him in Whose Hand is my life, what has brought you out has brought me out too; get up”.* They got up along with him. and together came to the house of an Anṣarī companion, but he was not at home. When his wife saw them, she said: *“Most welcome”,* and Allah’s Messenger ﷺ said to her: *“Where is so and so?”* She said: *“He has gone to get some fresh water for us”.* When the Ansari came and saw Allah’s Messenger ﷺ and his two companions, he said: *“Praise be to Allah, no one has more honourable guests today than I (have)”.* He then went out and brought them a bunch of ripe dates, dry dates and fresh dates, and said: *“Eat some of them”.* He then took hold of his long knife (for slaughtering). Allah’s Messenger ﷺ said to him: *“Beware of killing a milk animal.”* He slaughtered a sheep for them and after they had eaten of the meat and of the dates and drank the water until their fill, Allah’s Messenger ﷺ said to Abu Bakr and ‘Umar: *“By Him in Whose Hand is my life, you will certainly be questioned about this bounty on the Day of judgment. Hunger brought you out of your house, then you did not return until this bounty came to you.”*^{78*} *

⁷⁷Jāmi‘ al-Tirmidhi, 3358

⁷⁸Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, 2038

We should make a daily habit of showing gratitude by taking a daily account of our blessings and even making a diary of the good things that happen to us in the day.

Concluding remarks and morals

- Do not allow the material goods of the world to distract you from your purpose in life,
- Fulfil the rights attached with all of Allāh's blessings, before you are asked about them tomorrow,

— *End of Sūrat al-Takāthur* —

سُورَةُ الْعَصْرِ

103 – The [Diminishing] Time

This is a Makkī Sūra, and consists of 3 Āyāt

Link with the previous Sūra

Previously, Allāh ﷻ informed man about the evil of competing with one another in attaining material wealth, trying to maximise worldly profits. Now, Allāh ﷻ speaks of how these types of persons are in fact drowning in loss, except for those who maximise their time on this earth in doing good, and helping others do good, maximising their reward.

A short introduction

The Sūra tells us that human beings are drowning in loss, in both lives. Then Allāh ﷻ informs us of how to attain success and salvation. The Sūra is matchless in its comprehensiveness and brevity. A whole world of meaning has been compressed into its few brief words, which is so vast in content, it would need a voluminous work to explain and understand the sentiment expressed in it.

Imām Shāfiʿī has very rightly said that if the people only considered this Sūra well, it alone would suffice them for their guidance.

Virtues of this Sūra

Shuyaib ibn Hudaifa said, “When two Companions of the Messenger ﷺ would meet they would not depart until they had read Sūrat al-Asr [103] and then they would give salam [and leave].” [al-Awsat of Tabrani and Shuʿab al-Īmān of al-Bayhaqī]

Imām Shāfiʿī said, “If only mankind reflected upon this Sūra, it would be sufficient for them.”

At a glance

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ *In the name of Allāh, the All-Merciful, the Especially Merciful.*

وَالْعَصْرِ (١) *I swear by [the diminishing] time*

إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لِفِي خُسْرٍ (٢) *Indeed, every human is surely in great loss [in respect to both worlds]*

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ
وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ (٣) *Except those who have brought Imān, and done good deeds, and encouraged good, and encouraged patience*

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allāh, the All-Merciful, the Especially Merciful.

وَالْعَصْرِ (١)

I swear by [the diminishing] time

What does ‘aṣr actually mean? Its root sense is to squeeze, to wring out — which is why ‘aṣīr is juice, squeezed from the fruit. Wal-‘aṣr, then, evokes that which has been squeezed until very little of it remains; and this is why the ‘Aṣr prayer sits where it does, at the point of the day when the daylight has nearly run out. Built into the very word of the oath is its message: time is running out. There is even a quiet irony here — when we are in a rush, the Sūra we reach for in ṣalāh is almost always Wal-‘aṣr: the very Sūra in which Allāh ﷻ tells us to beware of time.

The ‘Ulamā have drawn out further meanings. Some said al-‘aṣr is the age of the Messenger of Allāh — ﷺ the finest period of time from Ādam until the Day of Judgement, an era worthy of a divine oath. Others said it indicates the ‘Aṣr prayer itself, whose weight in the sharī‘a is immense: the Messenger ﷺ said that the one who misses the ‘Aṣr prayer is

as though he has been plundered of his family and his wealth. Reflect on what that comparison means: a man comes home to find his house burnt to the ground and his family gone — the grief, the anxiety, the regret that would crush him at that moment is the grief that should seize a believer over one missed prayer. The Ḥadīth says a sin sits on the hypocrite like a fly he waves off his face, and on the believer like a mountain upon his shoulders; where between those two do we stand?

And when Allāh ﷻ takes an oath by a thing, that thing is thereby announced as tremendous. Time is the greatest blessing we possess — and the previous Sūra closed by warning that we will be asked about every blessing. Fittingly, the very next words of the Qur’ān swear by the blessing we squander most.

Muftī Shafī, in his *tafsīr* of this Sūra, offers an image that once heard is never forgotten. Each of us has been handed a block of ice, and it is melting. The problem is that no one knows how large his block is. If I am twenty-one and knew my block was half gone, I could plan for the remainder — but no one knows whether he will see Fajr. Time is passing; you are leaving this world, and you do not even feel it. One of the mashāyikh extended the picture: a man leaves home in the morning with a block of ice to sell. On the way he stops to watch one game, then another; each time he looks down, the ice is smaller. By evening he is haggling desperately over the sliver that remains, and even as he haggles it melts in his hands. The ice is your life; the sale price is your good deeds; and the evening is old age, when a man finally turns to worship with whatever drops are left. Do not wait for the evening.

One further note: the believer never curses time. Time belongs to Allāh ﷻ; He controls it, and He can withdraw it whenever He wills. Our task is not to blame the age we live in, but to fill the hours we are given.

إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ (٢)

Indeed, every human is surely in great loss [in respect to both worlds]

The translation cannot carry the full force of the Arabic. Inna means indeed, certainly; and the lām of la-fī adds a second, independent oath of certainty — two emphatic devices stacked in a single short sentence, upon the foundation of the oath itself. Certainly, emphatically, every human being is right now — not in the past, not in some future — immersed in loss. And the word chosen for “human” is al-insān, not rijāl or any other term: insān is linked to nisyān, forgetfulness. The creature in loss is the creature that forgets — forgets death, forgets his purpose, forgets that the ice is melting.

Al-insān, with its definite article, admits no exceptions: every single individual. When a headteacher announces “whoever fights will be punished”, each pupil assumes it means someone else; this is the human instinct — to deflect. So Allāh ﷻ frames the sentence in a way that cannot be deflected: all of you, each of you, are in loss. Before we worry about anyone else’s state, the Sūra forces each of us to worry about our own; on the Day of Judgement a man will offer his wife, his children, his brother — everyone — for ransom, so long as he himself is saved. Rectify yourself first; your children will follow what they see you do far more faithfully than what they hear you say.

Imām al-Ghazālī captured the state of heedless man in an unforgettable parable. A man flees through a jungle from a lion. He reaches a well and leaps in, catching hold of a rope. Relieved, he looks down — and sees a serpent waiting at the bottom. He looks up — and sees two mice, one white and one black, gnawing steadily through the rope. Then he notices, at the side of the well, a honeycomb. He dips his finger in, tastes the sweetness, closes his eyes — and forgets the lion, the serpent, and the mice. The lion is death, which pursues every one of us; the rope is your lifespan; the serpent is the grave; the white mouse and the black mouse are day and night, eating through your rope without pause; and the honeycomb is the *dunyā*, whose sweetness makes us close our eyes to the whole picture. The honey will finish; the rope will part; only the preparation matters.

What, precisely, is the loss? The Sūra defines it by its exceptions, and so the ‘Ulamā counted the losses as four: a person has no true conviction; or he has *īmān* but does not translate it into deeds; or he practises but never calls anyone else towards the truth; or he does all this but abandons it at the first test, having no *ṣabr* and encouraging none. Imām al-Shāfi‘ī observed that the lover obeys his beloved; if our conviction in Allāh ﷻ were true love, obedience would follow of itself. That it does not is the first and deepest of the losses.

And because the loss is defined by Allāh ﷻ, our notions of success and failure must be recalibrated to His. Would we call being driven from one’s homeland failure? The Messenger ﷺ was driven from Makkah — and it was the beginning of the victory. Being cast out by one’s own father? That was Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, honoured now by every heavenly religion. A price on one’s head? That was Mūsā عليه السلام. Conversely: would we call the richest man alive a success? Qārūn was so wealthy that the keys to his treasures needed a company of men to carry them — and he is the Qur’ān’s emblem of failure. A king with an empire? Fir‘awn. Success is what Allāh ﷻ says it is: *“Whoever is drawn away from the Fire and admitted into Janna has truly succeeded.”*

Nor is the Sūra an attack on wealth itself. ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه’s caravans made Madīnah tremble when they arrived; al-Zubayr رضي الله عنه left an estate reckoned in millions — and both were given glad tidings of Janna. The Ṣaḥāba were taught the secret: keep the *dunyā in your hand, and never let it enter your heart. Earn — the Qur’ān itself says “disperse through the land and seek of Allāh’s bounty” — but on the condition that the earning never displaces the obligations you owe to Allāh ﷻ.* The loss is not in possessing the honeycomb; it is in closing your eyes.

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَتَوَّصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ وَتَوَّصَوْا

بِالصَّبْرِ (٣)

Except those who have brought Īmān, and done good deeds, and encouraged good, and encouraged patience

Here — and only here — is the ladder out of the loss, in four rungs. *Īmān*: conviction that has entered the heart. Deeds: conviction translated into limbs. *Tawāṣī bi'l-ḥaqq*: not keeping the truth to yourself, but counselling one another towards it. And *tawāṣī bi'ṣ-ṣabr*: counselling one another to patience, for whoever stands for the truth will be tested, and whoever is not braced by *ṣabr* will drop it.

The two Sūrahs on either side of al-'Aṣr — al-Takāthur before it and al-Humaza after it — both diagnose the disease: rivalry, hoarding, obsession with wealth, man drowning in loss. Neither prescribes the cure. The cure is placed here, between them, in the shortest of the three: this is why Imām al-Shāfi'ī said that had Allāh ﷻ revealed nothing but this Sūra, it would have sufficed mankind.

Note finally the mutuality of *tawāṣī*: it is a shared, reciprocal act — each reminding and each being reminded. When you carry the message to five doors, the listeners each hear it once; you hear it five times. The first beneficiary of commanding the good is the one commanding it — which is itself a mercy, for the Sūra has already told us who is most in need.

— End of Sūrat al-'Aṣr —

سُورَةُ الْهُمَزَةِ

104 – The Slanderer

It is a Makkī Sūra, consisting of 9 Āyāt

Link with the previous Sūra

Previously, we learnt of evil traits which Allāh ﷻ despises, and the abode for such people. In this Sūra, Allāh ﷻ introduces another evil trait: slander, and explains in graphic detail the horrors of the blazing Fire of Jahannam, the abode of those who are drowning in loss.

A short introduction

This Sūra mentions 3 types of sin and warns about the severe punishment which will be inflicted on the person who commits these sins. The Sūra then goes into further detail about the uniqueness of this punishment. As we read through the commentary, we should remind ourselves about our own shortcomings. If we are from those who perpetrate these sins, we need to begin turning back to Allah.

At a glance

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ	<i>In the name of Allāh, the All-Merciful, the Especially Merciful.</i>
وَيْلٌ لِّكُلِّ هُمَزَةٍ لُّمَزَةٍ (١)	<i>Destruction is for every slanderer, the one who mocks</i>
الَّذِي جَمَعَ مَالًا وَعَدَّدَهُ (٢)	<i>who amasses wealth and counts it [and doesn't spend it in Allāh's path]</i>
يَحْسَبُ أَنَّ مَالَهُ أَخْلَدَهُ (٣)	<i>He [foolishly] assumes that his wealth will make him immortal [and that death will never come to him]</i>

- كَلَّا لَيُنْبَذَنَّ فِي الْحُطَمَةِ (٤) *No! [He will certainly face death and] He will most certainly be thrown into Huṭama [the Crusher]*
- وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الْحُطَمَةُ (٥) *And what will make you realise what Huṭama [the Crusher] is?*
- نَارُ اللَّهِ الْمَوْقَدَةُ (٦) *The ignited fire of Allāh*
- الَّتِي تَطَّلِعُ عَلَى الْأَفْئِدَةِ (٧) *Which [is so fierce, it] will penetrate the hearts*
- إِنَّهَا عَلَيْهِمْ مُّوَصَّدَةٌ (٨) *Indeed, it will close on them [so they cannot escape]*
- فِي عَمَدٍ مُمَدَّدَةٍ (٩) *With towering pillars [the flames will rise high and lock the people in]*

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allāh, the All-Merciful, the Especially Merciful.

وَيَلْ لِكُلِّ هُمَزَةٍ لُّمَزَةٌ (١)

Destruction is for every slanderer, the one who mocks

الَّذِي جَمَعَ مَالًا وَعَدَّدَهُ (٢)

who amasses wealth and counts it [and doesn't spend it in Allāh's path]

Allāh ﷻ mentions the third evil characteristic of this person, his greed for wealth, constantly counting it and refusing to part with it in the name of charity. As mentioned in Sūra wa'l-ʿĀdiyāt, wealth is not inherently evil. When a person uses wealth wisely and generously, it is a means of great reward.

When a wealthy person is always counting their wealth, always checking their bank balance, always turning over the same notes, it is a sign of insecurities about themselves. It is the same insecurity which has caused the first two evil traits; slandering and backbiting. Another common factor in the three evil qualities mentioned is obsession with oneself, narcissism. When a person thinks very highly of themselves, for them to continue feeling this way, two things are required: 1. Belittling others 2. Constant mention of their own perfection. Narcissism is the same evil quality which subjected Shayṭān to Allāh's wrath and caused his eternal disgrace in the court of his Creator.

It is mentioned by the Messenger of Allāh , ﷺ

لَا بَأْسَ بِالْغِنَى لِمَنْ اتَّقَى اللَّهَ

*There is no problem with wealth for the one who fears Allāh[^1]**

With regards to owning large amounts of wealth, in our celebrated history, there have been many great personalities who have possessed tremendous wealth. Sayyidunā 'Uthmān b. 'Affān was so wealthy, he became known as *al-Ghanī*, the wealthy one. On the occasion of the Battle of Tabūk when the Muslim army was in desperate need of monetary support, it was the three Caliphs who gave the greatest sacrifice, and from them, Sayyidunā 'Uthmān was given a great honour by our Ḥabīb ﷺ who said of him: "*Never will any harm come to 'Uthmān for anything he does after today[^2]*". His wealth enabled him to support the Muslim's cause in their time of need. But these personalities were not obsessed with wealth, and as we will read below, their possession of such vast sums of wealth did not distract them from Allāh ﷻ and their obligations to Him. Allāh ﷻ speaks of such noble persons in Sūrat al-Nūr, "*Men (of great distinction) whom neither business nor trade (nor any other worldly preoccupations) can divert from the remembrance of Allāh and establishing the Prayer, and*

paying the Zakāh; they are in fear of a Day on which all hearts and eyes will be overturned.”[³]* *

The scholars of taṣawwuf [purification of the heart] mention words to the effect of, “*Possess millions in your pockets, but do not let a penny enter your heart.*” This concept is explained beautifully by the great Ṣūfī, Maulānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, who writes in his Ma‘ārif-e-Mathnawī:

آب در کشتی هلاک کشتی است آب اندر زیر کشتی پستی
است

Water which seeps into the ship causes it to be ruined,

but the water underneath the ship is its support

Maulānā Shāh Muḥammad Ḥakīm Akhtar Ṣāhib explains this example thus, **“The example of this lowly world is like the seas. A ship sails on it. If the seawater is outside and beneath the ship, it is the means whereupon the ship sails. However, when the seawater comes inside the ship, it eventually sinks the ship. Similarly, if this lowly world stays outside the heart, as in the case when Allāh’s love is greater than the love for wealth, children, wife and all else, then it is not harmful. It will be a means of attaining Allāh’s * pleasure and nearness. But, when this lowly world enters the heart and the love for these worldly entities becomes greater than our love for Allāh , then this will lead to destruction. Surely, the heart has been created by Allāh solely for Himself.*”[⁴]

A Hadith[⁵] *states that on the Day of Qiyaama, man will be brought forward like a lamb. He will then be presented before Allāh, who will ask, “Did I not grant you wealth and bounties? What did you do with these?” He will reply, “I accumulated it and multiplied it until it flourished. Then I left it all behind. Allow me to return and bring it all before you.” Allāh will say, “Show Me what you had sent ahead here [to the Ākhira as good deeds].” He will again reply, “I accumulated my wealth and multiplied it until it*

flourished. Then I left it all behind. Allow me to return and bring it all before you.” When it is clear that he had not performed any good deeds on earth, he will be flung into the blazing fire.

The Qur’an describes these actions as sordid and ugly, delivering a stern warning to anyone who indulges in them. This suggests that the Sūra is referring to an actual case of some unbelievers subjecting the Prophet and the believers to their taunts and slander. The reply to these actions comes in the form of a strong prohibition and awesome warning.

يَحْسَبُ أَنَّ مَالَهُ أَخْلَدَهُ (٣)

He [foolishly] assumes that his wealth will make him immortal [and that death will never come to him]

When a person puts all his hopes and ambitions in his wealth, he starts to feel invincible, as if nothing can harm him. Allāh ﷻ is now explaining the fallacy of that attitude. Many of those who are the wealthiest suffer from the worst types of illnesses which their riches cannot find the cure for. We also know that death is not exclusive to the poor, it has come to every type of person, and will continue to come to every type of person, regardless of wealth, colour, race or religion.

We amass wealth, why? Because we are insecure of our futures and want to plan for the long-term. We think, ‘I might need to buy a house in ten years’ time, this money will help me’, but the reality of our creation is that a long-term vision isn’t to think ten years ahead, but to extend that thinking a further thousand years, thinking of our time in the grave. How can this money help me then? This is true long-term thinking.

It is strange that man believes that he could live forever, and he feels invincible, yet when he falls asleep at night, Allah removes his nafs and dangles it above it head, and the sleeper is unaware if he will even make it to the morning. Once his eyes close, he has no idea if they will re-open.

History shows us that those with large amounts of wealth were not able to extend their lives by means of their wealth. Being rich is not a cure to death.

He assumes that his wealth will make him immortal, could also mean that although he knows he will die, he desires to use his wealth to keep his legacy alive. How many of us do some good but publicise it for others, to earn their approval and so we can increase in honour, only to lose our reward in the court of our Master? People's perceptions of us are more important to us than how Allah thinks of us. If our wealth is spent sincerely for the sake of Allah, then certainly He will ensure we will be remembered well by the people.

كَأَلَّا لِيُنْبَذَنَّ فِي الْحُطَمَةِ (٤)

No! [He will certainly face death and] He will most certainly be thrown into Huṭama [the Crusher]

Allah uses multiple words to describe the Hellfire in the Qur'an, of which 'the Crusher' carries one of the most vivid descriptions. To understand the contempt in which these types of people will be held, you need to understand the connotations of word *layumbadhanna*, meaning to 'cast aside' or 'to throw in contempt'. It can be described as the throwing of something which has no value, similar to throwing a used sweet wrapper in the bin, there is no second thought given to the value of the wrapper.

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الْحُطَمَةُ (٥)

And what will make you realise what Huṭama [the Crusher] is?

Allāh challenges man; do you even know what *Huṭama* is? What do you know about *Huṭama*, what should I tell you about *Huṭama*?

The warning comes in the form of a picture of the hereafter portraying the mental and physical suffering there and drawing an image of hell which is both palpable and telling. It takes care to relate the crime to the punishment inflicted and to its effect on the culprit. On the one side there

is the image of the taunting, slandering backbiter who mocks and ridicules others while he gathers wealth thinking that he is guaranteed immortality in this way. This image of a cynical arrogant person seeking power through wealth is contrasted with the disregarded person who is scorned and will be flung into a crushing instrument which destroys all that comes in its way. It soon crushes his conceit and his pride.

نَارُ اللَّهِ الْمَوْقَدَةُ (٦)

The ignited fire of Allāh

Knowing humankind's lack of an answer, Allah provides it Himself: It is Allah's ignited fire! In other parts of the Qur'ān, Allāh mentions the Hellfire but doesn't make a direct attribution to Himself. That changes here; it is a fire I have ignited Myself. Imagine the power of Allah and the power of the fire he has kindled Himself. It strikes fear into the hearts of anybody who understands the severity of the fire. May Allah save and protect us from the fire.

الَّتِي تَطَّلِعُ عَلَى الْأَفْئِدَةِ (٧)

Which [is so fierce, it] will penetrate the hearts

It is different to anything in this world. If a person were to be burnt in this world, he would demise before the fire penetrated all the layers of his skin and reached his heart. Unique is the fire the hereafter, that it will penetrate the inner parts of the chest, the hearts of man, so the pain will be worse, and death will not rescue us from the pain. Allah says in the Qur'ān:

كُلَّمَا نَضِجَتْ جُلُودُهُمْ بَدَّلْنَاهُمْ جُلُودًا غَيْرَهَا لِيَذُوقُوا الْعَذَابَ

*We will drive them into a fire. Every time their skins are roasted through,
We will replace them with other skins so they may taste the punishment.
Indeed, Allāh is ever Exalted in Might and Wise.*

The fire

The fire of Jahannam is described as seventy times hotter than the fire of this dunya. How many of us can cope with the fire of this dunya, so what makes us think we'll be able to cope with the fire of the hereafter? It is so Allāh can keep punishing him, keep punishing him keep punishing him

A word on balance. The Qur'ān speaks constantly of the mercy of Allāh — ﴿ٱلرَّحْمَٰنُ﴾ *a mercy that encompasses all things* — but if we hear only of mercy, we grow complacent: “I will keep sinning; His mercy is always there.” So the Qur'ān also confronts us with reality: Allāh is Ghafūrūn Raḥīm, and He is also sarī'ū'l-ḥisāb, swift in reckoning, and shadīdu'l-'iqāb, severe in punishment. The believer travels between hope and fear, and passages such as these exist to keep the second wing strong.

إِنَّهَا عَلَيْهِمْ مُّوَصَّدَةٌ (٨)

Indeed, it will close on them [so they cannot escape]

Muṣada: sealed shut upon them. In this world every fire has an edge, a direction of escape; the *ḥuṭama* has none. Its inmates will circle it seeking an exit, and the answer of the Qur'ān is a locked door.

فِي عَمَدٍ مُمَدَّدَةٍ (٩)

With towering pillars [the flames will rise high and lock the people in]

The *mufasssirūn* explain the outstretched pillars in two ways: immense columns sealing every exit, or the columns and chains to which its inmates are bound. The Qur'ān paints the same scene at length in Sūrat al-Ḥāqqa. The one who receives his book in his right hand will parade it — “Here, read my

book!” — like a graduate showing his certificate to everyone, and he will be told: eat and drink in ease, for what you sent ahead in the days gone by. And the one who receives it in his left will cry: “I wish I had never been given my book... my wealth has not availed me; my power has perished from me!” Then the command: “Seize him and shackle him, then cast him into the Blaze, then bind him in a chain of seventy cubits.” And the Qur’ān gives the reason in words that land directly upon the subject of our Sūra: “Indeed, he did not believe in Allāh, the Tremendous, nor did he encourage the feeding of the poor.” The hoarder of al-Humaza and the chained man of al-Hāqqa are one portrait.

A question is often asked: if a man disobeyed Allāh ﷻ for fifty or sixty years, why should the punishment be eternal? The answer lies in intention. Those fifty years were, to him, his entire life — and he spent the entirety of what he believed he had in disobedience. Had he been left for a thousand years, he would have continued as he was; his *kufṛ* was not a phase but a settled state, and the recompense answers the state, not the calendar. *Jahannam* itself testifies to the scale of the matter: when it is asked, “Are you full?”, it does not answer yes or no; it answers, “Are there any more to come?”

Concluding remarks

The Sūra opened with the tongue — the jabber, the mocker — and closed with the heart, the seat the Fire reaches first: *alladhī yaṭṭali‘u ‘alā’l-aḥḍa*. That is no accident, for the mocking tongue and the hoarding hand are both driven from the heart — a heart that counts its wealth and believes, somewhere beneath its arguments, that the wealth will make it immortal. Three sins, one root.

And the cure is the mirror image of the disease: a tongue busied with *dhikr* instead of ridicule; wealth counted for *zakāh* rather than for security against death; and a heart that has accepted what the next Sūra will swear by — that time is short, and only *īmān*, deeds, truth and patience survive it.

— *End of Sūrat al-Humaza* —

سُورَةُ الْفِيلِ

105 – The Elephant

This is a Makkī Sūra, consisting of 5 āyāt

Link with the previous Sūra

In the previous sūra, Allāh made mention of the plight of those people who violated the rights of fellow humans by verbally abusing them, in this sūra Allah mentions the outcome of those who had set out to violate the rights of his sacred house. Previously, Allah mentions a punishment of the afterlife, whereas in this sūra he describes the punishment of this life.

A short introduction

Abraha the governor of Yemen built a temple to which he wanted the Arabs to pay homage. When they ignored his temple because they refused to abandon the Kaba in Makkah, Abraha marched with an army of elephants to destroy the Kaba. However, when they reached the Kaba, many flights of little birds approached them, each bird carrying three little pebbles, one pebble in its beak and one in each claw. As the birds flew over Abraha's army, they dropped their pebbles which went straight through anything they struck and settled deep in the ground, thereby destroying Abraha's army. It is in reference to this incident that Allāh says

The background of the incident

To appreciate this Sūra, one must recall that the final Sūrah of the Qur'ān are intimately tied to the *du'ā* of Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. After building the Ka'ba, he asked Allāh ﷻ for two things: “My Master, make this a city of safety, and provide its people with fruits [all types of provision].” For any society to prosper, two things are essential: safety and provision. The one time in history that the safety of Makkah was truly threatened was when an army

came from Yemen with elephants, intending to crush the Ka'ba and, with it, the standing of Makkah.

Abraha was the governor of Yemen, appointed by the Negus, the emperor of Abyssinia. Seeing multitudes of people travelling to Makkah to visit the House of Allāh, and the honour and trade this brought to the Quraysh, he was consumed with jealousy. He built an extravagant shrine in Ṣan'ā', known as al-Qulais, using the most expensive materials and exotic items, hoping it would undermine the value of Makkah and become the alternative centre of pilgrimage. He then placed restrictions upon the Yemenis, forbidding them from travelling to Makkah for ḥajj.

When the Arabs heard of this, they were outraged. In one popular narration, a man of the tribe of Kināna secretly entered the Qulais and defiled it, as a statement of what the Arabs thought of this pretender to the Ka'ba's station. When news reached Abraha, he was enraged, and swore an oath that he would not rest until he had destroyed the Ka'ba with his own hands.

He prepared an enormous army; narrations put its number between twelve and sixty thousand men, accompanied by somewhere between nine and thirteen elephants. Leading them was a colossal elephant named Maḥmūd, Abraha's own. The plan was chillingly practical: chains would be tied from the legs of the elephants to the walls of the Ka'ba, and the beasts would be driven forward until the House was pulled apart, brick from brick. En route, several Arab tribes attempted to resist this army, and each was crushed. The people of Ṭā'if, seeing the destruction, compromised, and sent a man to guide the army to Makkah.

Near Makkah, the army seized the grazing livestock of the Makkans, among them two hundred camels belonging to 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, the grandfather of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ and the chief of the Quraysh. *Abraha then sent word to the Makkans: "We have not come to fight you; our intention is only to destroy the Ka'ba. Do not stand in our way, and you will not be harmed."*

‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib went to meet Abraha. When he entered, Abraha was awestruck by his imposing, radiant presence, and welcomed him graciously. But when ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib made his request — “I have come to ask only that you release the camels you have seized, some of which belong to me” — Abraha was astounded. “I had thought you a man of dignity,” he said, “yet you speak of your camels, and say nothing of the House which you call the House of your Lord and your place of worship!” ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib replied with the words that have echoed through history: “I am the owner of the camels, and this is why I ask about them. As for the House, it has its own Owner, who will defend it.”

Abraha released the camels. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib returned and instructed his people to evacuate Makkah and take to the mountains, for when punishment descends, it strikes all who are present. He then went to the Ka‘ba with a small group and beseeched Allāh “ :ﷻ O Allāh, we can do nothing in the face of this great army. A man defends his own house; O Allāh, defend Your House.”

When Abraha ordered the advance upon Makkah, Maḥmūd, the elephant he was mounted on, knelt down and refused to move. They beat it, struck it with axes and iron spears, but it would not budge. When they turned it towards Yemen, it walked; towards Shām, it walked; back the way they had come, it walked briskly — but the moment it was turned towards Makkah, it sat down again. Even the animal recognised the sanctity of what its masters intended to violate.

Then flocks of birds were seen approaching from the direction of the sea — strange birds, never seen before nor since, smaller than pigeons, with red claws. Each carried pebbles in its claws and beak. By the power of Allāh , ﷻ these pebbles rained down upon the army and did the work of bullets: a pebble would strike a man’s head and exit from beneath him. One was enough even for the mighty elephants.

Not all of the army was destroyed at once; some fled, and many perished on the road home. But as Allāh ﷻ willed, the most severe

punishment was reserved for Abraha himself. He was afflicted with a disease in which a poison spread through his body; his limbs began to rot and fall away one after another, and in this state he was carried back towards Ṣan‘ā’, dying just as he reached it.

The Arabs were so astonished by this event that it became the very reference point of their history. They had no calendar; from that year on, they dated everything by “‘Ām al-Fīl” — the Year of the Elephant: such-and-such happened ten years before the Year of the Elephant, such-and-such ten years after. And it was in this very year — around fifty days after the incident — that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ was born. The ‘Ulamā count this event among the irhāṣāt: the miracles which Allāh displays before the arrival of a Prophet, announcing to the world that a great Messenger is about to come.

At a glance

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the All Merciful, the Ever Merciful.

[O Muḥammad ﷺ] Have you not seen how your Master dealt with the people of the elephants? [Abrahā and his army]

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ فَعَلَ رَبُّكَ بِأَصْحَابِ الْفِيلِ
(١)

Did he not put their evil plots to waste?

أَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ كَيْدَهُمْ فِي تَضْلِيلٍ (٢)

He sent [unleashed] upon them birds, in flocks

وَأَرْسَلَ عَلَيْهِمْ طَيْرًا أَبَابِيلَ (٣)

Striking them with stones of hard-baked clay

تَرْمِيهِمْ بِحِجَارَةٍ مِّن سِجِّيلٍ (٤)

Then he made them [appear] like devoured chaff [waste]

فَجَعَلَهُمْ كَعَصْفٍ مَّأْكُولٍ (٥)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the All Merciful, the Ever Merciful.

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ فَعَلَ رَبُّكَ بِأَصْحَابِ الْفِيلِ (١)

[O Muḥammad ﷺ Have you not seen how your Master dealt with the people of the elephants? [Abrahā and his army]]

Have you not seen? The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ did not witness the event himself — it occurred shortly before his blessed birth — but he had heard it recounted all his life, from eyewitnesses who were still alive and from a community for whom it was the defining memory of the age. The question is therefore rhetorical, and it carries two audiences at once. Allāh ﷻ addresses His Messenger ﷺ, but the Quraysh are listening; and for them the question lands like a reminder from a benefactor: did I not protect you? Did I not deal with those who came against this House? Why, then, do you not believe — and why do you pollute the very House I protected with your idols?

Note also the wording rabbuka — “your Master”. Although the Sūra is about Makkah and the defence of the House, Allāh ﷻ did not say “the Lord of the House” here, but “your Lord”, addressing His beloved ﷺ. The event was, before all else, an honour prepared for the Messenger who was about to enter the world.

أَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ كَيْدَهُمْ فِي تَضْلِيلٍ (٢)

Did he not put their evil plots to waste?

The elephants were never the plot; they were merely its instrument. The real scheme was economic. Abraha had watched the trade routes of Arabia bend towards Makkah — pilgrims coming for the Ka’ba, then trading, buying, and selling, drawing food, cloth and wealth of every kind into the city. He wanted that river of benefit diverted towards his own counterfeit Ka’ba, and to do that he first had to crush the true one. So when

Allāh ﷻ says He put their *kayd* — their scheming — into ruin, He is exposing the plot beneath the army.

And here lies a divine irony. They wanted the caravans of food to come in their direction; Allāh ﷻ made them themselves like devoured food, chewed up and spat out. He protected the *du'ā* of Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, and the very next Sūra will speak of the provision and security that continued to flow to Makkah.

وَأَرْسَلَ عَلَيْهِمْ طَيْرًا أَبَابِيلَ (٣)

He sent [unleashed] upon them birds, in flocks

Some narrations describe the birds in the thousands, filling the sky from the direction of the sea — what a scene it must have been. Note the precision of the Qur'ān: Allāh ﷻ says *arsala 'alayhim* — He sent upon them — and not *ilayhim*, to them. This was not a delegation arriving; it was a punishment descending.

تَرْمِيهِمْ بِحِجَارَةٍ مِّن سِجِّيلٍ (٤)

Striking them with stones of hard-baked clay

Tarmīhim is in the present tense, which in Arabic conveys continuity: the pebbles kept coming, wave upon wave. Had the past tense *ramat* been used, it would have suggested a single volley. As for *sijjil*, the scholars mention that the word entered Arabic from the Persian *sang-gil*: pebbles formed when mud dries and is baked hard in the sun. In itself it is a weak, humble thing — yet when Allāh ﷻ wills, He destroys armoured elephants with baked mud. A pellet would enter through the skull, the hardest bone in the body, and pass out beneath.

فَجَعَلَهُمْ كَعَصْفٍ مَّأْكُولٍ (٥)

Then he made them [appear] like devoured chaff [waste]

‘Aṣf ma’kūl is the dry husk and straw that remains after cattle have chewed through a crop — trampled, mangled, discarded. When elephants walk through a field, they leave everything looking chewed up and crushed; Allāh ﷻ made the army of the elephant itself end up looking exactly so.

Concluding remarks

This Sūra is a warning to every rebellious and arrogant tyrant of every age and era. It is not only about the aggression of Abraha against the Ka‘ba; it sends a message to every power that wreaks havoc upon the innocent: the mightiest armies are nothing before Allāh . ﷻ At times Allāh grants respite — carry on, and you will see the outcome — but a time comes for every tyrant, as it came for Abraha.

For the believer, the Sūra plants a certainty in the heart: the One who defended His House without a single sword being raised is fully able to defend His dīn, and His servants who hold fast to it.

— End of Sūrat al-Fil —

سُورَةُ قُرَيْشٍ

106 – The Quraysh

This is a Makkī Sūra, consisting of 5 āyāt

Alternative names

- Sūrat *Lilāf Quraysh*: named after its opening word

Link with the previous Sūra

Previously, Allah spoke of his favours on the Quraysh, by saving them from destruction at the hands of Abrahā. In this Sūra, he counts another blessing of his: granting them the exclusive privilege of being able to embark on trade journeys whenever they wished, relieving their hunger and protecting them from fear. Then Allah speaks of how they should repay these favours. It is as if both this sūra and the previous sūra are in fact one sūra split into two parts.

The connection between this Sūra and the one before it is so intimate that it was the practice of some of the Ṣaḥāba to recite them as a pair. It is related of Sayyidunā ‘Umar رضى الله عنه that he would recite al-Fil and Quraysh together in one *rak‘a* — and this was the view of Ibn Mas‘ūd رضى الله عنه — to illustrate how the two flow into one another, whilst remaining two distinct Sūrahs.

The very grammar binds them: the Sūra opens with a lām — li-ilāfi Quraysh, “For the security of the Quraysh...” For what? For the events of the previous Sūra: We destroyed the army of the elephant for the convenience of the Quraysh. The Quraysh constantly travelled towards Yemen for trade; had Abraha’s army survived, those routes would have closed forever. Allāh ﷻ protected His House, and in the very same stroke kept the caravans of Quraysh moving.

Together the two Sūrahs record the completion of the *du‘ā* of Ibrāhīm عليه السلام: he asked for safety, and safety was granted in Sūrat al-Fil; he asked

for provision, and provision is the subject of Sūrat Quraysh. The first records the removal of harm, and the second the granting of benefit — and once both favours are complete, the expectation follows: let them then worship the Master of this House. Whether they met that expectation, the next Sūra will reveal.

A short introduction

Because the Quraysh lived in Makkah where the Kaba was situated, the Arabs held them in high esteem and would not harm them even though the Arabs at that time were accustomed to looting and fighting each other. When the people of the elephants were destroyed as mentioned in the previous Sūra - and the incident became popular, the Arabs began to have even more reverence for the Quraysh. Therefore, when their caravans annually made a winter trip to Yemen and a summer trip to Shām for trade, no one attacked them and they always returned safely with their goods. Allāh had made these trade journeys of the Quraysh a means by which their food and clothing because Makkah was always a barren place without any vegetation or resources. Referring to these bounties of Allāh to the Quraysh, Allāh says

Before Islām, the whole of Arabia lived in a state of perpetual warfare. No one's life or wealth was safe; no man could travel from one city to another alone. The tribes were forever at each other's throats, and a traveller passing another tribe's lands risked being robbed, kidnapped or killed. Anyone taking merchandise across the desert on a caravan had the bleakest chance of arriving. Yet even in that age of ignorance, the Quraysh enjoyed a singular privilege: because they lived beside the Ka'ba and were known as custodians of the House of Allāh, every tribe — however lawless — respected them. Their caravans would pass through hostile territory in peace, and return in peace.

Consider also where Allāh ﷻ placed them. Makkah is a barren valley — no cultivation, no greenery, no gardens; Ibrāhīm عليه السلام *himself said*, “I

have settled my family in a valley without vegetation.” And yet, by the du‘ā that hearts be inclined towards it, believers from every corner of the earth flock to it in their millions, though it offers no worldly attraction whatsoever. With no farming and no industry, trade was the only livelihood of Makkah. Their caravans became legendary in scale: the caravan of Abū Sufyān — the one that occasioned the battle of Badr — is said to have carried merchandise on a thousand camels.

As for the name Quraysh, the scholars mention several origins. Some derive it from *taqarrush*, gathering — for they gathered people from far distances. Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنهما when asked why they were so named, mentioned the *qirsh*: a great beast of the ocean that eats and is not eaten, that overpowers and is not overpowered — and that is what the Quraysh were among the tribes. The form Quraysh is a diminutive [ism taṣghīr], and in Arabic the diminutive can be used to magnify: “the little *qirsh*” meaning the great beast of a tribe that dwells here. And how did Arabia learn not to challenge the Quraysh? Abraha tried, and was destroyed — the event set a precedent that sealed their status.

At a glance

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*In the name of Allah, the All
Merciful, the Ever Merciful.*

لَا يَلْفُ قُرَيْشٍ (١)

*[He did this] Because of the
security enjoyed by the Quraysh*

إِلَّا فِيهِمْ رَحْلَةَ الشِّتَاءِ وَالصَّيْفِ (٢)

*Safe in their journeys of winter
and summer [from foreign
ambush]*

فَلْيَعْبُدُوا رَبَّ هَذَا الْبَيْتِ (٣)

*Let them then worship the Master
of this House [as a recognition of
his favours on them]*

الَّذِي أَطْعَمَهُمْ مِنْ جُوعٍ وَءَامَنَهُمْ مِنْ
خَوْفٍ (٤)

*Who has provided them with food
to ward off hunger [even though
their surroundings are barren],
and made them safe from fear [by*

*protecting the Ka'bah and
granting them safety in travel]*

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the All Merciful, the Ever Merciful.

لَا يَلْفُ قُرَيْشٍ (١)

[He did this] Because of the security enjoyed by the Quraysh

Notice that the previous Sūra addressed the Messenger ﷺ *directly* — “Have you not seen...” — while this Sūra speaks of the Quraysh in the third person. Allāh ﷻ does not speak to them; He speaks about them. In eloquent speech this shift carries a tone of displeasure, as when a father, upset with his son, addresses the room rather than the boy. The favours are theirs, but the register tells them their conduct has not earned direct address.

Īlāf carries the sense of familiarity, ease and security — a state of being settled and accustomed. These people enjoyed a remarkable favour from Allāh ﷻ: He made their lives easy so that their hearts might soften towards Him. We turn to Allāh when our hearts are soft; and those who are custodians of His House, of all people, ought to have the softest hearts.

إِلَيْهِمْ رَحْلَةَ الشِّتَاءِ وَالصَّيْفِ (٢)

Safe in their journeys of winter and summer [from foreign ambush]

The repetition — *ilāfihim* — is emphatic: did you hear what I said? For their security! And of all the Arabic words for travel, Allāh ﷻ chose *riḥla*, from *raḥl*, meaning baggage and merchandise: a journey undertaken with heavy loads. A caravan piled high with goods is the most tempting target in the desert — everyone could see what they carried — and yet they

travelled without fear. That was the convenience Allāh gave them: to Yemen in the winter, for its warmth, and to Shām in the summer, for its cool.

فَلْيَعْبُدُوا رَبَّ هَذَا الْبَيْتِ (٣)

Let them then worship the Master of this House [as a recognition of his favours on them]

Why mention “this House”? Because everything they enjoyed flowed from it. It was because of this House that the army of Abraha was destroyed; it was Ibrāhīm عليه السلام who built it and prayed for its safety and provision; it was custodianship of this House that gave the Quraysh their protected status across Arabia and drew the world’s trade to their barren valley. The lām here is the lām of consequence: since every favour traces back to the House, let them worship the Master of the House.

الَّذِي أَطْعَمَهُمْ مِنْ جُوعٍ وَءَامَنَهُمْ مِنْ خَوْفٍ (٤)

Who has provided them with food to ward off hunger [even though their surroundings are barren], and made them safe from fear [by protecting the Ka’bah and granting them safety in travel]

Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنهما explained that the food here is in direct response to the *du‘ā* of Ibrāhīm “and provide its people with fruits.” Note also the order: in Sūrat al-Baqara, Allāh ﷻ says He will test people with fear and hunger; here, in describing His favour, hunger is mentioned first — for in a barren valley, provision was the more improbable gift. And the fear He removed was twofold: the fear embodied by the army of the elephant, and the everyday fear of ambush and kidnap that haunted every other traveller in Arabia.

A great benefit

Abul Ḥasan al-Qazwīnī stated that whoever fears an enemy or an affliction should recite Sūrat Quraysh, and it will grant him security from fear and calamity. Imām al-Jazarī cites this and says the Sūra has been tried and tested for this purpose. Qāḍī Thanāʾullāh Pānīpatī records in his *Tafsīr Maḥzarī* that his shaykh, Mirzā Maḥzar Jān-i-Jānān, instructed him to recite this Sūra at times of fear and danger, and that he himself experienced its effect several times.

Concluding remarks

The Qurʾān is recited until the Day of Judgement, and its lesson is for all: every one of us is showered with the favours of Allāh ﷻ, and so every one of us owes Him worship. And when favours come to a person in the name of dīn — as they came to the Quraysh through the House — the obligation is greater still. When we consider how much evil we are involved in, and how gently Allāh continues to provide for us regardless, the only fitting response is to turn back to him: to rectify ourselves, put our houses in order, and make sincere tawba and *istighfār*.

— End of Sūrat Quraysh —

سُورَةُ الْمَاعُونِ

107 – Small Acts of Kindness

This is a Makkī Sūra, consisting of 7 āyāt

Link with the previous Sūra

Previously, Allah spoke of his expectations from the Quraysh. After granting them protection at home and on their journeys, they were expected to recognise these blessings and submit to his wishes. He fed them and gave them delivery from their hunger, so how can they have the nerve to prevent others from helping the poor and needy. He commanded them to worship him in the previous sūra and now he mentions how those who don't pray, pray with a negligent heart will be destroyed. Instead of trying to recognise and repay the favours of their Master, this Sūra will show us that they reneged and rejected submission.

A short introduction

The previous Sūra ended with a demand placed upon the Quraysh: let them worship the Master of this House. This Sūra opens with what they were actually doing. At first glance the translation seems to speak of two separate groups — a denier of the Judgement in the first half, and negligent worshippers in the second — but as we study it we discover it is one portrait: the outward religiosity of the second half and the cruelty of the first half live comfortably in the same person, because both grow from the same root — a heart that does not truly believe it will stand before Allāh . ﷻ

At a glance

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ *In the name of Allah, the All
Merciful, the Ever Merciful.*

- أَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي يُكَذِّبُ بِالْأَدِينِ (١) *Have you not seen the [evil] one who denies the [day of] judgement?*
- فَذَٰلِكَ الَّذِي يُدْعِ الْيَتِيمَ (٢) *It is he who pushes away the orphan*
- وَلَا يَحْضُ عَلَىٰ طَعَامِ الْمَسْكِينِ (٣) *and doesn't [even] encourage feeding the poor*
- فَوَيْلٌ لِلْمُصَلِّينَ (٤) *So woe be to those who [ought to] offer Ṣalāh*
- الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ صَلَاتِهِمْ سَاهُونَ (٥) *Those who are negligent of their Ṣalāh [by missing them with no regret]*
- الَّذِينَ هُمْ يُرَاءُونَ (٦) *Those who [if they ever do a good deed,] show off*
- وَيَمْنَعُونَ الْمَاعُونَ (٧) *and withhold even the small acts of kindness [trivial things that would cause them no loss]*

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the All Merciful, the Ever Merciful.

أَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي يُكَذِّبُ بِالْأَدِينِ (١)

Have you not seen the [evil] one who denies the [day of] judgement?

A-ra'ayta — “have you seen...?” — does not name anyone. Allāh ﷻ did not say “have you seen al-Walid”, or any individual; the description is left open [‘umūm], so that it fits anyone whom it fits. This creates a remarkable effect in the community in which it is recited: each hearer wonders, am I the one being described? Is this Sūra exposing me? It is the guilty conscience of the one who hears his own deed announced in a gathering, without his name.

Yukadhdhibu is in the present tense, conveying continuity: they deny the dīn day after day, given chance after chance, hearing *āya* after *āya*, and each time they respond with more denial. Ad-dīn here may mean the religion of Islām itself, or — as many have preferred — the Judgement and Recompense: the day when deeds are repaid. On this reading, the whole Sūra is an anatomy of what the denial of the *ākhirā* does to a human being.

فَذَالِكَ الَّذِي يَدُعُّ الْيَتِيمَ (٢)

It is he who pushes away the orphan

The *yatīm* is the very definition of defencelessness: a child with no father, no backing, no system to defend him. When even an adult loses a parent, he feels an emptiness; imagine the helplessness of a child, whose whole shelter is his mother and father. Such a person deserves the greatest pity, mercy and courtesy — so what kind of human being shoves him away? The word *yadu‘u* is violent: to push roughly, to drive off, to intimidate and throw out. The answer is in the previous verse: when a man denies the afterlife, his heart hardens; and when the heart hardens, mercy departs from it.

Allāh ﷻ *is intensely protective of the orphan throughout the Qur’ān — “So as for the orphan, do not oppress him” — and the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said, “I and the one who cares for an orphan will be like this in Paradise,” joining his two blessed fingers. What a station for the one who takes the defenceless child under his wing; and what a warning for the one who pushes him away.*

وَلَا يَحْضُرْ عَلَى طَعَامِ الْمَسْكِينِ (٣)

and doesn’t [even] encourage feeding the poor

The first verse described his private conduct; this one exposes his public life. Lā yaḥuddu — he does not even urge the feeding of the poor. Encouraging

costs nothing; no money leaves his pocket when he says “feed them”. Yet even this free act of goodness is beyond him. There is hunger and poverty in his society, and he cannot bring himself even to speak for the hungry — let alone give.

فَوَيْلٌ لِلْمُصَلِّينَ (٤)

So woe be to those who [ought to] offer Ṣalāh

Suddenly the subject changes, and Allāh ﷻ issues a threat: *fa-wayl* — woe! *Wayl* is reserved in the Qur’ān for the most terrible of crimes and criminals, and here it is aimed at people of prayer. This should terrify everyone who prays. We were all *muṣallīn* just now at ‘Aṣr; and Allāh pauses the verse here, leaving each of us to wonder — is it speaking about me?

الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ صَلَاتِهِمْ سَاهُونَ (٥)

Those who are negligent of their Ṣalāh [by missing them with no regret]

Notice the mercy hidden in a single letter. Allāh ﷻ says ‘an ṣalātihim — negligent of their prayer — and not *fi* ṣalātihim, negligent in their prayer. Had He said *fi*, every one of us would be destroyed, for who among us has not drifted mid-prayer, forgotten which *rak‘a* he is in, or caught his mind wandering to his dinner? The censure is not for stray thoughts within the prayer; it is for neglect of the prayer itself.

Sāhūn is from *sahw*: to forget something out of neglect, because it was never important to you. If the prayer happens, fine; if it doesn’t, that is fine too. You made every plan for your day out — but ṣalāh was not in the plans. As Muslims, we should schedule everything around ṣalāh, not schedule everything and leave ṣalāh to fend for itself.

The ‘Ulamā mention that this neglect takes several forms. The first is neglect of its time: the prayer is delayed without concern, not treated as an

appointment with Allāh ﷻ but as a burden to be discharged whenever convenient. The second, for men, is neglect of the congregation. The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said that he was at times moved to appoint someone to lead the prayer and then go to the houses of those who stayed away and burn their houses down upon them — such is the weight of *jamā'a*. In his final illness, the moment he found a little strength, he came to the masjid supported between two men, teaching us that congregation is not something a believer treats lightly.

The third is neglect of its etiquettes: praying, but without focus, without the postures performed properly [ta'dīl al-arkān], merely shaking off a burden. Everything in life has its rules, and this is the worship of Allāh: it must be learnt and performed as the Messenger ﷺ taught it. *When a person becomes careless of these etiquettes, the prayer may be discharged, but the light and blessing of the Sunnah is not attained. Prayed with its proper etiquette, ṣalāh does what Allāh promised: "Indeed the prayer restrains from shameful and evil deeds."*

الَّذِينَ هُمْ يُرَآءُونَ (٦)

Those who [if they ever do a good deed,] show off

And when they do pray, they pray to be seen. Yurā'ūn: striving to be noticed, needing people to know. The Quraysh had to appear religious — they were custodians of the Ka'ba — and the munāfiqīn are the primary target of this description, as Allāh says elsewhere: "Indeed the hypocrites seek to deceive Allāh... and when they stand for prayer, they stand lazily, showing off to the people." But within the censure of the hypocrites lies a message for the believers: do not let your state drift towards theirs — praying without care, and then praying for an audience. The disease begins quietly, with not caring much about ṣalāh; showing off is merely its later symptom.

وَيَمْنَعُونَ الْمَاعُونَ (٧)

and withhold even the small acts of kindness [trivial things that would cause them no loss]

Al-mā'ūn is the small stuff of neighbourliness — the trivial things whose loss would not pinch you: some salt, a pot, a tool, a hand. Many scholars have included zakāh in its meaning, and the fit is telling: zakāh is a mere fortieth of one's idle wealth, and still they withhold it. That is the depth of the miserliness this heart has reached — you call yourselves custodians of the House of the One who fed you in hunger, and you cannot part with a borrowed pencil.

Concluding remarks

For all its brevity, the teaching of this Sūra is essentially simple. Two things keep the heart soft, and two things are the proof that a person is not in quiet denial of the Recompense: how he prays, and how he gives. Your prayer and your giving are the twin indicators of how strongly you truly believe in the *ākhirā*.

For it is the belief in the afterlife that rectifies the life of a human being; strip it away and he descends towards the animal. The Qur'ān returns to this again and again: "Those who disbelieve claim they will never be resurrected. Say: yes, by my Lord, you will surely be resurrected, then informed of what you did — and that is easy for Allāh." A man once came to the Messenger ﷺ with two bones, crumbled them to dust and scoffed, "You claim Allāh will recreate this?" The answer came: He who created them the first time, from nothing, will bring them back. The One who made us from a drop of fluid, and carried us through stage after stage into a complete human being — is it difficult for Him to do it a second time?

And Allāh ﷻ has told us why this life and death exist at all: "He who created death and life, to test which of you is best in deed." There must be a Day of Recompense, a Day of Separation, a Day of Account — otherwise the good and the evil of every individual would go unanswered, and Fir'awn and Mūsā عليه السلام would end the same. The one who lives with this certainty

cannot shove an orphan, cannot ignore the hungry, cannot neglect his prayer; and the one who has lost it, this Sūra warns, is already doing all three.

— *End of Sūrat al-Māʿūn* —

سُورَةُ الْكَوْثَرِ

108 – Abundant Good

This is a Makkī Sūra, consisting of 3 āyāt

Link with the previous Sūra

Allah previously told us of the Quraysh's treachery and ingratitude to his favours. This Sūra serves as a consolation for our Messenger ﷺ, a reassurance from Allah that his efforts are not in vain. The previous sūra also mentioned 4 traits of the evil-doers; stinginess; missing prayers; showing off; avoiding charity. In this sūra, in response to their stinginess, Allāh mentions how he gave His Messenger an 'abundant good', and in response to their missing prayers, showing off and avoiding charity, He instructs His Messenger ﷺ to pray exclusively for Him and to sacrifice and distribute it amongst the people.

The correspondence between this Sūra and the one before it is exact. In al-Mā'ūn, four traits of the hypocrites were exposed: miserliness towards the weak, heedlessness of prayer, showing off, and withholding even the smallest kindness. In al-Kawthar, Allāh ﷻ answers all four. Against their miserliness: We have given you abundance — and the one given so much gives much. Against their heedlessness: pray, and be constant in it. Against their showing off: li-rabbika — pray for your Lord alone. Against their withholding: wa'nḥar — sacrifice, an act of worship that costs wealth and whose meat is shared with the poor. And the previous Sūra described, trait by trait, exactly the kind of person who is here declared al-*abtar*: the one truly cut off.

Virtues of this Sūra

At a glance

قَالَ بَيْنَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ
ذَاتَ يَوْمٍ بَيْنَ أَظْهَرْنَا إِذْ أَغْفَى إِغْفَاءً
ثُمَّ رَفَعَ رَأْسَهُ مُتَبَسِّمًا فَقُلْنَا مَا أَضْحَكَكَ
يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ قَالَ " أَنْزِلْتَ عَلَيَّ أَنْفًا
سُورَةً " . فَقَرَأَ " بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ
الرَّحِيمِ { إِنَّا أَعْطَيْنَاكَ الْكَوْثَرَ * فَصَلِّ
لِرَبِّكَ وَانْحَرْ * إِنَّ شَانِئَكَ هُوَ الْأَبْتَرُ } "
ثُمَّ قَالَ " أَتَذَرُونَ مَا الْكَوْثَرُ " . فَقُلْنَا
اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَعْلَمُ . قَالَ " فَإِنَّهُ نَهْرٌ
وَعَدَنِيهِ رَبِّي عَزَّ وَجَلَّ عَلَيْهِ خَيْرٌ كَثِيرٌ
هُوَ حَوْضٌ تَرُدُّ عَلَيْهِ أُمَّتِي يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ
إِنِّيئُهُ عَدَدُ النُّجُومِ فَيُخْتَلَجُ الْعَبْدُ مِنْهُمْ
فَأَقُولُ رَبِّ إِنَّهُ مِنْ أُمَّتِي . فَيَقُولُ مَا
تَذَرِي مَا أَخَذْتِ بَعْدَكَ " . رَأَى ابْنُ
حُجْرٍ فِي حَدِيثِهِ بَيْنَ أَظْهَرْنَا فِي
الْمَسْجِدِ . وَقَالَ " مَا أَخَذْتَ بَعْدَكَ

Anas reported: "One day the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) was sitting amongst us that he dozed off. He then raised his head smilingly. We said: What makes you smile. Messenger of Allah? He said: A Sura has just been revealed to me, and then recited: In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Verily We have given thee Kawthar (fount of abundance). Therefore turn to thy Lord for prayer and offer sacrifice, and surely thy enemy is cut off (from the good). Then he (the Holy Messenger) said: Do you know what Kawthar is? We said: Allah and His Messenger know best. The Messenger (ﷺ) said: It (Kawthar) is a canal which my Lord, the Exalted and Glorious has promised me, and there is an abundance of good in it. It is a cistern and my people would come to it on the Day of Resurrection, and tumblers there would be equal to the number of stars. A servant would be turned away from (among the people gathered there). Upon this I would say: My Lord, he is one of my people, and He (the Lord) would say: You do not know

that he innovated new things (in Islam) after you. Ibn Hujr made this addition in the hadith:” He (the Holy Messenger) was sitting amongst us in the mosque, and He (Allah) said: (You don’t know) what he innovated after you”[¹]

We have truly granted you [O Muḥammad ﷺ] abundant good [so don’t be affected by their treachery]

إِنَّا أَعْطَيْنَاكَ الْكَوْثَرَ (١)

So [as a token of gratitude] pray to your Master, and offer sacrifice

فَصَلِّ لِرَبِّكَ وَأَنْحَرْ (٢)

Indeed, it is your enemy who is cut-off [whose progeny will be cut-off, causing him to become unknown]

إِنَّ شَانِئَكَ هُوَ الْأَبْتَرُ (٣)

قَالَ بَيْنَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ذَاتَ يَوْمٍ بَيْنَ أَظْهُرِنَا إِذْ أَغْفَى إِغْفَاءَةً ثُمَّ رَفَعَ رَأْسَهُ مُتَبَسِّمًا فَقُلْنَا مَا أَضْحَكَكَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ قَالَ “ أَنْزَلْتُ عَلَى آنِفَا سُورَةً ” . فَقَرَأَ “ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ { إِنَّا أَعْطَيْنَاكَ الْكَوْثَرَ * فَصَلِّ لِرَبِّكَ وَأَنْحَرْ * إِنَّ شَانِئَكَ هُوَ الْأَبْتَرُ } ” . ثُمَّ قَالَ “ أَتَدْرُونَ مَا الْكَوْثَرُ ” . فَقُلْنَا اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَعْلَمُ . قَالَ “ فَإِنَّهُ نَهْرٌ وَعَدَنِيهِ رَبِّي عَزَّ وَجَلَّ عَلَيْهِ خَيْرٌ كَثِيرٌ هُوَ حَوْضٌ تَرْدُ عَلَيْهِ أُمَّتِي يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَنْيَبُهُ عَدَدُ النُّجُومِ فَيُخْتَلَجُ الْعَبْدُ مِنْهُمْ فَأَقُولُ رَبِّ إِنَّهُ مِنْ أُمَّتِي . فَيَقُولُ مَا تَدْرِي مَا أَخَدْتِ

بَعْدَكَ ” . زَادَ ابْنُ حُجْرٍ فِي حَدِيثِهِ بَيِّنَ أَظْهَرْنَا فِي الْمَسْجِدِ .
وَقَالَ “ مَا أَحَدَّثَ بَعْدَكَ

Anas reported: “One day the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) was sitting amongst us that he dozed off. He then raised his head smilingly. We said: What makes you smile. Messenger of Allah? He said: A Sura has just been revealed to me, and then recited: In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Verily We have given thee Kawthar (fount of abundance). Therefore turn to thy Lord for prayer and offer sacrifice, and surely thy enemy is cut off (from the good). Then he (the Holy Messenger) said: Do you know what Kawthar is? We said: Allah and His Messenger know best. The Messenger (ﷺ) said: It (Kawthar) is a canal which my Lord, the Exalted and Glorious has promised me, and there is an abundance of good in it. It is a cistern and my people would come to it on the Day of Resurrection, and tumblers there would be equal to the number of stars. A servant would be turned away from (among the people gathered there). Upon this I would say: My Lord, he is one of my people, and He (the Lord) would say: You do not know that he innovated new things (in Islam) after you. Ibn Hujr made this addition in the hadith:” He (the Holy Messenger) was sitting amongst us in the mosque, and He (Allah) said: (You don’t know) what he innovated after you”[¹]

The background of revelation

When the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ married Khadija رضي الله عنها, they were blessed with daughters and with sons — Qāsim, and ‘Abdullāh — but the sons passed away in childhood. Among the Arabs it was the custom to rejoice at a son, for the son carried the lineage and the name, and to receive a daughter with gloom — the same mentality that led them to bury daughters alive. So when the sons of the Messenger ﷺ passed away, the leaders of Quraysh saw an opening for cruelty.

Al-‘Āṣ b. Wā’il declared in a gathering: his line is severed; no one will carry his name; when he dies, his religion dies with him. And Abū Lahab — his own uncle and neighbour, one of the first to hear the news — went about rejoicing: batira Muḥammad, Muḥammad is cut off! Consider the wound: a man loses his child, and his own kin celebrate — and then he must rise the next morning and continue calling those same people to Allāh, with patience.

Such words are painful — so painful that Allāh ﷻ, in His delicacy towards His beloved, does not even quote them in the Sūra. He does not dignify the taunt with repetition. He goes straight to the reply: We have given you al-Kawthar... and it is your enemy who is cut off.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the All Merciful, the Ever Merciful.

إِنَّا أَعْطَيْنَاكَ الْكَوْثَرَ (١)

We have truly granted you [O Muḥammad ﷺ] abundant good [so don't be affected by their treachery]

Kawthar is from kathīr: incredible, overflowing abundance. The *kuffār* kept an inventory of everything the Messenger ﷺ lacked — *wealth, sons, worldly backing* — and asked why revelation was not sent to “a great man of the two cities”. Allāh ﷻ replies with the ledger they could not see: We have given you the Abundance. Allāh knows when His servant is hurting, and this Sūra is, before all else, a consolation from the Lord of the worlds to a grieving father.

The ‘Ulamā explain al-Kawthar as the river in Janna, and the Ḥawḍ — the vast cistern at which this Ummah will meet its Prophet ﷺ in the plain of resurrection — and, more broadly still, every kind of abundant good. The Messenger ﷺ said: “Every Prophet will have a cistern, and they will take pride in which of them has the greatest number coming to drink; and I hope

that mine will be the greatest.” Anas رضي الله عنه once asked him: “O Messenger of Allāh, intercede for me on the Day of Judgement — where shall I look for you?” He replied: “Seek me first at the Bridge; if not there, at the Scales; if not there, at the Hawḍ — you will not miss me at one of these three.”

The Aḥādīth describe the Hawḍ in breathtaking terms: its length and breadth are equal, each the journey of a month; its water is whiter than milk, sweeter than honey, its fragrance finer than musk; and its drinking-vessels glitter like the stars of the sky. Whoever drinks from it will never thirst again. And there is a warning within the glad tidings: some will approach whom the Messenger ﷺ recognises, and they him, but they will be barred; and when he says, “They are of my people,” it will be said: you do not know what they invented after you. Whoever wishes to drink at that Hawḍ on the day of thirst should cling to the Qur’ān and the Sunnah, and beware of inventing in the dīn what is not from it.

And beyond the Hawḍ, count what the Kawthar contains. The tremendous character — “indeed you are upon a magnificent standard of character.” Prophethood itself, and its seal. Mercy to the worlds. The conquest that other prophets, centuries in their nations, were not shown — his in twenty-three years. The Maqām Maḥmūd, the Station of Praise, and the great intercession, when every other Messenger will say naḥsī, naḥsī — myself, myself. Companions who were not monuments of stone but men and women who changed the earth. That Allāh ﷻ and His angels themselves send ṣalāh upon him. That Allāh addresses other prophets by name — “O Nūḥ”, “O Mūsā” — but him with titles of tenderness: O Prophet, O enshrouded one. The five prayers. The scholars of his Ummah. A message easy to remember and to memorise. Is such a one “cut off”?

فَصَلِّ لِرَبِّكَ وَأَنْحَرْ (٢)

So [as a token of gratitude] pray to your Master, and offer sacrifice

When someone does you a favour beyond repayment, you say: I do not know what to say; I can never repay you. So Allāh ﷻ Himself teaches His Messenger ﷺ the response: pray. The first act of gratitude is ṣalāh — the whole being, body and heart, turned to the Giver.

And sacrifice — wa'nḥar — li-rabbika, for your Lord. The *mushrikīn* slaughtered in the names of their idols, to please them; so the believers were commanded to make their sacrifice a declaration of *tawḥīd*, which is why the masnūn *du'ā* at the time of *qurbānī* is “Indeed my prayer, my sacrifice, my living and my dying are for Allāh, Lord of the worlds.” There is a further teaching here: gratitude is not only of the tongue. When Allāh showers a blessing, we thank Him verbally — *alḥamdulillāh* — and practically, with acts of worship and giving. We are alive; we are in health; our eyes and ears serve us: every one of these calls for both kinds of *shukr*.

إِنَّ شَانِئَكَ هُوَ الْأَبْتَرُ (٣)

*Indeed, it is your enemy who is cut-off [whose progeny will be cut-off,
causing him to become unknown]*

History has delivered the verdict on who was truly *abtar*. The lineage of the Messenger ﷺ continued through his daughter — the *sayyids*, honoured in every land to this day — while his spiritual progeny outnumbers the following of any leader, king or conqueror who has ever lived. There is not a minute, day or night, in which the testimony “I bear witness that Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh” is not rising from a minaret somewhere upon the earth. As for those who taunted him: who names their children after *Abū Labab* or *al-ʿĀṣ b. Wāʿil*? Their memory survives only inside the story of the man they mocked.

Allāh granted Rasūlullāh Messengerhood, the honour of being the best of all the *Ambiyā*, the Qurʾān, the largest Ummah, a *dīn* that has spread throughout the world and the high mantle of *Maqām Mahmūd* in the *Aakhira* [see verse 19 of Sūra 17]. The spiritual fountain of *Kawthar*, has

been awarded to Rasūlullāh on the Day of Qiyāma is a part of this “abundant good”. Apart from these things, there are numerous other bounties that Allāh gave exclusively to Rasūlullāh

This verse refers to a particular enemy of Rasūlullāh , ﷺ Abu Jahal who used to tell people that they should not worry about Rasūlullāh influence because without any male children, his lineage and religion will not continue after him. However, the name and message of Rasūlullāh is alive even today and always gaining more popularity, whereas the names of his enemies are disgraced.)

— End of Sūrat al-Kawthar —

سُورَةُ الْكَافِرُونَ

109 – The Disbelievers

This is a Makkī Sūra, consisting of 6 āyāt

Link with the previous Sūra

Previously, Allah instructed the Messenger ﷺ to pray exclusively for Him, so in this sūra Allah is instructing him not to fall prey to the disbeliever's request to share acts of worship with them, '*For them is their path, and for me is my path*'.

There is a sharper thread binding this Sūra to al-Kawthar. There, the *kuffār* had insulted the Messenger of Allāh “ — ﷺ Muḥammad is cut off” — and Allāh ﷻ closed the Sūra by naming the insulter: *shāni'* aka, your enemy. *Shāni'* is not any opponent; it is the bitterest kind of enemy, the one consumed by spite. Having identified them, Allāh now grants His Messenger the reply. They called him *abtar*; he is commanded to call them by their true name: *yā ayyuha'l-kāfirūn*. It is, as it were, the answer of Allāh on behalf of His beloved — and note that the title is chosen by Allāh, not by the Messenger ﷺ himself.

A short introduction

The Sūra tells us that there cannot be any compromise in the matters of faith and worship. People are free to follow whatever religion they want, but the truth and falsehood cannot be mixed together.

When the *mushrikīn* of Makkah “promised” to Rasūlullāh that they would accept Islām only if he worshipped or even kissed their idols, Allāh instructed Rasūlullāh with the following words:

Sūra Kāfirūn issues the ultimatum to the *kuffār*, telling them that, after much discussion, if they still choose not to take heed, they will be left to their own devices. Allāh says in Sūra Najm, “So ignore him who turns away

from Our advice and who desires only the life of this world” [verse 29, Sūra 53]. The believers should rather not associate with such people.

The background of revelation

When the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ began calling openly to the oneness of Allāh, those for whom guidance was written accepted and abandoned their idols. The great leaders of Makkah watched their society split into two camps, and — fearing the message more each day — decided upon a new strategy: compromise. Among those named in the narrations are al-Aswad ibn ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, Umayya ibn Khalaf, al-Walīd ibn al-Mughīra and al-‘Āṣ ibn Wā’il, and their proposals came on more than one occasion.

Their first offer: let us alternate. For one year we will worship your Lord and no one else; the next year, you worship our idols, and the feuding will end. For them this cost little — they already believed in Allāh in some fashion, and had merely ascribed partners to Him. The Messenger ﷺ rejected it instantly: he would never worship any but Allāh; this was the very mission he had been sent with. They returned with a softer version: keep worshipping your Lord in the Ḥaram — only touch our idols in passing. Rejected. Finally they laid the *dunyā* itself on the table: wealth until he became the richest man among them, leadership over Makkah, marriage to the most beautiful of Arabia — if he would only stop speaking against their idols and stay silent. It was at this point that Jibrīl عليه السلام descended with this Sūra, and the Messenger ﷺ went to the Ḥaram and recited it aloud before those very leaders.

Understand what their *shirk* actually was. These people did not deny Allāh; when asked who created the heavens and the earth, they answered “Allāh”. They would begin their tawāf with His name, and when a storm seized their ships at sea, they forgot every idol and cried out to Allāh alone — only to return to the idols the moment they reached shore. Their belief was that Allāh, having created everything, had delegated His authority: this idol dispenses provision, that one grants children, another controls rain. And yet

the Qur'an calls them — worshippers of Allāh one year in their own proposal — al-kāfirūn. Partnership with Allāh is not a lesser form of belief in Him; it is its negation.

Virtues of the Sūra

حَدَّثَنَا عُقْبَةُ بْنُ مُكْرَمٍ الْعَمِّيُّ الْبَصْرِيُّ، حَدَّثَنَا ابْنُ أَبِي فُدَيْكِ،
أَخْبَرَنَا سَلَمَةُ بْنُ وَرْدَانَ، عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ
صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ لِرَجُلٍ مِنْ أَصْحَابِهِ “ هَلْ تَزَوَّجْتَ يَا
فُلَانُ ” . قَالَ لَا وَاللَّهِ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَلَا عِنْدِي مَا أَتَزَوَّجُ بِهِ .
قَالَ “ أَلَيْسَ مَعَكَ (قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ) ” . قَالَ بَلَى . قَالَ “ ثَلَاثُ
الْقُرْآنِ ” . قَالَ “ أَلَيْسَ مَعَكَ (إِذَا جَاءَ نَصْرُ اللَّهِ وَالْفَتْحُ) ” .
قَالَ بَلَى . قَالَ “ رُبُعُ الْقُرْآنِ ” . قَالَ “ أَلَيْسَ مَعَكَ قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا
الْكَافِرُونَ ” . قَالَ بَلَى قَالَ “ رُبُعُ الْقُرْآنِ ” . قَالَ “ أَلَيْسَ مَعَكَ
(إِذَا زُلْزِلَتِ الْأَرْضُ) ” . قَالَ بَلَى . قَالَ “ رُبُعُ الْقُرْآنِ ” . قَالَ
“ تَزَوَّجْ تَزَوَّجْ ” . قَالَ أَبُو عِيسَى هَذَا حَدِيثٌ حَسَنٌ

Narrated Anas bin Malik: ” that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said to a man among his Companions: “Have you married O so-and-so?” He said: “No by Allah O Messenger of Allah! And I do not have anything to marry with.” He said: “Do you not know: Qul Huwa Allahu Ahad?” He said: “Of course.” He said: “It is a third of the Qur'an.” He said: “Do you not know Idha Ja Nasrullahi Wal-Fath?” He said: “Of course.” He said: “It is a fourth of the Qur'an.” He said: “Do you not know Qul Ya Ayyubal-Kafirun?” He said:

“Of course.” He said: “It is a fourth of the Qur’an.” He said: “Do you not know Idha Zulzilat Al-Ard?” He said: “Of course.” He said: “It is a fourth of the Qur’an.” He said: “Marry, marry.” Tirmidhee no. 2895

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ غِيْلَانَ، حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو دَاوُدَ، قَالَ أَخْبَرَنَا شُعْبَةُ،
عَنْ أَبِي إِسْحَاقَ، عَنْ رَجُلٍ، عَنْ فَرْوَةَ بْنِ نَوْفَلٍ، رَضِيَ اللَّهُ
عنه أَنَّهُ أَتَى النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ
عَلِّمْنِي شَيْئًا أَقُولُهُ إِذَا أَوَيْتُ إِلَى فِرَاشِي قَالَ “ اِقْرَأْ : (قُلْ يَا
أَيُّهَا الْكَافِرُونَ) فَإِنَّهَا بَرَاءَةٌ مِنَ الشِّرْكِ ” . قَالَ شُعْبَةُ أَحْيَانًا
يَقُولُ مَرَّةً وَأَحْيَانًا لَا يَقُولُهَا . حَدَّثَنَا مُوسَى بْنُ جِزَامٍ، أَخْبَرَنَا
يَحْيَى بْنُ آدَمَ، عَنْ إِسْرَائِيلَ، عَنْ أَبِي إِسْحَاقَ، عَنْ فَرْوَةَ بْنِ
نَوْفَلٍ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، أَنَّهُ أَتَى النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَذَكَرَ نَحْوَهُ
بِمَعْنَاهُ وَهَذَا أَصَحُّ .

Farwa bin Nawfal رضى الله عنه narrated that:” He came to the Messenger (ﷺ) and said: “O Messenger of Allah, teach me something that I may say when I go to my bed.” So he said: “Recite: Say: ‘O you disbelievers’ for verily it is a disavowal of Shirk.” Shuba said: “Sometimes he would say: ‘One time’ and sometime he would not say it.” (Another chain) from Farwa bin Nawfal, from his father: "That he came to the Messenger (ﷺ) then he mentioned similar in meaning. And this is more correct. [AbuEisa said:] And Zubair reported this hadith from Ishaq, from Farwa bin Nawfal, from his father from the Messenger (ﷺ), with similar wording. This is more appropriate and more correct than the narration of Shuba. The companions of Abu Ishaq were confused in the narration of this hadith.

This hadith has been reported through routes other than this. Abdur-Rahman is the brother of Farwa bin Nawfal.” Tirmidhi no. 3403

أَخْبَرَنَا عَبْدُ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، دُحَيْمٌ قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا مَرْوَانُ، قَالَ
حَدَّثَنَا يَزِيدُ بْنُ كَيْسَانَ، عَنْ أَبِي حَازِمٍ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، أَنَّ
رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَرَأَ فِي رَكْعَتَيِ الْفَجْرِ { قُلْ يَا
أَيُّهَا الْكَافِرُونَ } وَ { قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ }

It was narrated from Abu Huraira that: “The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) recited:”Say: O you disbelievers” and “Say: He is Allah, (the) One” in the two rak’ahs of Fajr.” Sunan an-Nasa’i no. 945

At a glance

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ	<i>In the name of Allah, the All Merciful, the Ever Merciful.</i>
{ قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْكَافِرُونَ (١) }	<i>Say [O Muhammad], O disbelievers</i>
{ لَا أُعْبُدُ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ (٢) }	<i>I do not worship what you worship [false Gods]</i>
{ وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ (٣) }	<i>And you do not worship whom I worship [Allah]</i>
{ وَلَا أَنَا عَابِدٌ مَّا عَبَدْتُمْ (٤) }	<i>And I will never worship what you have worshipped</i>
{ وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ (٥) }	<i>And nor will you ever worship whom I worship</i>
{ لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ (٦) }	<i>For you is your path [recompense], for me is my path [recompense]</i>

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the All Merciful, the Ever Merciful.

قُلْ يَٰٓأَيُّهَا الْكَافِرُونَ (١)

Say [O Muḥammad], O disbelievers

Qul — say — the command itself is part of the revelation, preserved in the recitation forever: this disavowal is not the Messenger's ﷺ personal temperament but the dictation of Allāh ﷻ. And the address, yā ayyuha'l-kāfirūn, is aimed not at every disbeliever on earth — many of those listening would later embrace Islām — but at those stubborn ones about whom Allāh knew that no proof would ever move them. To them the door of negotiation is here closed with a form of address they could not mistake.

لَا أُعْبُدُ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ (٢)

I do not worship what you worship [false Gods]

وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أُعْبُدُ (٣)

And you do not worship whom I worship [Allah]

وَلَا أَنَا عَابِدٌ مَا عَبَدْتُمْ (٤)

And I will never worship what you have worshipped

وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أُعْبُدُ (٥)

And nor will you ever worship whom I worship

Why the repetition? The 'Ulamā mention that the pairs of verses divide across time — a disavowal for the present and future, and a disavowal for the past: I do not and will not worship what you worship, and I never did; you do not worship my Lord, and you never truly did.

Beyond this, repetition is itself the register of emphatic refusal in Arabic speech. When a man finally severs ties with one who has pushed him beyond all patience, he does not say it once; he repeats it — do you understand me? Never. The Sūra carries exactly that tone: every avenue of compromise, year-sharing, idol-touching, silence-for-wealth, is being shut, twice over, from both directions.

لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ (٦)

For you is your path [recompense], for me is my path [recompense]

Lakum dīnukum wa-liya dīn is not a shrug of relativism — the Sūra just spent five verses declaring their way false — but the final line of a disavowal: your dīn is yours, and its recompense is yours; mine is mine, and its recompense is mine. Leave me to worship my Allāh. It draws the line across which the next Sūra will announce the outcome: the dīn of truth swept the peninsula, and the people entered it in crowds.

Concluding remarks

The first lesson of the Sūra is that worship is only counted when it is undiluted. The *kuffār* of Makkah affirmed Allāh as Creator, honoured His House and circled it in *tawāf* — and none of it availed them, because alongside Him they had installed others as dispensers of provision, children and health. And herein lies a warning that reaches into our own time: whenever a person believes that any saint, elder or buried walī independently possesses the power to grant needs — turning to graves and asking their occupants, rather than Allāh, to give and to remove difficulty — he has stepped towards the very *shirk* this Sūra was revealed to sever. We honour the friends of Allāh; we ask only Allāh.

And with this Sūra comes a gift for daily life: it was the practice of the Messenger ﷺ to recite al-*Kāfirūn* and al-*Ikhhlās* in the two sunnah *rak'ahs*

of Fajr and of Maghrib, and he advised more than one Companion to recite it before sleeping, describing it as a protection from *shirk*.

From this we understand the accusations of the orientalist and the modernists who say that the Messenger s.a.w. was a womanizer. Nabi s.a.w. was offered lots of women when he was younger than his current age and he turned them all away. Nabi s.a.w. married at the age of 25, and his first wife was 40 years old. Which man in the modern age at 25 would marry a 45-year-old and on top of that she was a widow. This shows that these allegations are completely baseless and to further your knowledge on this topic there is a booklet written by a man in Pakistan which explains all these baseless modernistic allegations. So, these *kuffār* came to the Messenger s.a.w. and he rejected them and so they came up with another plan. They said to Nabi s.a.w. ‘we’ll worship Allah for one year and you worship our gods for one year and we will do this continuously’ Nabi s.a.w. again rejected them and then this *āya* was revealed (insert Arabic). ‘say oh messenger, I am not going to worship what you are worshipping, you can’t expect me to do that’. Allah then tells Nabi s.a.w. that the kuffar are trying to compromise you. Once you are compromised you will soften up and they promise that they will soften up, but they won’t. The year you start worshipping their Gods they will get everyone to worship their Gods. (Arabic) ‘they want, you to soften and they promise they will soften’. Then Allah mentions 9 bad traits about Walid bin nagira. Allah says ‘he is a liar, he is someone who always takes qasms, he spreads tales, and right at the end Allah says that he is someone who we don’t even know what his lineage is, we don’t know who his father is. So, these people who are asking you to join their religion, it will never happen Muḥammad’. So, at the start of the Sūra it says, ‘oh you who are kuffar’. The word kufura means to hide, or to refuse or ungrateful. So, a good translation here could be, those who are ungrateful because it follows a pattern from previous Sūrahs. In previous Sūrahs Allah mentions the favours he gave the Quraysh. Ibrahim a.s. made two du‘ās. The first one was that Makkah would be protected and Allah

accepted this as he protected Makkah from the army of Abraha. Allah also said that Ibrahim made a *du'ā* that it would become prosperous. You went in the summer and you went in the winter and it became very prosperous. Allah mentions all their evil traits and says, 'I have kept you custodians of the Ka'ba even though Muḥammad is much more deserving'. Now Allah finally uses the words (Arabic 8:22) 'oh you who are ungrateful'. In the Qur'ān (Arabic) Allah says, 'if you do my *shukr* I will become pleased and give you more and more but if you are ungrateful you will feel my punishment'. Therefore, in Hadith's we hear the Messenger s.a.w. talk about people being ungrateful towards others. Therefore, the word *Kāfirūn* here may mean ungrateful or disbelievers. Al *Kāfirūn* here doesn't mean every disbeliever who has ever come but rather it is being specific to the *kuffār* of the Quraysh. Right at the end Allah says that 'oh Muḥammad let them go their way and you go your way'. Allah knew that these people would never become Muslim and he told Muḥammad s.a.w. this. He said let them do what they want as their fate was already known however we can't take this type of attitude now as we don't know whether a non-Muslim could become Muslim or not. (Arabic 9:50) So Allah says, 'oh messenger tell them, that I won't worship what you are worshipping, and you won't worship what I am worshipping' and Allah repeats these two phrases again in the next two *āya* but with slightly different translation. These two sentences come twice therefore there are 4 verses, two which are repeated twice. So why did Allah repeat these sentences twice? Some mufasssireen say that it is for emphasis e.g. when a father tells his son he is grounded, and then repeats it, he is emphasising it. So here they are saying that Allah is emphasising his point. Others says that there is a subtle difference. The first time he says it, he is saying that he won't worship the idols which they worship, or the objects that they worship and the second time he says it he is saying he won't worship it in the way that they worship it. This is important because the way they worshipped was very weak worship and even though they were made custodians of the Ka'ba, they

weren't even firm on their own belief. It is like how people are today where Christians do not go to church as much as they should, in the same way they became weak in their faith, so have they. So, Nabi s.a.w. is saying that there is no chance they will worship their gods and the way they worship their gods. The third reason why it is mentioned twice is (Arabic 13;02) that both mean I won't worship what you worship. In English they mean the same thing but in Arabic there is a difference, and as mentioned before there is a reason why Allah uses every type of word in the Qur'ān. the first *āya* is (Arabic) and it is a verb, 'I won't worship what you are worshipping'. (Arabic) is a noun. 'I am not worshipping what you are worshipping' – present tense. 'you have not and you will never worship what I am worshipping'. 'I am not worshipping and will never worship the thing you are worshipping'. 'you are not worshipping, and you will never worship that Allah which I am worshipping right now'. The noun and the verbs used Allah makes his message simple that Muḥammad s.a.w. was never a *kāfir* and never worshipped idols. Nabi s.a.w. never committed *kuffār* and he never will commit *kuffār*, but you the people of Makkah, have committed *kuffār* and will always commit *kuffār* and will never be able to accept Islam. This links to Sūra *lahab* where Allah promises that Abu *lahab* will go to Jahannam and that was a promise and he is saying a similar thing here. For the last aya the rough translation is 'you have your religion and I have mine. You go your way and I will go mine. You don't harass me, and I won't harass you, from today we will ignore each other'. Allah is saying here that debt is on your head and the judgement you will receive will be in the hereafter and will be with you, the outcome of the result of your *Īmān* is with me. 'For me are my deeds and for you are your deeds'. If you want to go against me now, go ahead, we will see who will succeed'. Allah says, 'tell the kuffar that they can worship what they want, they can go their way and Muḥammad you will go your way'. 18:00

Maulānā Ahmed Panum Poori used to say about the kuffar and those Muslims with weak Iman. He says, 'you will reap what you sow'. Put an

apple seed and expect a mango tree, it will not happen. You put an apple seed in and expect mango tree, it doesn't exist. Then he says, 'there is a Jahannam and there is a Jannat and if you don't believe me, go 6 feet under and then tell me if they exist'. This is what Allah is saying that if you don't want to believe now then don't, we will see what happens in the future.
19:05

رضي الله عنه Says that 'I have witnessed Nabi reciting Sūra *Kāfirūn* and Sūra ikhlas. In the two *rak'āt* sunnah of maghrib and fajr so much that I have lost count'. Ḥaḍrat Aisha r.a. said that Nabi read his sunnah and nafil ṣalāh at home. His sunnah ṣalāh for fajr would be so fast that it would seem like he hadn't even read Sūrat al-Fātiḥa yet. Reading those two Sūrats would only take a couple of minutes. Another sunnah is he used to read it in witr ṣalāh. It comes in a hadith in tirmizee that Nabi s.a.w. said pray Sūra *Kāfirūn* before sleeping and Allah will protect you from losing your Iman. Another *āya* to pray 'ARABIC' Allah you have given us guidance, don't turn your back on us. That is what the *āya* means, don't turn us to wrongdoing and the bad path.

— End of Sūrat al-Kāfirūn —

سُورَةُ النَّصْرِ

110 - [Divine] Help

This is a Madanī Sūra, consisting of 3 āyāt

Link with the previous Sūra

Previously, The Messenger of Allah ﷺ announced his complete rejection of the path of the disbelievers. In this Sūra, Allah consoles Rasūlullāh ﷺ in this Sūra, telling him that he is guaranteed victory, which came at the conquest of Makkah when the pagan's idols were destroyed.

A short introduction

This is a Madani Sūra and according to most of the authorities this is the last Sūra that was revealed to the Messenger ﷺ. The Sūra reminds about the attitude of the Believer in the situation of success. One should be thankful to Allah and seek His forgiveness for any shortcomings or mistakes.

Virtues of the Sūra

Abd-Allāh b. 'Abbās رضى الله عنهما says: Umar used to make me sit with the elderly men who had fought in the Battle of Badr. Some of them felt it (did not like that) and said to Umar "Why do you bring in this boy to sit with us while we have sons like him?" Umar replied, "Because of what you know of his position (i.e. his religious knowledge.)"

One day Umar called me and made me sit in the gathering of those people; and I think that he called me just to show them. (my religious knowledge). Umar then asked them (in my presence). "What do you say about the interpretation of the Statement of Allah: 'When comes Help of Allah (to you O, Muḥammad against your enemies) and the conquest (of Makkah).'" (110.1) Some of them said, "We are ordered to praise Allah and ask for His forgiveness when Allah's Help and the conquest (of Makkah) comes to us."

Some others kept quiet and did not say anything. On that, Umar asked me, "Do you say the same, O IbnAbbas?" I replied, "No." He said, 'What do you say then?'"

I replied, "That is the sign of the death of Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) which Allah informed him of. Allah said:— '(O Muḥammad) When comes the Help of Allah (to you against your enemies) and the conquest (of Makkah) (which is the sign of your death). You should celebrate the praises of your Lord and ask for His Forgiveness, and He is the One Who accepts the repentance and forgives.' (110.3) On that 'Umar said, "I do not know anything about it other than what you have said."

This Sūra has a further distinction: it was the last Sūra of the Qur'ān to be revealed in its entirety. Individual verses descended after it — such as "This day I have perfected for you your religion" — but no complete Sūra. After its revelation, the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ remained in this world for a short period more; and this is why Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنهما read in it what he read. Every prophet is sent for a purpose: to deliver the message. When the victory arrives and the people enter the dīn in crowds, the mission is accomplished — and the announcement of completion is, for the one who understands, the announcement of departure. It is related too that when this Sūra was recited, the Ṣaḥāba rejoiced at the coming victory of Islām — while the uncle of the Messenger ﷺ wept, for he had understood the same sign, and the Messenger ﷺ confirmed it.

At a glance

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*In the name of Allah, the All
Merciful, the Ever Merciful.*

إِذَا جَاءَ نَصْرُ اللَّهِ وَالْفَتْحُ (١)

*[O Messenger ﷺ] When Allah's
help will come and the conquest
[once Makkah has been
conquered]*

وَرَأَيْتَ النَّاسَ يَدْخُلُونَ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ أَفْوَاجًا (٢) *And you see the people enter Allah's way in crowds [in larger numbers than ever before]*

Then glorify your Master with his praise [in gratitude for this great favour] and seek his forgiveness [for any shortcomings in your efforts]. Indeed, he readily accepts repentance

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the All Merciful, the Ever Merciful.

إِذَا جَاءَ نَصْرُ اللَّهِ وَالْفَتْحُ (١)

[O Messenger ﷺ When Allah's help will come and the conquest [once Makkah has been conquered]

The *naṣr* and the *fath* are mentioned separately: the help of Allāh, and the conquest — for the help of Allāh had accompanied him throughout, and the conquest of Makkah was its crowning. And what a conquest it was; history has no parallel. The city that had tortured its believers day and night for saying one kalima, the city that drove out its own Prophet — was entered by him not at the head of a triumph, but with his blessed head bowed low upon his camel in humility, reciting “Indeed We have granted you a manifest victory.”

Instead of vengeance, a general amnesty was proclaimed: whoever enters the Ḥaram is safe; whoever shuts his door is safe; whoever lays down his weapons is safe; whoever enters the house of Abū Sufyān is safe. And to the assembled leaders of Quraysh — the very men who had plotted against him for twenty years — he said the words Yūsuf عليه السلام *had said to his brothers*: “*Lā tathriba ‘alaykumu’l-yawm — no blame upon you today; you*

are all free.” Then Bilāl رضي الله عنه was told to climb upon the roof of the Ka’ba itself, and the adhān rang out over Makkah. Any other conqueror in history would have drowned the city in blood; this is the conquest the Sūra celebrates.

وَرَأَيْتَ النَّاسَ يَدْخُلُونَ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ أَفْوَاجًا (٢)

And you see the people enter Allah’s way in crowds [in larger numbers than ever before]

Hasan رضي الله عنه relates the reasoning that then swept Arabia. The tribes had deliberately waited out the struggle between the Messenger ﷺ and Quraysh, and they remembered one thing above all: when the army of the elephant came against Makkah, Allāh did not let it enter. Yet Allāh let Muḥammad ﷺ enter, and made him custodian of the Ka’ba. Their conclusion was immediate: no one conquers the Ḥaram unless he is upon the truth. So they came — without a fight, delegation after delegation, tribe after tribe. From Yemen alone a single group of seven hundred came and took bay’a at his hands in one sitting. This is the meaning of *afwājā*: not one by one, but in crowds.

فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَاسْتَغْفِرْهُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ تَوَّابًا (٣)

Then glorify your Master with his praise [in gratitude for this great favour] and seek his forgiveness [for any shortcomings in your efforts].

Indeed, he readily accepts repentance

Observe the sequence of the verse: *tasbīḥ* first, then *ḥamd*, and *istighfār* last. There is a lesson here for everyone who wishes to ask of Allāh : ﷻ before you ask for what you want — and forgiveness is for you — first give Allāh what is His: glorify Him, praise Him, and then ask. This is the etiquette by which *du‘ā* is accepted, and Allāh teaches it in the very order of the words.

‘Ā’isha رضي الله عنها relates that after this Sūra came down, the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ *recited abundantly in his rukū’ and sujūd: “Subḥānaka’llāhumma wa-bi-ḥamdika, allāhumma’ghfir lī — Glory be to You, O Allāh, and with Your praise; O Allāh, forgive me.” She says: I asked him about it, and he said, “My Lord has commanded me,” and recited this Sūra. Ibn Mas’ūd رضي الله عنه relates a like wording. His worship in that final period intensified so that he would stand in the night until his blessed feet swelled — and still he would say: “We have not worshipped You as You truly deserve to be worshipped.”*

But a question presses itself: the Messenger ﷺ lived a sinless life — why is he commanded to seek forgiveness? Herein lies the teaching for us. However much worship a person offers, he can never worship Allāh ﷻ as He deserves; so the servant works, and then seeks forgiveness for the shortfall in his work. This is why the Sunnah after every ṣalāh is to say *astaghfirullāh* three times: O Allāh, I have prayed, but not as Your right demanded.

There is a beautiful saying transmitted from Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه: when a servant finishes his prayer and says two sentences — *alḥamdulillāh*, then *astaghfirullāh* — he breaks the back of Shayṭān. For Shayṭān hunts the worshipper down one of two roads: he inflates him — what a magnificent worship you have offered! — and the cure is *alḥamdulillāh*: the ability was Allāh’s gift, not my accomplishment. Or he deflates him — what was that lifeless, distracted prayer even worth? — and the cure is *astaghfirullāh*: Allāh accepts the repentance of His servant, and when He accepts the *istighfār*, He will not reject the ṣalāh it was made for.

And in the Sūra’s wider grammar lies its final lesson: the victory is *nasru’llāh* — the help of Allāh — not the achievement of men. When success comes, the believer’s response is not self-congratulation but *tasbīḥ*, *ḥamd* and *istighfār*: attribute the accomplishment to Allāh ﷻ, and return to Him.

— End of Sūrat al-Naṣr —

سُورَةُ الْمَسَدِ

111 – The Palm-fibre Rope

This is a Makkī Sūra, consisting of 5 āyāt

Alternative names

- Sūrat Al-Lahab: The flame
- Sūra Tabbat: The ruin

Link with the previous Sūra

Allah already made it clear that the disbelievers should be ignored if they refuse to take heed after numerous attempts to persuade them to believe. Allah will still grant victory to the Muslims and destroy the disbelievers. Sūrat al-Masad now describes how a particular disbeliever was destroyed.

A short introduction

Abu Lahab was the brother of Rasūlullāh ﷺ's father. He and his wife were among the staunchest opponents of Islām and should take every opportunity to harass Rasūlullāh. When he once cursed Rasūlullāh (i, Allāh revealed this Sūra saying,

Nowhere else in the Qur'ān has Allāh ﷻ dedicated an entire Sūra, by name, to one particular enemy. There is no Sūra of Abū Jahl, no Sūra of 'Utba b. Rabī'a — only this man. And that is the measure of how far he went. It is one thing to be a mushrik: crime enough. It is worse to add to that enmity towards the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ. But to go out of one's way, day after day, in hatred of him — nobody went as far as Abū Lahab: his own uncle, and his next-door neighbour, who would throw filth at his door and who openly rejoiced at the deaths of his sons.

His real name was ‘Abd al-‘Uzzā; Abū Lahab was his nickname. Lahab is a flickering red flame, and its glow was a symbol of beauty among the Arabs: he was nicknamed for his handsome, radiant complexion. The Arabs attached “Abū” to whatever a man was associated with — as the Messenger ﷺ affectionately called ‘Alī رضي الله عنه, “Yā Abā Turāb”, father of dust, and as the famous companion devoted to his cat became Abū Hurayra, father of the kitten.

His wife’s nickname was Umm Jamīl — mother of beauty — for she was known through the city for her looks. She was of the noblest lineage, the sister of Abū Sufyān. Between his wealth and their combined standing, this was the celebrity couple of Makkah: admired for power, family nobility and appearance alike. It is precisely this pair — with everything the world could offer — whose ruin Allāh ﷻ announces in five short verses.

The background of revelation

When the command came down, “And warn your nearest kinsfolk,” the Messenger of Allāh — ﷺ who until then had confined his da‘wa to individuals — climbed Mount Ṣafā, near the Sacred Mosque, and called out to the Quraysh. It was the custom of the Arabs, when an enemy army approached, for a man to climb a height and cry “wā ṣabāḥāh!” — “O, what a morning is coming!” — for armies attacked at dawn, and at this cry everyone would gather. So they gathered.

He asked them: “O Quraysh — if I told you that behind this mountain an army stands ready to attack you, would you believe me?” He had lived among them forty years as al-Ṣādiq al-Amīn, the truthful, the trustworthy, who had never lied nor betrayed a trust. Of course, they said, we would believe you. “Then I warn you,” he said, “of a punishment more severe than any army, if you do not leave the worship of idols for the worship of the One Allāh.”

Those whose hearts were open believed. But Abū Lahab spat out: “Tabban laka! — May you perish! Is this what you gathered us for?” From that day his hostility became a career. When the Messenger ﷺ went to the

great market fairs — *‘Ukāz, Dhu’l-Majāz, Dhu’l-Majanna* — calling, “O people, say *lā ilāha illa’llāh* and you will succeed,” *Abū Lahab* would trail behind him telling the crowds, “Do not listen to him.” And *Umm Jamīl* matched her husband: she would gather branches of thorns and lay them in the path the Messenger ﷺ walked by night, and she composed sarcastic verses against him.

It was in answer to his own curse — *tabban laka* — that the *Sūra* descended, turning his word back upon him for eternity: *tabbat yadā Abī Lahab*.

At a glance

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ *In the name of Allah, the All
Merciful, the Ever Merciful.*

تَبَّتْ يَدَا أَبِي لَهَبٍ وَتَبَّ (١) *May the hands of Abū Lahab be
shattered [broken], and may he be
destroyed!*

مَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُ مَالُهُ ۖ وَمَا كَسَبَ (٢) *Neither will his wealth save him,
nor what he earnt [when he stands
before Allah on the last day]*

سَيَصْلَىٰ نَارًا ذَاتَ لَهَبٍ (٣) *Soon, he will enter the fire, full of
flames*

وَأَمْرَأَتُهُ ۖ حَمَّالَةَ الْحَطَبِ (٤) *And his wife [Umm Jamīl], the
[wicked] carrier of firewood [of
thorns, to harm the Messenger ﷺ]*

فِي جِيدِهَا حَبْلٌ مِّن مَّسَدٍ (٥) *[She will enter the flaming fire]
With a [the same] palm-fibre rope
around her neck*

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the All Merciful, the Ever Merciful.

تَبَّتْ يَدَا أَبِي لَهَبٍ وَتَبَّ (١)

May the hands of Abū Lahab be shattered [broken], and may he be destroyed!

Why his hands? One narration mentions that Abū Lahab grabbed a rock to strike the Messenger ﷺ, *so the hands that rose against him were cursed. When the Sūra was revealed, Abū Lahab — sharp-tongued as ever — would hold out his hands in gatherings, stare at them theatrically and mock, “May they be destroyed...!” He treated the words of Allāh ﷻ as material for comedy.*

The verse contains a declaration and a guarantee. Tabbat — the ruin of his hands, his efforts against Islām — was, as history unfolded, as good as done: everything he worked against triumphed. And wa-tabb — his own destruction — was a promise whose fulfilment the whole of Makkah would witness.

مَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُ مَالُهُ ۖ وَمَا كَسَبَ (٢)

Neither will his wealth save him, nor what he earnt [when he stands before Allah on the last day]

There is a story behind this verse. Someone once said to Abū Lahab: think a little — this man has never lied in his life; if he is truthful, and you must one day stand before Allāh, what will become of you? He replied: first, I do not believe him; and even if it were true, I have so much wealth that I will ransom myself from any punishment. Allāh ﷻ answered him for all time: neither his wealth availed him, nor what he earned.

Why the two expressions — māluhu and mā kasab? Māl is wealth however it arrives: inheritance, gifts, fortune without effort. Kasab is what a man acquires by his own striving. Neither category — the given nor the earned — was of the slightest use to him. There is a subtlety here too: he took pride in two things, his wealth and his famous good looks; and Allāh

stripped him of precisely those two, for the disease that killed him was a disease of the skin.

His end was wretched. He developed a plague-like disease of boils and swellings, and was considered contagious; his sons, servants and family fled from him, and he died slowly, alone and in pain. His corpse lay untouched, for none would go near it, until his sons hired some Abyssinians who dug a ditch and pushed the body into it with poles, not once touching it with their hands. So passed the celebrity of Makkah.

However much a person amasses, he leaves it all behind at the door of the grave. It is narrated that three things follow the deceased: his family, his wealth and his deeds; two return, and only his deeds remain with him. Here is the reprimand for every heart that spends its days and nights scheming after more: this wealth serves you only up to a point — and then, *mā aghnā ‘anhu māluh*.

سَيَصْلَىٰ نَارًا ذَاتَ لَهَبٍ (٣)

Soon, he will enter the fire, full of flames

Sayaṣlā nāran — “he will enter a fire” — would have sufficed. But *Allāh* ﷻ says *nāran dhāta lahab*: a fire possessing flame — *lahab*, the very word he wore as an ornament. It is as if he is told: you loved to be called by the red flame for your beauty? Then you shall be known by it forever — but the flame will now mean the Fire. From this day his nickname is no longer a compliment; every time the Qur’ān is recited until the Day of Judgement, it is a sentence.

وَأَمْرَأَتُهُ حَمَّالَةَ الْحَطَبِ (٤)

And his wife [Umm Jamīl], the [wicked] carrier of firewood [of thorns, to harm the Messenger] ﷺ

“Carrier of firewood” operates on every level at once. Literally, she carried thorn branches to strew in the path of the Messenger ﷺ. Figuratively — and the Arabs used exactly this idiom — the carrier of firewood is the gossip-monger: she carried tales from this one to that one, feeding the fire between people, supplying fuel wherever there was a flame of discord. And in the ākhira, the scholars mention, she will carry fuel in earnest: bundles upon her head to feed the very Fire in which her husband burns.

When the Sūra was revealed, she swore by al-Lāt and al-Uzzā — clutching the famous, fabulously expensive necklace she paraded around town — “I will surely spend this necklace in my enmity against Muḥammad.” Her most precious possession, pledged to hatred. Allāh ﷻ recorded for her instead a different neckpiece.

فِي جِيدِهَا حَبْلٌ مِّن مَّسَدٍ (٥)

[She will enter the flaming fire] With a [the same] palm-fibre rope around her neck

Fī jīdhā ḥablun min masad — upon her neck a rope of twisted palm-fibre. The scholars give the verse several layers: a rope of palm-fibre, or a collar of twisted iron strands in the Fire; and an echo of her own practice, for she would carry her bundle of thorns with a rope around her neck to hold it. It is even related that this practice was her end: that one day, tired under her load, she sat, the rope slipped, and she was strangled by it. The woman of the necklace ended with a rope; and in the ākhira, the rope remains.

Concluding remarks

Observe the placement of this Sūra. Al-Kāfirūn drew the line between two dīns — “for you is your religion, and for me is mine.” Al-Naṣr announced the outcome of the true dīn: the help of Allāh and the conquest. And al-Masad shows the outcome of falsehood: as Allāh ﷻ says elsewhere,

“Truth has arrived, and falsehood has perished — indeed falsehood is ever bound to perish.” Al-Naṣr is the arriving of truth; al-Masad is the perishing of falsehood.

And consider: of all people, only this man is condemned by name in the Book that is recited until the Day of Judgement. Children recite this Sūra; it is read in every land, in ṣalāh, every day — and with every recitation, the curse upon Abū Lahab is renewed. The man who feared that Muḥammad’s ﷺ name would be cut off ensured, by his enmity, that his own name would survive only as a byword for ruin.

— End of Sūrat al-Masad —

سُورَةُ الْإِخْلَاصِ

112 - Pure Faith

This is a Makkī Sūra, consisting of 4 āyāt

Link with the previous Sūra

When describing the disbeliever's helplessness and dependence in the previous sūra, Allah says: *'Neither will his wealth save him, nor what he earnt'*, which is in direct contrast to the independence of Allah which is mentioned in this sūra, *'Allāh is the independent'*.

There is also a wider arc to observe. The run of Sūrahs from al-Fil onwards has traced the *sīra* of the Messenger — ﷺ the protection of Makkah, the favours upon Quraysh, the taunts answered, the compromises refused — and it closes with al-Masad: the worst enemy destroyed, the victory sealed. But when a conflict runs long, people forget what it was ever about. So the moment the story ends, the Qur'ān restates the agenda in four verses: this was never about tribe, territory or power; it was about *tawhīd* — completing the legacy of Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. And there is a pointed contrast with the Sūra before it: Abū Lahab lived as though he were the one everyone needed — the wealthy treasurer whom no one could touch. His ruin having been announced, Allāh ﷻ now declares who alone is truly al-Ṣamad: the One whom all need, and who needs none.

A short introduction

This is a great Sūra of *Tawhīd*. It speaks about the oneness of Allah. The Sūra is named al-Ikhlās - which can be translated as 'pure, complete, sincerity'. Interestingly, the word does not appear in the Sūra itself.

The Ṣaḥāba so treasured this Sūra that the scholars have counted for it some twenty names. Among them: Sūrat al-Tawhīd, for it unifies the attributes of Allāh; Sūrat al-Tafrīd, the declaration of His aloneness; Sūrat

al-Ma'rifa, for whoever does not know this Sūra does not truly know who Allāh is; Sūrat al-Ṣamad, the only Sūra in which this name occurs; Sūrat al-Asās, the foundation, for this is the core of the mission of the Messenger ﷺ; al-Muqashqisha, that which purges — cleansing the heart of *shirk* as medicine purges sickness; Sūrat al-Nūr, for everything has a light and the light of the Qur'ān is Qul huwa'llāhu *aḥad*; and Sūrat al-Najāt, the rescue — of which more below.

The background of revelation

When the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ called the idolaters to the One God, some of them came with questions shaped entirely by the only “gods” they knew — the idols their own hands had carved. What is your Allāh made of, they asked — gold? Silver? Others demanded His lineage: in this world you place a man by asking who his father is, so what is the family tree of your Lord? Had they used the smallest measure of intellect, they would have seen the absurdity: whatever is made of gold requires that gold exist before it, and whatever has a father depends upon that father — and a dependent, manufactured, descended being is precisely not God. It was in answer to these questions that this Sūra was revealed: four verses that demolish every such notion permanently.

Virtues of the Sūra

حَدَّثَنَا عُقْبَةُ بْنُ مُكْرَمٍ الْعَمِيُّ الْبَصْرِيُّ، حَدَّثَنَا ابْنُ أَبِي فُدَيْكٍ،
أَخْبَرَنَا سَلَمَةُ بْنُ وَرْدَانَ، عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ
صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ لِرَجُلٍ مِنْ أَصْحَابِهِ “ هَلْ تَزَوَّجْتَ يَا
فُلَانُ ” . قَالَ لَا وَاللَّهِ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَلَا عِنْدِي مَا أَتَزَوَّجُ بِهِ .
قَالَ “ أَلَيْسَ مَعَكَ (قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ) ” . قَالَ بَلَى . قَالَ “ ثَلَاثُ

الْقُرْآنَ " . قَالَ " أَلَيْسَ مَعَكَ (إِذَا جَاءَ نَصْرُ اللَّهِ وَالْفَتْحُ) " .
 قَالَ بَلَى . قَالَ " رُبُّعُ الْقُرْآنِ " . قَالَ " أَلَيْسَ مَعَكَ قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا
 الْكَافِرُونَ " . قَالَ بَلَى قَالَ " رُبُّعُ الْقُرْآنِ " . قَالَ " أَلَيْسَ مَعَكَ
 (إِذَا زُلْزِلَتِ الْأَرْضُ) " . قَالَ بَلَى . قَالَ " رُبُّعُ الْقُرْآنِ " . قَالَ
 " تَزَوَّجْ تَزَوَّجْ " . قَالَ أَبُو عِيسَى هَذَا حَدِيثٌ حَسَنٌ

Narrated Anas bin Malik: " that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said to a man among his Companions: "Have you married O so-and-so?" He said: "No by Allah O Messenger of Allah! And I do not have anything to marry with." He said: "Do you not know: Qul Huwa Allahu Ahad?" He said: "Of course." He said: "It is a third of the Qur'an." He said: "Do you not know Idha Ja Nasrullahi Wal-Fath?" He said: "Of course." He said: "It is a fourth of the Qur'an." He said: "Do you not know Qul Ya Ayyubal-Kafirun?" He said: "Of course." He said: "It is a fourth of the Qur'an." He said: "Do you not know Idha Zulzilat Al-Ard?" He said: "Of course." He said: "It is a fourth of the Qur'an." He said: "Marry, marry." Tirmidhee no. 2895

حَدَّثَنَا قُتَيْبَةُ بْنُ سَعِيدٍ، حَدَّثَنَا الْمُعْضَلُ، عَنْ عُفَيْلٍ، عَنْ ابْنِ
 شِهَابٍ، عَنْ عُرْوَةَ، عَنْ عَائِشَةَ، أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ
 كَانَ إِذَا أَوَى إِلَى فِرَاشِهِ كُلَّ لَيْلَةٍ جَمَعَ كَفَّيْهِ ثُمَّ نَفَثَ فِيهِمَا فَقَرَأَ
 فِيهِمَا {قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ} و{قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ الْفَلَقِ} و{قُلْ أَعُوذُ
 بِرَبِّ النَّاسِ} ثُمَّ يَمْسَحُ بِهِمَا مَا اسْتَطَاعَ مِنْ جَسَدِهِ يَبْدَأُ بِهِمَا عَلَى
 رَأْسِهِ وَوَجْهِهِ وَمَا أَقْبَلَ مِنْ جَسَدِهِ يَفْعَلُ ذَلِكَ ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ.

Narrated 'Aisha: Whenever the Messenger (ﷺ) went to bed every night, he used to cup his hands together and blow over it after reciting Sūrat Al-Ikhlās, Sūrat Al-Falaq and Sūrat An-Nas, and then rub his hands over whatever parts of his body he was able to rub, starting with his head, face and front of his body. He used to do that three times." Sahih Bukhari no.

5017

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ يُوسُفَ، أَخْبَرَنَا مَالِكٌ، عَنْ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنِ أَبِي صَعْصَعَةَ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ أَبِي سَعِيدٍ الْخُدْرِيِّ، أَنَّ رَجُلًا، سَمِعَ رَجُلًا، يَقْرَأُ {قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ} يُرَدِّدُهَا فَلَمَّا أَصْبَحَ جَاءَ إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَذَكَرَ ذَلِكَ لَهُ وَكَانَ الرَّجُلُ يَتَقَالُهَا فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " وَالَّذِي نَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ إِنَّهَا لَتَعْدِلُ ثُلُثُ الْقُرْآنِ "

Narrated Abu Said Al-Khudri: "A man heard another man reciting (Sūrat-Al-Ikhlās) 'Say He is Allah, (the) One.' (112. 1) repeatedly. The next morning he came to Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) and informed him about it as if he thought that it was not enough to recite. On that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said, "By Him in Whose Hand my life is, this Sūra is equal to one-third of the Qur'an!" Sahih Bukhari no. 5013

وَقَالَ عُبَيْدُ اللَّهِ عَنْ ثَابِتٍ، عَنْ أَنَسٍ - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ - كَانَ رَجُلٌ مِنَ الْأَنْصَارِ يُؤْمُهُمْ فِي مَسْجِدِ قُبَاءٍ، وَكَانَ كُلَّمَا افْتَتَحَ سُورَةً يَقْرَأُ بِهَا لَهُمْ فِي الصَّلَاةِ مِمَّا يَقْرَأُ بِهِ افْتَتَحَ ب - {قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ}

حَتَّى يَفْرُغَ مِنْهَا، ثُمَّ يَقْرَأُ سُورَةً أُخْرَى مَعَهَا، وَكَانَ يَصْنَعُ ذَلِكَ فِي كُلِّ رَكْعَةٍ، فَكَلَّمَهُ أَصْحَابُهُ فَقَالُوا إِنَّكَ تَفْتَتِحُ بِهَذِهِ السُّورَةَ، ثُمَّ لَا تَرَى أَنَّهَا تُجْزِلُكَ حَتَّى تَقْرَأَ بِأُخْرَى، فِيمَا أَنْ تَقْرَأَ بِهَا وَإِمَّا أَنْ تَدْعَهَا وَتَقْرَأَ بِأُخْرَى. فَقَالَ مَا أَنَا بِتَارِكِهَا، إِنْ أَحْبَبْتُمْ أَنْ أُؤَمِّكُمْ بِذَلِكَ فَعَلْتُ، وَإِنْ كَرِهْتُمْ تَرَكْتُكُمْ. وَكَانُوا يَرَوْنَ أَنَّهُ مِنْ أَفْضَلِهِمْ، وَكَرَهُوا أَنْ يُؤَمَّهُمْ غَيْرُهُ، فَلَمَّا آتَاهُمُ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَخْبَرُوهُ الْخَبَرَ فَقَالَ “ يَا فُلَانُ مَا يَمْنَعُكَ أَنْ تَفْعَلَ مَا يَأْمُرُكَ بِهِ أَصْحَابُكَ وَمَا يَحْمِلُكَ عَلَى لُزُومِ هَذِهِ السُّورَةِ فِي كُلِّ رَكْعَةٍ ”. فَقَالَ إِنِّي أَحِبُّهَا. فَقَالَ “ حُبُّكَ إِيَّاهَا أَدْخَلَكَ الْجَنَّةَ ”.

Anas said: “One of the Ansar used to lead the Ansar in Salat in the Quba’ mosque and it was his habit to recite Qul Huwal-lahu Ahad whenever he wanted to recite something in Salat. When he finished that Sūra, he would recite another one with it. He followed the same procedure in each Rak’a. His companions discussed this with him and said, ”You recite this Sūra and do not consider it sufficient and then you recite another. So would you recite it alone or leave it and recite some other.” He said, “I will never leave it and if you want me to be your Imam on this condition then it is all right; otherwise I will leave you.” They knew that he was the best amongst them and they did not like someone else to lead them in Salat. When the Messenger (ﷺ) went to them as usual, they informed him about it. The Messenger (ﷺ) addressed him and said, “O so-and-so, what forbids you from doing what your companions ask you to do ? Why do you read this Sūra particularly in every Rak’a ?” He replied, “I love this

Sūra.” *The Messenger* (ﷺ) said, “Your love for this Sūra will make you enter Paradise.” *Sahih Bukhari* no. 774b

حَدَّثَنَا أَحْمَدُ بْنُ صَالِحٍ، حَدَّثَنَا ابْنُ وَهْبٍ، حَدَّثَنَا عَمْرُو، عَنْ ابْنِ أَبِي هِلَالٍ، أَنَّ أَبَا الرَّجَالِ، مُحَمَّدَ بْنَ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ حَدَّثَهُ عَنْ أُمِّهِ، عَمْرَةَ بِنْتِ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ وَكَانَتْ فِي حَجْرٍ عَائِشَةَ زَوْجِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَنْ عَائِشَةَ أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ بَعَثَ رَجُلًا عَلَى سَرِيَّةٍ، وَكَانَ يَقْرَأُ لِأَصْحَابِهِ فِي صَلَاتِهِ فَيَخْتِمُ بِ - {قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ} فَلَمَّا رَجَعُوا ذَكَرُوا ذَلِكَ لِلنَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالَ “ سَلُّوهُ لَأَيِّ شَيْءٍ يَصْنَعُ ذَلِكَ ” . فَسَأَلُوهُ فَقَالَ لِأَنَّهَا صِفَةُ الرَّحْمَنِ، وَأَنَا أُحِبُّ أَنْ أَقْرَأَ بِهَا. فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ “ أَخْبِرُوهُ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّهُ ” .

Narrated `Aisha: “The Messenger (ﷺ) *sent (an army unit) under the command of a man who used to lead his companions in the prayers and would finish his recitation with (the Sura 112): ‘Say (O Muḥammad): “He is Allah, the One.”’ (112.1) When they returned (from the battle), they mentioned that to the Messenger. He said (to them), “Ask him why he does so.” They asked him and he said, “I do so because it mentions the qualities of the Beneficent and I love to recite it (in my prayer).” The Messenger; said (to them), “Tell him that Allah loves him.” Sahih Bukhari* no. 7375

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ بْنُ حُمَيْدٍ، حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ إِسْمَاعِيلَ بْنِ أَبِي فُدَيْكٍ،
 حَدَّثَنَا ابْنُ أَبِي ذُنْبٍ، عَنْ أَبِي سَعِيدٍ الْبَرَّادِ، عَنْ مُعَاذِ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ
 بْنِ حُبَيْبٍ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، قَالَ خَرَجْنَا فِي لَيْلَةٍ مَطِيرَةٍ وَظُلْمَةٍ شَدِيدَةٍ
 نَطْلُبُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يُصَلِّي لَنَا - قَالَ -
 فَأَدْرَكْتُهُ فَقَالَ " قُلْ " . فَلَمْ أَقُلْ شَيْئًا ثُمَّ قَالَ " قُلْ " . فَلَمْ أَقُلْ
 شَيْئًا . قَالَ " قُلْ " . قُلْتُ مَا أَقُولُ قَالَ " قُلْ : (هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ)
 وَالْمُعَوِّذَتَيْنِ حِينَ تُمْسِي وَتُصْبِحُ ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ تَكْفِيكَ مِنْ كُلِّ
 شَيْءٍ " .

Muadh bin Abdulla bin Khubaiib, narrated from his father, who said:
 " "We went out on a rainy and extremely dark night, looking for the
 Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) so that he could lead us in Salat." He said: "So I
 met him and he (ﷺ) said: 'Speak' but I did not say anything. Then he
 (ﷺ) said: 'Speak.' But I did not say anything. He (ﷺ) said: 'Speak.' So I
 said: 'What should I say?' He (ﷺ) said: 'Say: "Say: He is Allah, the One"
 and Al-Mu'awwidhatain, when you reach evening, and when you reach
 morning, three times, they will suffice you against everything.' " Tirmidhi
 no. 3575

As for the Sūra being a third of the Qur'ān, the 'Ulamā explain that
 the message of the Qur'ān revolves around three great themes: the oneness
 and attributes of Allāh; His commands and laws; and the accounts of His
 prophets and creation, with the promise and warning of the *ākhirā*. This
 Sūra contains the first theme whole and pure — and so, in meaning, it

weighs a third of the Book. From this the *fuqahā* have drawn the practice, when sending reward to the deceased, of reciting it three times.

At a glance

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ	<i>In the name of Allah, the All Merciful, the Ever Merciful.</i>
قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ (١)	<i>Say [O Muḥammad] He is Allāh, the unique one</i>
اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ (٢)	<i>Allāh is the independent [He needs no one and nothing, but everyone and everything needs Him]</i>
لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ (٣)	<i>Neither does he give birth [He has no children], nor was he given birth [He is nobody's child]</i>
وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ (٤)	<i>And there is none [even] comparable to him [neither in His Being nor in His qualities]</i>

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the All Merciful, the Ever Merciful.

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ (١)

Say [O Muḥammad] He is Allāh, the unique one

Why *aḥad* and not *wāḥid*, when both are translated “one”? In Arabic, *wāḥid* is the one of counting — one as opposed to two or three — and a thing may be *wāḥid* while being built of many parts: a single chair is one object, yet it is composed of wood, fabric and nails, and it depends on every one of them. *Aḥad* cuts deeper. *Laysa wāḥidun fi'l-masjid* denies one person but allows two; *laysa aḥadun* denies that there is anyone at all. Applied to Allāh ﷻ, *aḥad* declares Him one in a way that excludes all

composition, all plurality and all resemblance: He is not assembled from elements, has no partner, and nothing is like Him. It is the direct answer to “what is He made of?” — He is not made. And it is a distinction with living relevance: others may affirm that God is wāḥid, one rather than three, while still imagining a composed, begetting deity; only aḥad — together with al-ṣamad, the two names never shared with any creature — expresses the tawḥīd this Sūra came to teach.

(٢) اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ

Allāh is the independent [He needs no one and nothing, but everyone and everything needs Him]

Al-Ṣamad is the being to whom the whole of creation turns in need, while He needs no one — the verb ṣamada means precisely to direct oneself to someone for one’s needs. Everything built of parts depends on its parts: man is made of flesh and bone and cannot exist without them; had Allāh been made of gold and silver, He would have depended on gold and silver. Instead, gold and silver — and flesh, and bone, and every atom — depend on Him; until He creates a thing, it cannot be. He is aḥad because He is ṣamad: uncomposed because utterly self-sufficient, while all else stands in need.

And here is the secret of the name Sūrat al-Najāt, the Sūra of rescue. It rescues a person from despair and sadness, because it settles once and for all where problems are taken. Take your case to the authorities and you may or may not be answered; take your illness to the physician and you may or may not be cured; but there is One door at which no one has ever stood and been ignored — al-Ṣamad, the One to whom all turn and who fails none. And it is najāt in the fullest sense: rescue from the Fire itself.

لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ (٣)

Neither does he give birth [He has no children], nor was he given birth [He is nobody's child]

This is the reply to those who demanded His lineage. He begets not — so every claim of a “son of God”, whether the angels the Arabs called His daughters or the son the Christians ascribe, falls; and He was not begotten — so He has no origin, no point before which He was not. Both directions of dependence are severed: nothing came from Him by generation, and He came from nothing.

وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ ۚ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ (٤)

And there is none [even] comparable to him [neither in His Being nor in His qualities]

The final verse seals every gap the previous three might have left. Find any human being and you can find another resembling him; for Allāh there is no mithl, no counterpart, no equivalent in Being or in attributes. In this exceptional way, the Sūra affirms for Allāh every perfection and denies of Him every defect — and this is why it is called al-Ikhlāṣ: the Sūra of pure, unmixed devotion, in which worship is emptied of every partner and directed to Allāh alone. Whoever grasps its four verses has grasped what the entire mission of the prophets came to establish; small wonder that the Companion who could not put it down was told that Allāh Himself loved him.

— End of Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ —

سُورَةُ الْفَلَقِ

113 – The Break of Dawn

This is a Madanī Sūra, consisting of 5 āyāt

Link with the previous Sūra

Allah mentioned in the previous sūra that He is absolutely independent from any of his creation, yet they all are dependent on him. Thus, when humankind goes through any difficulty, they should seek assistance from the One who is independent and hold the solutions to all their difficulties.

This sūra is also closely connected very closely to Sūrat al-Nās.

The two Sūrahs were revealed together, and together they are known as *al-mu'awwidhatayn* — the two Sūrahs of seeking refuge. Notice the remarkable sequence within this one: the petition moves from the widest circle to the narrowest. First, the evil of everything He created — all of creation, the broadest possible scope; then narrower, the evil that stirs in the night; then a particular class, those who blow upon knots; then a single figure, anyone who envies. It is the method of a master physician: cover everything, then name the dangers one by one.

And the whole Sūra is painted in a single palette: darkness. The *ghāsiq* is the literal dark of night; sorcery is worked in darkness and is itself the darkness of *shirk*; and *ḥasad* is the darkest of emotions. Against all of it, Allāh ﷻ opens the Sūra with the one word that defeats darkness — *al-falaq*, the dawn that tears the night open. You are calling upon the Lord who splits the darkness with light to split every one of these darknesses from you.

Background of revelation

Once to harm Rasūlullāh, a person tied knots in some of his hair and placed them with some leaves and other articles beneath a rock in a well so

that Rasūlullāh ﷺ could be affected by the evil of black magic. This caused Rasūlullāh ﷺ to forget doing certain things. However, Allāh exposed the plot to Rasūlullāh and then revealed Sūra Falaq and Sūra Naas. To cure him, Allāh commanded him to have the things beneath the rock removed and to untie each knot while reciting a verse of Sūra Falaq and Sūra Naas.)

The narrations give the account in detail. After Ḥudaybiyya, the Makkans were no longer the chief threat, and the plotting passed to others. The Jews of Khaybar approached Labīd ibn al-Aʿṣam — of Banū Zurayq, outwardly attached to the Muslims but at best a hypocrite, and the most skilled sorcerer they knew — saying: we have tried everything against Muḥammad, and our magic is not strong enough; you must do something to tear him apart. In some narrations his daughters assisted him. A servant boy was paid to procure hairs of the Messenger ﷺ from his comb; upon these, knots were tied and blown upon, and the device was hidden beneath a rock at the bottom of the well of Dhū Arwān.

Its effect upon the Messenger ﷺ was physical and mental pressure: agitation, disturbed sleep, and a clouding of memory in everyday matters — he would think he had done a thing he had not, or had not done a thing he had. ʿĀʾisha رضي الله عنها relates that he said: *“I asked Allāh, and He has answered me.” In his dream two angels came in the form of men; one asked, what ails him? The other answered: a spell has been cast upon him. Who cast it? Labīd ibn al-Aʿṣam. With what? Hairs from his comb, knotted, beneath a rock in the well of Dhū Arwān. The Messenger ﷺ sent for the device — going himself to the well — and as each verse of the muʿawwidhatayn was recited, a knot came undone; the narrations note that the knots numbered as the verses of the two Sūrahs number, eleven. When the last was released he said it was as though he had been tied and was now unbound.*

Two clarifications guard this account. First, no sorcery of man, jinn or Shayṭān can ever touch the message of a prophet — Allāh ﷻ has protected revelation absolutely; what the spell affected was the Messenger’s ﷺ bodily comfort and everyday memory, as an illness might, and prophets, being

human, may fall ill without the least injury to their prophethood. Second, there is a mercy in the incident itself: since the Messenger ﷺ was sent to guide humanity until the Last Day, Allāh caused every human condition to pass over him so that the Sunnah response to each would be established. From this incident, the Ummah learnt for all time what to recite against magic and the evil eye — and, indeed, whether afflicted or not.

A short introduction

The Sūra reminds us that evil is lurching everywhere and things can become harmful. One should always be conscious, do right things and seek Allah’s protection.

Virtues of the Sūra

حَدَّثَنَا قُتَيْبَةُ بْنُ سَعِيدٍ، حَدَّثَنَا الْمُفَضَّلُ، عَنْ عُقَيْلٍ، عَنْ ابْنِ شِهَابٍ، عَنْ عُرْوَةَ، عَنْ عَائِشَةَ، أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ كَانَ إِذَا أَوَى إِلَى فِرَاشِهِ كُلَّ لَيْلَةٍ جَمَعَ كَفَّيْهِ ثُمَّ نَفَثَ فِيهِمَا فَقَرَأَ فِيهِمَا {قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ} و{قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ الْفَلَقِ} و{قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ النَّاسِ} ثُمَّ يَمْسَحُ بِهِمَا مَا اسْتَطَاعَ مِنْ جَسَدِهِ يَبْدَأُ بِهِمَا عَلَى رَأْسِهِ وَوَجْهِهِ وَمَا أَقْبَلَ مِنْ جَسَدِهِ يَفْعَلُ ذَلِكَ ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ.

Narrated 'Aisha: Whenever the Messenger (ﷺ) went to bed every night, he used to cup his hands together and blow over it after reciting Sūrat Al-Ikhlās, Sūrat Al-Falaq and Sūrat An-Nas, and then rub his hands over whatever parts of his body he was able to rub, starting with his head, face and front of his body. He used to do that three times.” Sahih Bukhari no.

حَدَّثَنَا أَحْمَدُ بْنُ صَالِحٍ، حَدَّثَنَا ابْنُ وَهْبٍ، حَدَّثَنَا عَمْرُو، عَنِ ابْنِ أَبِي هِلَالٍ، أَنَّ أَبَا الرَّجَالِ، مُحَمَّدَ بْنَ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ حَدَّثَهُ عَنْ أُمِّهِ، عَمْرَةَ بِنْتِ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ وَكَانَتْ فِي حَجَرِ عَائِشَةَ زَوْجِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَنْ عَائِشَةَ أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ بَعَثَ رَجُلًا عَلَى سَرِيَّةٍ، وَكَانَ يَقْرَأُ لِأَصْحَابِهِ فِي صَلَاتِهِ فَيَخْتِمُ بِ - {قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ} فَلَمَّا رَجَعُوا ذَكَرُوا ذَلِكَ لِلنَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالَ " سَلُّوهُ لَأَيِّ شَيْءٍ يَصْنَعُ ذَلِكَ ". فَسَأَلُوهُ فَقَالَ لِأَنَّهَا صِفَةُ الرَّحْمَنِ، وَأَنَا أَحِبُّ أَنْ أَقْرَأَ بِهَا. فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " أَخْبِرُوهُ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّهُ " .

Muadh bin Abdulla bin Khubaib, narrated from his father, who said:
 " "We went out on a rainy and extremely dark night, looking for the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) so that he could lead us in Salat." He said: "So I met him and he (ﷺ) said: 'Speak' but I did not say anything. Then he (ﷺ) said: 'Speak.' But I did not say anything. He (ﷺ) said: 'Speak.' So I said: 'What should I say?' He (ﷺ) said: 'Say: "Say: He is Allah, the One" and Al-Mu`awwidhatain, when you reach evening, and when you reach morning, three times, they will suffice you against everything.'" Tirmidhi no. 3575

وَحَدَّثَنِي مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ نُمَيْرٍ، حَدَّثَنَا أَبِي، حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ، عَنْ قَيْسٍ، عَنْ عُقْبَةَ بْنِ عَامِرٍ، قَالَ قَالَ لِي رَسُولُ

الله صلى الله عليه وسلم “ أَنْزَلَ - أَوْ أَنْزَلْتُ - عَلَى آيَاتٍ لَمْ يُرَ مِنْهُنَّ قَطُّ الْمُعَوِّذَتَيْنِ ” .

'Uqba b. 'Amir reported: The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said to me: There have been sent down to me verses the like of which had never been seen before. They are the Mu'awwadhatain.” Sahih Muslim 814 b

At a glance

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the All Merciful, the Ever Merciful.

قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ الْفَلَقِ (١)

Say [O Muḥammad] I take refuge in the Master of the day-break

مِنْ شَرِّ مَا خَلَقَ (٢)

From the evil of what He has created

وَمِنْ شَرِّ غَاسِقٍ إِذَا وَقَبَ (٣)

And from the evil of the dark night [and all types of darkness] when it penetrates [arrives]

وَمِنْ شَرِّ النَّفَّاثَاتِ فِي الْعُقَدِ (٤)

and from the evil of those [witches] who blow on knots [perform black magic]

وَمِنْ شَرِّ حَاسِدٍ إِذَا حَسَدَ (٥)

and from the evil of the jealous person when he is jealous

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the All Merciful, the Ever Merciful.

قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ الْفَلَقِ (١)

Say [O Muḥammad] I take refuge in the Master of the day-break

Falaq is from a root meaning to split a thing open so that something emerges from within it. It is used for the dawn because the first rays tear through the fabric of the night and the morning breaks out — and the choice of this name here is the Sūra’s master-stroke: against a catalogue of darkesses, refuge is sought with the Lord of the light that no darkness has ever withstood. There is a further subtlety: the daybreak arrives every single morning without fail; His deliverance is as certain as His dawn.

مِنْ شَرِّ مَا خَلَقَ (٢)

From the evil of what He has created

Min sharri mā khalaq casts the widest net in the Qur’ān: the evil of whatever He created. Learn from this that nothing in creation is free of a capacity for harm — the sun that ripens also burns; the water that gives life also drowns; man and jinn carry evils of their own. Only the Creator is without flaw. And since whatever difficulty reaches us does so by His decree, the refuge is sought precisely with Him: recite this, and either Allāh ﷻ will remove the difficulty, or He will make it a source of blessing and purification — there is no third outcome for the believer who turns to Him.

وَمِنْ شَرِّ غَاسِقٍ إِذَا وَقَبَ (٣)

And from the evil of the dark night [and all types of darkness] when it penetrates [arrives]

Ghāsiq is the early night, when the last blue has drained from the sky; waqab is its deepening — darkness so complete that things vanish within it, and what hides in it cannot be seen. Why single out the night? Because it is theatre of harm: predators move in it, crimes are committed under its cover, and those who work black magic choose it deliberately, for it is in darkness that they seek the help of the shayāṭīn. But the ‘Ulamā remind us

that darkness is also a metaphor read easily: every sin, every act of disobedience, is a darkness — and from all of it we ask the Lord of the daybreak for shelter.

وَمِنْ شَرِّ النَّفَّاثَاتِ فِي الْعُقَدِ (٤)

and from the evil of those [witches] who blow on knots [perform black magic]

Al-naffāthāt are those who blow upon knots: the practitioners of sorcery who take a thread, a rope — or, as in the incident of this Sūra, strands of hair — tie their knots, recite their formulas and blow upon them. The feminine plural points to the women who commonly practised it (Labīd's own daughters are said to have assisted him), though it extends to the covens and groups who work such arts together. It is a Shayṭānī craft, taught by devils to those who trade their *ākḥira* for it — and this verse is its appointed antidote.

وَمِنْ شَرِّ حَاسِدٍ إِذَا حَسَدَ (٥)

and from the evil of the jealous person when he is jealous

The Sūra closes by naming the root of it all. Why does anyone commission sorcery, plot in the dark, seek another's destruction? Ḥasad — the inability to bear another's blessing. It was envy of the Messenger ﷺ that moved the plotters of Khaybar, and envy strikes first and hardest within families and among neighbours, wherever blessings are close enough to see. Note the precision of *idhā ḥasad* — when he envies, that is, when the feeling is acted upon: the passing sting that a person fights down and does not obey is not the evil here; the evil is envy given rein. From the one who has released it, only Allāh ﷻ can shield us.

Concluding remarks

This Sūra was a remedy revealed for the Messenger — ﷺ and through him, a remedy for his Ummah until the end of time. He taught its recitation morning and evening, after every prayer, and at night: reciting the *mu‘awwidhatayn* and Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ, blowing upon the hands and passing them over the body — a practice he maintained his whole life, and which ‘Ā’isha رضى الله عنها performed for him in his final illness. Whoever holds to it has taken shelter, each day and each night, with the Lord of the daybreak.

— *End of Sūrat al-Falaq* —

سُورَةُ النَّاسِ

114 – Mankind

This is a Madanī Sūra and contains 6 āyāt

Link with the previous Sūra

Allah mentioned in the Sūrat al-Ikhlās that He is absolutely independent from any of his creation, yet they all are dependent on him. Thus, when humankind goes through any difficulty, they should seek assistance from the One who is independent and hold the solutions to all their difficulties.

The final sūra is thus also connected to the very first sūra of the Qur’ān: Al-Fātiḥa, in which mankind makes a declaration that ‘*You alone do we worship and from You alone do we seek help*’, which is being manifested in this sūra as we take refuge in Allah’s mercy from Shayṭān’s whispers.

Its bond with al-Falaq is closer still. There, refuge was sought from harms outside ourselves — the night, the sorcerer, the envier: evils that strike the body and the *dunyā*, and for whose arrival we bear no blame. Here, refuge is sought from the evil that makes its way inside: the whisper that reaches the heart, where the target is not our comfort but our *dīn*, our *īmān* and our *ākhirā*. And see how the Qur’ān weighs the two: in al-Falaq, one attribute of Allāh is invoked — the Lord of the daybreak — against three named evils; here, three attributes are invoked against a single evil. We are taught to ask hardest for what matters most: the *dunyā* can be lost and restored; the loss of *īmān* is the only true ruin. There is a thread from the last word of al-Falaq too: refuge was sought from the *ḥāsīd* — and of all creation, the arch-envier is Iblīs himself, whose envy of Ādam عليه السلام began the whole war. Al-Falaq ends with the envier; al-Nās names him.

A short introduction

This Sūra makes reference to all three levels of *Tawhīd* contained in Sūrahs al-An‘ām, Hadeed and Hashar.

“The Rabb of mankind” refers to the first level i.e. the fact that Allāh is man’s Nourisher and Nurturer.

“The King of mankind” refers to the second level i.e. He is the Only Sovereign in control of everything.

“The Ilāh of mankind” refers to the third level i.e. Only He is worthy of worship and Only He should be turned to in prayer in times of difficulty.

The Sūra also tells us that Satan is always against the human beings and he puts wrong suggestions in their minds. We should seek Allah’s protection from Satan and his whisperings. This is a very appropriate ending for the Book of Allah. The Book of God is to provide protection from all evil and success under the guidance of Allah.

Why the ascending ladder of three names? Rabb, on its own, can be said of others — the Arabs spoke of rabb al-dār, the master of the house, and rabb al-māl, the owner of wealth. So the Sūra rises: not every master is a king — Maliki’n-nās; and not every king is worthy of worship — Ilāhi’n-nās. Only Allāh ﷻ unites all three: the Nurturer who raises His servants, the Sovereign who commands them, the God they worship. And each of the three is itself a ground of protection — a master protects his dependants, a king protects his subjects, and that the Worshipped protects His worshipper is the surest of all. Seeking refuge by all three together is therefore the most complete petition a tongue can make.

Rabb carries a special intimacy besides: it is the first name by which Allāh ﷻ introduced Himself to His Messenger — *iqra’ bi’smi rabbik* — and to Mūsā عليه السلام at the sacred valley: *innī ana rabbuk*. And notice that the Sūra says al-nās three times where a pronoun would have sufficed. Imām al-Rāzī observes the honour in it: at the very moment the human being is described as prey to the whisperer, Allāh sets His own name beside ours, three times over — a Lord declaring how ready He is to shelter those

who ask. The word *nās* itself, the scholars note, is linked to *nisyān*, forgetfulness — for it is in the moment of forgetting that the whisperer finds his opening, and some connect it to the forgotten covenant of *alastu bi-rabbikum*.

Virtues of the Sūra

حَدَّثَنَا قُتَيْبَةُ بْنُ سَعِيدٍ، حَدَّثَنَا الْمُفَضَّلُ، عَنْ عُفَيْلٍ، عَنْ ابْنِ شِهَابٍ، عَنْ عُرْوَةَ، عَنْ عَائِشَةَ، أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ كَانَ إِذَا أَوَى إِلَى فِرَاشِهِ كُلَّ لَيْلَةٍ جَمَعَ كَفَّيْهِ ثُمَّ نَفَثَ فِيهِمَا فَقَرَأَ فِيهِمَا {قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ} وَ{قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ الْفَلَقِ} وَ{قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ النَّاسِ} ثُمَّ يَمْسَحُ بِهِمَا مَا اسْتَطَاعَ مِنْ جَسَدِهِ يَبْدَأُ بِهِمَا عَلَى رَأْسِهِ وَوَجْهِهِ وَمَا أَقْبَلَ مِنْ جَسَدِهِ يَفْعَلُ ذَلِكَ ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ.

Narrated 'Aisha: Whenever the Messenger (ﷺ) went to bed every night, he used to cup his hands together and blow over it after reciting Sūrat Al-Ikhlās, Sūrat Al-Falaq and Sūrat An-Nas, and then rub his hands over whatever parts of his body he was able to rub, starting with his head, face and front of his body. He used to do that three times." Sahih Bukhari no.

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حَدَّثَنَا أَحْمَدُ بْنُ صَالِحٍ، حَدَّثَنَا ابْنُ وَهْبٍ، حَدَّثَنَا عَمْرُو، عَنْ ابْنِ أَبِي هِلَالٍ، أَنَّ أَبَا الرَّجَالِ، مُحَمَّدَ بْنَ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ حَدَّثَهُ عَنْ أُمِّهِ، عَمْرَةَ بِنْتِ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ وَكَانَتْ فِي حَجَرِ عَائِشَةَ زَوْجِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَنْ عَائِشَةَ أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ

وسلم بَعَثَ رَجُلًا عَلَى سَرِيَّةٍ، وَكَانَ يَقْرَأُ لِأَصْحَابِهِ فِي صَلَاتِهِ
 فَيَخْتِمُ بِ - {قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ} فَلَمَّا رَجَعُوا ذَكَرُوا ذَلِكَ لِلنَّبِيِّ
 صلى الله عليه وسلم فَقَالَ “ سَلُّوهُ لِأَيِّ شَيْءٍ يَصْنَعُ ذَلِكَ ” .
 فَسَأَلُوهُ فَقَالَ لِأَنَّهَا صِفَةُ الرَّحْمَنِ، وَأَنَا أُحِبُّ أَنْ أَفْرَأَ بِهَا. فَقَالَ
 النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم “ أَخْبِرُوهُ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّهُ ” .

*Muadh bin Abdulla bin Khubaib, narrated from his father, who said:
 ” “We went out on a rainy and extremely dark night, looking for the
 Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) so that he could lead us in Salat.” He said: “So I
 met him and he (ﷺ) said: ‘Speak’ but I did not say anything. Then he
 (ﷺ) said: ‘Speak.’ But I did not say anything. He (ﷺ) said: ‘Speak.’ So I
 said: ‘What should I say?’ He (ﷺ) said: ‘Say: “Say: He is Allah, the One”
 and Al-Mu’awwidhatain, when you reach evening, and when you reach
 morning, three times, they will suffice you against everything.” Tirmidhi
 no. 3575*

وَحَدَّثَنِي مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ نُمَيْرٍ، حَدَّثَنَا أَبِي، حَدَّثَنَا
 إِسْمَاعِيلُ، عَنْ قَيْسٍ، عَنْ عُقْبَةَ بْنِ عَامِرٍ، قَالَ قَالَ لِي رَسُولُ
 اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم “ أَنْزَلَ - أَوْ أُنْزِلَتْ - عَلَى آيَاتٍ لَمْ يُرَ
 مِثْلُهُنَّ قَطُّ الْمَعْوَدَتَيْنِ ” .

*’Uqba b. ’Amir reported: The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said to me:
 There have been sent down to me verses the like of which had never been seen
 before. They are the Mu’awwadhatain.” Sahih Muslim 814 b*

At a glance

- بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ *In the name of Allah, the All Merciful, the Ever Merciful.*
- قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ النَّاسِ (١) *Say [O Muḥammad] I take refuge in the Master of the people*
- مَلِكِ النَّاسِ (٢) *The King of the people*
- إِلَهِ النَّاسِ (٣) *The Deity [God] of the people*
- مِنْ شَرِّ الْوَسْوَاسِ الْخَنَّاسِ (٤) *From the evil of the whispering devil who hides [immediately after whispering evil into man's heart]*
- الَّذِي يُوسْوِسُ فِي صُدُورِ النَّاسِ (٥) *Who whispers [evil thoughts] in the hearts of the people*
- مِنْ الْجِنَّةِ وَالنَّاسِ (٦) *Whether [the whispers are] from jinn-kind and humankind*

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the All Merciful, the Ever Merciful.

قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ النَّاسِ (١)

Say [O Muḥammad] I take refuge in the Master of the people

مَلِكِ النَّاسِ (٢)

The King of the people

إِلَهِ النَّاسِ (٣)

The Deity [God] of the people

مِنْ شَرِّ الْوَسْوَاسِ الْخَنَّاسِ (٤)

*From the evil of the whispering devil who hides [immediately after
whispering evil into man's heart]*

Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنهما describes the *waswās* stationed upon the very heart of the son of Ādam: the moment the person grows heedless and forgets, he whispers; the moment the person remembers Allāh, he shrinks back. That is the meaning of *al-khannās* — not one who retreats once, but one who retreats again and again, because he attacks again and again. He takes no holidays and knows no fatigue; you may take a break from the remembrance of Allāh, but he takes no break from you.

Yet the ‘Ulamā point out the mercy hidden inside the very name. Allāh *ﷻ* did not call him the conqueror or the overwheeler; He called him the one who perpetually retreats. Built into the description is the cure and the reassurance: he will certainly whisper — but the instant you remember Me, he flees. “Indeed the plot of *Shayṭān* is ever weak.” And it is not the way of the All-Wise to create a poison without creating its antidote: the poison is the whisper, and the antidote is *dhikr*, refuge, and this very Sūra.

الَّذِي يُوسَّوْسُ فِي صُدُورِ النَّاسِ (٥)

Who whispers [evil thoughts] in the hearts of the people

The whispering comes in kinds, and each has its treatment. The first is the whisper towards sin — look at this, take a little of that, it is only small. Its cure is the remembrance we have described. The second is graver in appearance and lighter in reality: the whisper against *īmān* itself — dark questions about Allāh, doubts a believer is ashamed even to voice. A Companion came to the Messenger ﷺ in distress: thoughts occur within me that I would rather burn to ashes than speak aloud. And the answer came: *dhāka ṣarīḥu’l-īmān* — that is the very essence of faith. The thief, as the *mashāyikh* put it, does not break into an empty house; he comes where the valuables are. *Shayṭān* has no need to unsettle the faith of one who has none; his sieges are laid against treasure. When Ḥājī Imdādullāh was

approached with the same complaint, he gave the same comfort: it is a sign of your belief — pay the thoughts no attention, and they starve.

The third kind is *waswasa* in the form of obsessive doubt — the conviction, against all evidence, that one's wuḍū is broken, the washing incomplete, the prayer invalid, repeated until an hour is spent at the tap. The whisperer's design here is patient: let the man exhaust himself in repetition until one day he says "this is too hard" and abandons ṣalāh altogether. Our 'Ulamā prescribe the counter-attack: defy the doubt deliberately — wash the prescribed three times, then refuse to wash again however loud the doubt shouts — and he will despair of you; and recite this Sūra in abundance. Left untreated, this illness spreads beyond worship into suspicion of spouses and ruin of households; treated with defiance and refuge, it withers.

مِنَ الْجِنَّةِ وَالنَّاسِ (٦)

Whether [the whispers are] from jinn-kind and humankind

The final verse widens the enemy's ranks: the whisper comes from the jinn — and from people. The Messenger ﷺ told his Companions that there is no one without a companion from the jinn assigned to him. "Even you, O Messenger of Allāh?" they asked. "Even me," he replied, "except that Allāh has aided me against him, so he only commands me to good." And he taught how near the enemy operates: when two Anṣārī men saw him at night walking his wife home from the mosque, he stopped them and said, "This is Ṣafiyya bint Huyayy" — explaining that Shayṭān flows through man as blood flows through his veins, and he feared a whisper being cast into their hearts. If such precaution was taught concerning the best of creation, what of us?

As for the human devils, Iblis has never worked alone: he recruits. The whisper can arrive in the voice of a close friend, in a suggestion across a table — the speaker, at that moment, an unwitting courier. And in our age he scarcely needs couriers: the whisper is broadcast, packaged and re-played

through the very screens we carry in our pockets. The Sūra's final word is therefore its most practical: guard the heart's gates on both fronts — the unseen whisperer within, and the seen ones without.

Concluding remarks

How fitting that the Book which opened by teaching us to ask for guidance — *ihdina'ş-şirāṭa'l-mustaqīm* — should close by teaching us to guard it. The Qur'ān begins with the prayer for the straight path and ends with refuge from the whisperer who would coax us off it; between the two lies everything a servant needs. And so the recitation ends as the believer's day should end: not in fear of the enemy, but folded into the protection of the Rabb, the Malik and the Ilāh of mankind.

— *End of Sūrat al-Nās* —

Addendum: The Journey of Ṣalāh

A companion collection on the prayer — its preparation, its postures and its completion.

Part One — Before the Prayer

Importance of Ṣalāh

The first thing we will be questioned about

إِنَّ أَوَّلَ مَا يُحَاسَبُ بِهِ الْعَبْدُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ مِنْ عَمَلِهِ صَلَاتُهُ، فَإِنْ صَلَحَتْ فَقَدْ أَفْلَحَ وَأَنْجَحَ، وَإِنْ فَسَدَتْ فَقَدْ خَابَ وَخَسِرَ

‘The first action for which a servant of Allah will be held accountable on the Day of Resurrection will be his prayers. If they are in order, he will have prospered and succeeded. If they are lacking, he will have failed and lost.’

Abu Hurayra · رضي الله عنه · Sunan al-Tirmidhi 413

Among the final words of the Prophet ﷺ

كَانَ آخِرُ كَلَامِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: الصَّلَاةُ
الصَّلَاةُ، اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ فِيمَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ

‘The final words of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ were: ‘Safeguard the prayer, safeguard the prayer! Fear Allah regarding those under your custodianship.’

‘Alī · رضي الله عنه · Sunan Abī Dāwūd 5156

The most beloved of all actions

سُئِلَ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ: أَيُّ الْعَمَلِ أَفْضَلُ؟ قَالَ: الصَّلَاةُ لَوْفَتْهَا، وَبِرُّ
الْوَالِدَيْنِ، ثُمَّ الْجِهَادُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ

Someone asked: "Which deed is the most beloved to Allah?" The Messenger of Allah ﷺ replied: "Performing the prayer at its prescribed, fixed time." "What next?" He replied: "Dutifulness to the parents." "What next?" He replied: "Striving in the cause of Allah."

Ibn Mas'ūd · رضي الله عنه · Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī

The path of nearness to Allah

The farā'id are the quickest path to Allah.

وَمَا تَقَرَّبَ إِلَيَّ عَبْدِي بِشَيْءٍ أَحَبَّ إِلَيَّ مِمَّا افْتَرَضْتُ عَلَيْهِ، وَمَا
يَزَالُ عَبْدِي يَتَقَرَّبُ إِلَيَّ بِالنَّوَافِلِ حَتَّى أُحِبَّهُ

Allah ﷻ said: "My servant does not draw near to Me with anything more beloved to Me than the religious duties I have obligated upon him. And My servant continues to draw near to Me through voluntary acts until I love him..."

Ḥadīth Qudsī · Abu Hurayra · رضي الله عنه · Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 6502

A river that washes away sin

The example of the five daily prayers is like a deep flowing river.

أَرَأَيْتُمْ لَوْ أَنَّ نَهْرًا بِبَابِ أَحَدِكُمْ، يَغْتَسِلُ فِيهِ كُلَّ يَوْمٍ خَمْسًا، مَا
تَقُولُ ذَلِكَ يُبْقِي مِنْ دَرَنِهِ؟ قَالُوا: لَا يُبْقِي مِنْ دَرَنِهِ شَيْئًا. قَالَ:
فَذَلِكَ مِثْلُ الصَّلَوَاتِ الْخَمْسِ، يَمْحُو اللَّهُ بِهَا الْخَطَايَا

The Prophet ﷺ said: "If there was a river at the door of any of you and he took a bath in it five times a day, would any dirt remain on him?" They said: "Not a trace of dirt would be left." He said: "That is the example of the five prayers, by which Allah blots out sins."

Abu Hurayra رضى الله عنه · Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 528

The plea of the people of Hell

When asked what brought them to the Fire, their first answer is Ṣalāh.

مَا سَلَكَكُمْ فِي سَقَرَ ○ قَالُوا لَمْ نَكُ مِنَ الْمُصَلِّينَ

‘What has put you into Saqar (Hell)?’ They will say, ‘We were not of those who prayed.’

Sūra al-Muddaththir 74:42–43

A means of gratitude and asking for more

Ṣalāh is how we show our gratitude to Allah for every favour He has poured upon us — and it is, at the same time, the way we ask Him for even greater favours. Every standing is a thank-you; every prostration is a request. The same act that acknowledges the gift becomes the door to receiving more.

Never abandoned — in any circumstance

Ṣalāh is never left. In sickness — we sit, or lie down. While travelling — we shorten it. Even in the heat of war — there is a prayer of fear prescribed for it. The form bends; the practice does not break. Why? Because Ṣalāh is not an extra. It is a need. We need Ṣalāh more than it needs us.

Practical tips for punctuality

- Imagine it's your last day. How would you stand, how would you bow, if you knew this was your final prayer? Try to bring that urgency every time.
- Treat it as a gift from the King. Allah is allowing you — five times a day — to access His treasures. Receive it as a privilege, not a duty to clear off your list.
- Make it the priority. Treat Ṣalāh like an important meeting that cannot be rescheduled. Build your day around it; do not squeeze it into the gaps.
- Don't make it depend on your feelings. Pray when you feel like it, and pray when you don't. Especially when you don't.
- Look up — find role models. Spend time around those who are punctual. Their consistency rubs off.
- Track your times. Use a prayer-times app, a printed timetable, phone reminders, or athan alerts — whatever keeps the timings in front of you.
- Have your space ready. Keep a prayer mat in your room, your car, your bag, your office drawer. Friction removed is ṣalāh secured.
- Fix your prayer spots. Know in advance where you'll pray at work, at uni, on the road, when shopping. Don't leave it to chance.

Khushū' — Presence of Heart

What is Khushū'?

The basic meaning

Khushū' is the softness of the heart — its being gentle, still, submissive, needy, and yearning. It is the inner state, and the limbs follow.

As Imām al-Ṭabarī described it

‘When a servant humbles himself to Allah in it, the humility of his submission is seen in the stillness of his limbs, his focus on his obligation, and his leaving what he has been commanded to leave within it.’

Examples — what khushū' looked like

The Prophet — ﷺ his gaze lowered

كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ إِذَا صَلَّى طَاطَأَ رَأْسَهُ وَرَمَى بَصَرَهُ نَحْوَ
الْأَرْضِ

‘When the Messenger of Allah ﷺ prayed, he would lower his head and cast his gaze toward the ground.’

Narrated by al-Hākim

The Prophet — ﷺ a whole night on one verse

قَامَ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ بِآيَةٍ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ لَيْلَةً

رضي الله عنها reported: "The Prophet ﷺ stood the whole night in prayer reciting only a single verse from the Qur'ān."

Sunan al-Nasā'i

The Prophet — ﷺ weeping in prayer

أَتَيْتُ النَّبِيَّ ﷺ وَهُوَ يُصَلِّي وَلَجَوْفِهِ أَرْيَزُ كَأَرْيَزِ الْمَرْجَلِ —
يَعْنِي: يَبْكِي

‘Abdullāh ibn al-Shikhhīr said: "I came to the Prophet ﷺ while he was praying, and from his chest came a sound like the bubbling of a cauldron — meaning, he was weeping."

Sunan Abi Dāwūd

Ibn al-Zubayr رضي الله عنه — sparrows on his back

كَانَ ابْنُ الزُّبَيْرِ إِذَا سَجَدَ وَقَعَتِ الْعَصَافِيرُ عَلَى ظَهْرِهِ تَصْعَدُ
وَتَنْزِلُ، لَا تَرَاهُ إِلَّا جِدْمَ حَائِطٍ

Yahyā ibn Wathāb said: "When Ibn al-Zubayr prostrated, sparrows would land on his back, coming and going — they would see him as nothing more than a piece of a wall, due to his absolute stillness."

Kitāb al-Zuhd

Virtues — What do I get?

1. Success

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ○ الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ

'Successful indeed are the believers — those who are humble in their prayer.'

Sūra al-Mu'minūn 23:1-2

2. Ṣalāh becomes easier

وَاسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ ۚ وَإِنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلَّا عَلَى الْخَاشِعِينَ
○ الَّذِينَ يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُلَاقُوا رَبِّهِمْ وَأَنَّهُمْ إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

'And seek help through patience and prayer — and indeed, it is difficult except for those with khushū'; those who are certain that they will meet their Lord and that to Him they will return.'

Sūra al-Baqara 2:45-46

3. Forgiveness — a covenant with Allah

خَمْسُ صَلَّاتٍ افْتَرَضَهُنَّ اللَّهُ، مَنْ أَحْسَنَ وُضُوءَهُنَّ وَصَلَّاهُنَّ
لَوْ قَتِهِنَّ وَأَتَمَّ رُكُوعَهُنَّ وَسُجُودَهُنَّ وَخَشِعَ عَنْهُنَّ كَانَ لَهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ
عَهْدٌ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ لَهُ، وَمَنْ لَمْ يَفْعَلْ فَلَيْسَ لَهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ عَهْدٌ، إِنْ شَاءَ
غَفَرَ لَهُ وَإِنْ شَاءَ عَذَّبَهُ

‘Allah, the Exalted, has made five prayers obligatory. Whoever performs ablution for them well, offers them at their right time, and perfects their bowing, prostration, and submissiveness — has a covenant with Allah that He will forgive him. Whoever does not, has no such covenant; if Allah wills He will forgive him, and if He wills He will punish him.’

‘Ubāda ibn al-Ṣāmit رضي الله عنه · Sunan Abī Dāwūd 425

4. Paradise made necessary

مَا مِنْ مُسْلِمٍ يَتَوَضَّأُ فَيُحْسِنُ وُضُوءَهُ، ثُمَّ يَقُومُ فَيُصَلِّي رَكْعَتَيْنِ
مُقْبِلًا عَلَيْهِمَا بِقَلْبِهِ وَوَجْهِهِ، إِلَّا وَجَبَتْ لَهُ الْجَنَّةُ

‘Whoever performs wuḍū’ and perfects it, then prays two rak‘ahs in which his heart and his face are fully turned toward Allah — Paradise becomes necessary for him.’

‘Uqbā ibn ‘Amir رضي الله عنه · Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim

Harms — What if I don’t?

1. Reduced reward — only what you were present for

إِنَّ الرَّجُلَ لَيَنْصَرِفُ وَمَا كُتِبَ لَهُ إِلَّا عَشْرُ صَلَاتِهِ، تُسْعُهَا،
ثُمَّنْهَا، سُبْعُهَا، سُدُسُهَا، خُمُسُهَا، رُبْعُهَا، ثُلُثُهَا، نِصْفُهَا

‘Indeed, a man may turn away from his prayer and nothing is written for him except a tenth of it — or a ninth, an eighth, a seventh, a sixth, a fifth, a fourth, a third, or a half.’

‘Ammār ibn Yāsir · رضي الله عنه · Sunan Abī Dāwūd

2. Khushū’ is the first thing lost from this dīn

Ḥudhayfa رضي الله عنه said: "The first thing you will lose of your religion will be khushū’, and the last thing you will lose of your religion will be ṣalāh itself. There may be a person praying — yet there is no goodness in him. Soon a time will come when you will enter a large masjid and not find a single person with khushū’."

Levels of Khushū’

Five stations — from heedlessness to iḥsān
As if you see Allah
Iḥsān — the highest
Focused
Ṣalāh becomes a joy
Fighter
Rewarded for the struggle
Distracted
Neutral
Negligent
Accountable · punishable
Framework from Shaykh Asim Khan — Elevate Your Ṣalāh

Preparation for Ṣalāh

wuḍū’ — Ablution

Mindfulness — this water is washing away my sins

Abu Umāma رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "When a man performs his ablution intending to pray, and he washes his hands — the sins of his hands fall down with the first drop. When he rinses

his mouth and nose — the sins of his tongue and lips fall down with the first drop. When he washes his face — the sins of his hearing and sight fall down with the first drop. When he washes his arms to his elbows and his feet to his ankles — he is purified from every sin and fault, like the day he was born from his mother. If he stands for prayer, Allah will raise his status by a degree. If he sits, he will sit in peace."

Musnad Ahmad 22267

Virtue — the Prophet ﷺ will recognise us by our wuḍū'

'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه reported: It was said, "O Messenger of Allah, how will you recognise those of your nation you have never seen?" He ﷺ said: "Their limbs will be radiant from the traces of ablution." (Sunan Ibn Māja 284)

The Prophet ﷺ said: "I love to see my brothers." The companions said: "Aren't we your brothers, O Messenger of Allah?" He said: "You are my companions. Our brothers are those who have not yet come into the world." They said: "How will you recognise those of your Ummah who have not yet been born?" He said: "Suppose a man had horses with white blazes on their foreheads and legs among horses which were all dark — would he not recognise his own? They will come with shining faces and arms and legs from ablution, and I will arrive at the Ḥawḍ (the Pond) before them."

Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 249

Du'ā after wuḍū' — all eight gates of Paradise opened

أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا
عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ ، اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْنِي مِنَ التَّوَّابِينَ وَاجْعَلْنِي مِنَ
الْمُنْتَظَرِينَ

I bear witness that there is no god except Allah, alone with no partner, and I bear witness that Muḥammad ﷺ is His servant and Messenger. O Allah,

make me among those who repent often, and make me among those who purify themselves.'

Whoever performs ablution in the best manner and says this, the eight gates of Paradise will be opened for him — he may enter through whichever he wishes. — Sunan al-Tirmidhī 55

Following the Sunnah method

Niyya → Bismillāh → Hands to the wrists → *Miswāk* → Mouth (gargle) → Nose → Face → Beard → Arms → Wiping the head → Ears → Feet → Toes → *Du'ā* after. Maintain the correct order, continuity between limbs, and be wary of *waswasa*.

On the *Miswāk*

'If I were not afraid of overburdening my Ummah, I would have commanded them to use the siwāk for every ṣalāh.' (Bukhārī)

'The siwāk purifies the mouth and pleases the Lord.' (Nasā'ī)

Before he ﷺ breathed his last, he asked for a *miswāk* to prepare for his meeting with Allah.

Common errors

Skipping the elbows. The arms must be washed to and including the elbows.

Missing the ankles and heels. Water must reach every part — including the back of the heel where it often gets missed in haste.

وَيْلٌ لِّلْأَعْقَابِ مِنَ النَّارِ

'Woe to the heels from the Fire!' — said the Prophet ﷺ to those who had performed wuḍū' hastily, leaving dry patches on their heels. Do wuḍū' properly.'

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī

Adhān — The Call

History — how it was legislated

The adhān was legislated in Madīnah in the early days after the Hijra. Before it existed, the Muslims would gather and try to guess when the time for prayer had come.

Ibn ‘Umar رضي الله عنهما said: "When the Muslims came to Madīnah, they used to come together and try to find out if the time for prayer had come, for there was no call to prayer. One day they were talking about that, and some of them said, 'Let us use a bell like the bell of the Christians.' Others said, 'Let us use a horn like the horn of the Jews.'..."

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 569

Then a companion — ‘Abdullāh ibn Zayd — رضي الله عنه saw a dream in which the words of the adhān were taught to him. He came to the Prophet ﷺ, who confirmed the dream as true, and ‘Umar رضي الله عنه reported having seen the same dream. The Prophet ﷺ then chose Bilāl ibn Rabāḥ رضي الله عنه — for the beauty and reach of his voice — to be the first mu’adhdhin of Islam.

(Full narration in Sunan Abī Dāwūd)

Virtues — Shayṭān flees

إِذَا نُودِيَ لِلصَّلَاةِ أَدْبَرَ الشَّيْطَانُ وَلَهُ ضُرَاطٌ حَتَّى لَا يَسْمَعَ
التَّائِذِينَ، فَإِذَا قُضِيَ النَّدَاءُ أَقْبَلَ، حَتَّى إِذَا ثُوبَ بِالصَّلَاةِ أَدْبَرَ،
حَتَّى إِذَا قُضِيَ التَّنَوُّبُ أَقْبَلَ حَتَّى يَخْطُرَ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَنَفْسِهِ،
يَقُولُ: اذْكُرْ كَذَا، اذْكُرْ كَذَا — لِمَا لَمْ يَكُنْ يَذْكُرُ، حَتَّى يَظَلَّ
الرَّجُلُ لَا يَذْرِي كَمْ صَلَّى

‘When the call to prayer is announced, Shayṭān turns his back and runs, passing wind, to avoid hearing it. When the call is finished, he turns back — until the iqāma is announced, then he turns away again. When the iqāma is finished, he returns and casts thoughts into a man, saying:

'Remember this, remember that' — bringing to mind what was not on his mind — until the man no longer knows how much he has prayed.'

Abu Hurayra · رضي الله عنه · Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 608 · Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 389

The words of the adhān

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ ، اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ ، اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ ، اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ

Allah is the Greatest, Allah is the Greatest, Allah is the Greatest, Allah is the Greatest

أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ ، أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

I bear witness that there is no one worthy of worship except Allah (× 2)

أَشْهَدُ أَنْ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ، أَشْهَدُ أَنْ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ

I bear witness that Muḥammad ﷺ is the Messenger of Allah (× 2)

حَيَّ عَلَى الصَّلَاةِ ، حَيَّ عَلَى الصَّلَاةِ

Come to Ṣalāh (× 2)

حَيَّ عَلَى الْفَلَاحِ ، حَيَّ عَلَى الْفَلَاحِ

Come to success (× 2)

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ ، اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ

Allah is the Greatest (× 2)

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

There is no one worthy of worship except Allah
Virtue of responding to the mu'adhdhin

مَنْ سَمِعَ الْمُؤَذِّنَ فَقَالَ مِثْلَ مَا يَقُولُ فَلَهُ مِثْلُ أَجْرِهِ

*Mu'āwiya رضى الله عنه said: I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say:
"Whoever hears the mu'adhdhin and repeats what he says, will receive a
similar reward as him."*

Reported by al-Tabarānī

We repeat each phrase word-for-word — except when he says **حَيَّ عَلَى الصَّلَاةِ · حَيَّ عَلَى الْفَلَاحِ** ("Come to Ṣalāh · Come to success"). At those two phrases we instead say:

لَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ

There is no power and no strength except with Allah
A sincere shahāda after the adhān — Paradise

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Whoever says these words from his heart upon hearing the mu'adhdhin shall enter Paradise."

Sahīb Muslim

Du'ās after the adhān

1. The witness of contentment — forgiveness of sins

وَأَنَا أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ ، وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ ، رَضِيتُ بِاللَّهِ رَبًّا ، وَبِمُحَمَّدٍ رَسُولًا ، وَبِالْإِسْلَامِ دِينًا

I too bear witness that there is no god worthy of worship except Allah, alone with no partner, and that Muhammad ﷺ is His servant and Messenger. I

am content with Allah as my Lord, with Muḥammad ﷺ as my Messenger, and with Islam as my religion.'

Whoever says this on hearing the mu'adhdhin, his sins will be forgiven . — Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim

2. Send blessings on the Prophet — ﷺ ten blessings in return

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "When you hear the mu'adhdhin calling for the prayer, repeat his words, then send blessings upon me. The one who sends blessings upon me once, Allah will send ten blessings upon him ." — Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim

3. The *du'ā* of the Wasīla — the intercession of the Prophet ﷺ

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ هَذِهِ الدَّعْوَةِ التَّامَّةِ وَالصَّلَاةِ الْقَائِمَةِ ، آتِ مُحَمَّدًا
الْوَسِيلَةَ وَالْفَضِيلَةَ ، وَابْعَثْهُ مَقَامًا مَحْمُودًا الَّذِي وَعَدْتُهُ

'O Allah, Lord of this perfect call and established prayer, grant Muḥammad ﷺ the Wasīla (the highest station in Paradise) and the eminence, and raise him to the praiseworthy station that You have promised him.'

Whoever says this after the adhān shall receive my intercession on the Day of Judgement . — Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī

Attire — dressing for the meeting

إِنَّ اللَّهَ جَمِيلٌ يُحِبُّ الْجَمَالَ

'Indeed Allah is Beautiful and loves beauty.'

Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim

يَا بَنِي آدَمَ خُذُوا زِينَتَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ

'O Children of Adam, beautify yourselves at every masjid.'

How do we dress when we have an important occasion — a wedding, an interview, meeting someone we want to honour? There is nothing more important than a meeting with Allah.

Abu Hurayra رضى الله عنه reported: Someone asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ about praying in a single garment. He ﷺ said: "Does each of you not possess two garments?"

Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim

A note from psychology

'Enclothed cognition' is a psychological phenomenon where the clothing a person wears influences their thoughts, feelings, and behaviours (Galinsky & Adam, 2012). The way you dress for prayer is not only outward respect — it shapes your inner state.'

Masjid Etiquettes

- *Du'ā* entering and leaving. Ask for His mercy when entering; ask for His sustenance and blessings when leaving.
- Right foot in, left foot out. The Sunnah mindset — honour what is honourable.
- Walk calmly to Ṣalāh. Be dignified; Allah is watching.
- Silence your phone. Ringtones and notifications steal khushū' — yours and everyone else's.
- Pray two *rak'ahs* on arrival. Taḥiyyat al-Masjid — greeting the masjid — and the Prophet ﷺ said that for whoever consistently prays the sunan rawātib, "Allah builds a palace in Paradise."
- Don't disturb other musallīn. Lower your voice; mind your movement.
- Intend optional I'tikāf. Even for a few minutes — extra reward for the same time spent.

Don't step over people's shoulders when the *jamā'a* has settled in.

Sutra — use a barrier if you're in an awkward position, or simply as a focal point in front of you.

- Straighten the rows. Stand close together. When the ṣaff is straight, hearts unite.

For Women

Women may attend — but the home is better

لَا تَمْنَعُوا نِسَاءَكُمْ الْمَسَاجِدَ ، وَبُيُوتَهُنَّ خَيْرٌ لَهُنَّ

reported: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Do not prevent your womenfolk from the masjids — though their homes are better for them."

Sunan Abī Dāwūd

The greater the privacy, the greater the reward

Umm Ḥumayd رضي الله عنها, the wife of Abū Ḥumayd al-Sā'idi, came to the Prophet ﷺ and said: "O Messenger of Allah, I love to pray with you." He ﷺ said: "I know that you love to pray with me. But your prayer in your room is better for you than your prayer in your courtyard; and your prayer in your courtyard is better than your prayer in the open part of the house; and your prayer in your house is better than your prayer in your local masjid; and your prayer in your local masjid is better than your prayer in my masjid (Masjid al-Nabawī)."

So she ordered that a prayer-place be prepared for her in the furthest, darkest part of her house — and she prayed there until she met Allah.

Musnad Aḥmad

The reward of a woman's ṣalāh is multiplied by the very privacy that the world today often dismisses. What feels hidden is, in the sight of Allah, the most honoured.

Cultivating focus — in general

Why we can't focus

Multitasking scatters the mind. The brain isn't built to split attention. What feels like efficiency is actually a slow erosion of our ability to think deeply — and it carries long-term costs.

Focus is a trained capacity. Like a muscle that's never been lifted, it cannot be summoned on demand. It has to be built — small reps, over time.

The attention economy is real. Phones, apps, and social media are engineered to capture your focus because your attention is their product. They profit from your distraction; they do not care about your cognitive health. Even Steve Jobs and Mark Zuckerberg famously restricted their own children's screen time.

What helps

Prioritise ruthlessly. Drop tasks instead of juggling them. Laser your focus onto one demanding thing rather than scattering it across many.

Train the focus muscle. Read long-form books. Sit through complex arguments. Practise staying with one task when the urge to switch arises.

Take real breaks from your phone. Turn off notifications. Set genuine offline blocks of time, not just intentions.

Use device wellbeing features — screen-time limits, app blockers, greyscale mode — to create a healthier balance.

Consume media that demands attention. Choose content that asks you to follow a thread of thought, not content that flashes past you.

Get comfortable with silence. Take a walk with no audio. Sit without a podcast. Let your mind settle on its own.

From an Islamic lens

Distraction is the first step toward sin. *Ghafla* — heedlessness — is what Shayṭān works with. A scattered mind makes a soft target.

Cultivate *Murāqaba*. Mindfulness in the Islamic sense: the constant awareness that Allah is watching. This is *taqwā* lived in real time.

Make *dhikr* a habit — and let it move from the tongue into the heart. Remembrance is the antidote to forgetfulness.

Ṣalāh itself is the cure. Five times a day, by design, you disconnect from the world and reconnect with your Lord. You are liberated from distraction on a fixed schedule.

Fasting sharpens focus — clinical research is increasingly catching up with what believers have long known.

Eliminating distractions — before Ṣalāh

Khushū' in ṣalāh is only attained by the one who has emptied his heart totally for it, who occupies himself fully for it and does not pay attention to anything else besides it, and who prioritises it over everything else. At that point it becomes a source of comfort and intense joy.

Ibn Kathīr (rahimahullāh)

Practical steps

Phone on silent. Keep notifications off — especially between sunnah and farḍ. Don't invite the world in.

Clear urgent tasks first. Finish what's pressing — cooking, eating, the reply that's nagging at you. A busy mind cannot empty itself on command.

Choose a comfortable space. Quiet, good temperature, clean, somewhere you can settle.

Remove visual distractions. Clear your immediate field of view. Watch out for patterns or text on clothing in front of you — even small things pull the eye.

Part Two — Within the Prayer

Opening Takbīr

Crossing the threshold

The moment I say "Allāhu Akbar", the rules change. The world I was standing in a second ago has been left behind — its concerns, its noise, its weight. This is the Takbīrat al-Iḥrām — the takbīr that forbids me from anything except Him.

'The key to prayer is purification; its tahrīm (its sealing-off from the world) is the opening takbīr, and its tahlīl (its release) is the taslīm.'

Sunan al-Tirmidhī

Sins falling from the head and shoulders

Imagine: all the sins I have committed are gathered up and placed on my head and shoulders. As I raise my hands for the opening takbīr, I throw them off me.

Ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنهما reported: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "When a servant stands to pray, his sins are placed on top of his head and shoulders. Every time he bows or prostrates, they fall away from him."

Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Habbān

The standing of Ḥātim al-Aṣamm

When the time of Ṣalāh approaches, I perform wuḍū' thoroughly and proceed to the place where I intend to pray. I sit there until I am fully composed. Then I stand to offer my prayer — and I picture the Ka'ba directly in front of me, the bridge of *Ṣirāṭ* beneath my feet, Paradise to my right, Hellfire to my left, and the Angel of Death behind me. And I believe this is my last prayer.

Ḥātim al-Aṣamm (raḥimahullāh)

The opening takbīr

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ

Allah is the Greatest.

'Akbar' is not just "great" — it is the comparative: greater than. Greater than what? Everything. Greater than the worry that brought me here, greater than the rush waiting for me after, greater than my hopes and my fears. With these two words I declare that nothing in this universe deserves my attention more than the One I now stand before.'

Mumbling. The takbīr must be audible, at minimum to oneself. Many slur the words.

Rushing — especially when catching the imām in *rukūʿ*. Many rush the opening takbīr in their haste to bow with the imām. But the takbīrat al-ihrām is a pillar of ṣalāh — without it being said properly, while standing, before going into *rukūʿ*, the prayer itself is incomplete.

Qiyām — The Standing

Two standings — practise for the one that matters

The slave of Allah stands before his Lord on two occasions: the first, when he stands in his ṣalāh; and the second, when he meets Him on the Day of Judgment. Whoever fulfils the rights of the first standing — the second will be made easy for him. And whoever belittles, neglects, and does not fulfil the rights of the first standing — the second will be made very difficult for him.

Ibn al-Qayyim (rahimahullāh)

The wisdom of lowered gaze and folded hands

Imām Aḥmad was asked about the wisdom of lowering the gaze and folding the hands. He said: "It is the humble stance of a slave before a Mighty Lord."

ʿĀʾisha رضي الله عنها said: "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ entered the Kaʿba, and his gaze did not go beyond the site of his prostration until he came out."

Lowering the gaze in prayer is a sign of love — and of shyness before the Beloved.

Ibn al-Qayyim · Rawḍat al-Muḥibbīn

How to stand

Throw the world behind you as you raise your hands for the takbīr.

Lower your sight in humility — the gaze rests where you will prostrate.

Fold your arms to create stillness — a form of honouring the standing before Allah.

Face the qibla with the body — and turn the heart toward Allah.

Qiyām is the posture in which all that follows — Thanā', *Isti'ādha*, Basmala, al-Fātiḥa, and a sūra — takes place. The standing is the container; what fills it follows in the next sections.

رضي الله عنها asked the Prophet ﷺ about it; he said: "That is theft — Shayṭān steals from a person's prayer." (Bukhārī)

Slouching, swaying, fidgeting. Khushū' shows itself in the stillness of the limbs.

Going into *rukū'* too quickly when catching the imām. Qiyām is an obligatory rukn — a pillar. Even when joining late, stand for a while before bowing. Don't sacrifice an obligation for the sake of catching a *rak'a*.

Thanā' — Opening Praise

Before petition — praise. Before asking — acknowledgement. The opening *du'ā* establishes the etiquette of the entire conversation: I am here not to demand, but to glorify. The Name comes before everything else.

The common opening — Subḥānaka Allāhumma

سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ وَبِحَمْدِكَ ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ ، وَتَعَالَى جَدُّكَ ، وَلَا
إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

'How Perfect are You, O Allah, and all praise is Yours. Your Name is most blessed, Your majesty is exalted, and there is no god worthy of worship except You.' (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim)

Other authentic opening *du'ās*

1. Distance me from my sins

اللَّهُمَّ بَاعِدْ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَ خَطَايَايَ كَمَا بَاعَدْتَ بَيْنَ الْمَشْرِقِ
وَالْمَغْرِبِ ، اللَّهُمَّ نَقِّنِي مِنَ الْخَطَايَا كَمَا يُنْقَى الثَّوْبُ الْأَبْيَضُ مِنَ
الدَّنَسِ ، اللَّهُمَّ اغْسِلْ خَطَايَايَ بِالْمَاءِ وَالتَّلْجِ وَالْبَرَدِ

‘O Allah, put a great distance between me and my sins, as great as the distance You have made between the East and the West. O Allah, cleanse me of sins as a white garment is cleansed from filth. O Allah, wash away my sins with water and snow and hail.’

2. The words that opened the doors of heaven

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ كَبِيرًا ، وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ كَثِيرًا ، وَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلًا

‘Allah is the Greatest, the Greatest; abundant praise is for Allah; and how perfect is Allah, morning and evening.’

‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar رضى الله عنهما narrated: "Once we were praying with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ when a man said these words. After the ṣalāh, he ﷺ asked, 'Who said those words?' The man replied, 'It was me, O Messenger of Allah.' He ﷺ said: 'I was amazed by them — the doors of heaven were opened for them.' " Ibn ‘Umar said: "I have not stopped saying these words since I heard that from the Messenger of Allah)". (Muslim)

3. The praise twelve angels raced to carry up

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ حَمْدًا كَثِيرًا طَيِّبًا مُبَارَكًا فِيهِ

‘All praise is for Allah — abundant, sincere, and blessed praise.’

Anas رضى الله عنه narrated that a man came in breathing heavily and joined the row in ṣalāh, and uttered these words. When the Messenger of Allah ﷺ finished his ṣalāh, he asked who had said them. The man, fearing he had erred, was silent. The Prophet ﷺ said: "I saw twelve angels competing with each other to ascend with it." (Muslim)

Vary your opening *du'ā*. Different words speak to different states of the heart — and reciting variety guards us from auto-pilot.

***Isti'ādha* — Seeking Refuge**

Shayṭān is obsessed with destroying our ṣalāh

His three weapons: make us leave it · make us delay it · distract us inside it (*waswasa*).

‘Ā’isha رضي الله عنها said: "I asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ about looking around in prayer." He ﷺ said: "That is theft — Shayṭān steals it from a person's prayer."

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī

An open enemy — and we cannot fight him alone

ثُمَّ لَا تَأْتِيهِمْ مِّنْ بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ وَعَنْ أَيْمَانِهِمْ وَعَنْ شَمَائِلِهِمْ وَلَا تَجِدُ أَكْثَرَهُمْ شَاكِرِينَ

‘Then I will come to them from before them, from behind them, from their right, and from their left — and You will not find most of them grateful.’

— Iblīs to Allah · Sūra al-A‘rāf 7:17’

A reflection: Iblīs mentions four directions — front, back, right, left. He does not mention above, and he does not mention below. Above is where mercy descends. Below is the place of sajdah. The two directions of nearness to Allah are the two directions he cannot reach you from.

This is why we seek refuge in Allah before reciting — because the enemy is real, but he is not omnipotent, and Allah has left the doors of His help wide open.

The words of seeking refuge

أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ

‘I seek refuge in Allah from Shayṭān, the accursed.’

'A'ūdhu" — I take shelter, I run to. "Bi-llāh" — in Allah. "Min al-Shayṭān" — from the one who is far, expelled, cast out. "Al-rajīm" — the stoned, the cursed.'

Basmala

I begin every task — major or minor — with the Name of Allah. To open with His Name is to acknowledge that nothing begins, nothing continues, and nothing completes without Him.

The Name of Allah is not mentioned over something small except that it increases it; nor over something good except that it nurtures and blesses it; nor over an affliction except that it removes it; nor against a devil except that it repels him — humiliated and defeated.

Ibn al-Qayyim (rahimahullāh)

Some literal meanings of the word Allah

The One worshipped — the sole worthy object of devotion.

The Eternal Refuge — the escape and shelter for all of humanity.

The One who amazes those who reflect upon Him.

The One whom hearts adore — the natural longing of every soul.

The Name Allah is a culmination of all of His attributes — every Beautiful Name is gathered under it.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

'In the Name of Allah — the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful.'

Three Names sit at the doorway of every recitation: Allah — the One who gathers all majesty; al-Raḥmān — the One whose mercy embraces the whole creation, believer and disbeliever, in this world; and al-Raḥīm — the One whose mercy is reserved especially for the believers, in this world and the next.

Rights of the Qur'ān

When the Qur'ān is recited in ṣalāh, we are not merely passing time between postures — we are receiving His speech. There are rights to that. Five of them.

1. Attentive Listening

وَإِذَا قُرِئَ الْقُرْآنُ فَاسْتَمِعُوا لَهُ وَأَنْصِتُوا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

'So when the Qur'ān is recited, then listen to it and pay attention, so that you may receive mercy.'

Sūra al-A'rāf 7:204

Istimā' is to listen. Inṣāt is to listen without speaking — total stillness of tongue and heart.

Ibn 'Ashūr

2. Recitation

وَأُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ○ وَأَنْ أَتْلُو الْقُرْآنَ

'And I have been commanded to be of the Muslims, and to recite the Qur'ān.'

Sūra al-Naml 27:91–92

Recite as the Prophet ﷺ did — beautifully, with tartīl, avoiding errors that change the meaning.

Ten rewards for every letter. Not every word — every letter . Alif. Lām. Mīm. That's three letters, thirty rewards.

3. Memorisation

'Indeed, one who does not hold anything of the Qur'ān within himself is like a ruined house.'

In Janna, those who have memorised a larger portion will be allowed to climb higher — the position will be determined by the last verse they recite.

4. Understanding & Reflection

أَفَلَا يَتَذَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ أَمْ عَلَى قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَالُهَا

‘Do they not reflect upon the Qur’ān, or are there locks upon their hearts?’

Sūra Muḥammad 47:24

كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِيَذَّبَرُوا آيَاتِهِ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

‘This is a blessed Book which We have revealed to you, so that they may reflect upon its verses, and that those of understanding may be reminded.’

Sūra Ṣād 38:29

We have the speech of Allah with us — the words of our Creator. It speaks of the past with accuracy, informs us of the future, and remains relevant and a solution to every era.

Those who came before you viewed the Qur’ān as letters from their Lord.

Ḥasan al-Baṣrī

When we reflect, our love grows

We can interact with the verses and feel the meaning behind the words.

We come to know how Allah describes Himself — and we draw closer to Him.

We use it as healing and cure for physical and spiritual ailments.

We use it to understand the world around us — its origin, its trajectory, its end.

5. Application

وَهَذَا كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ مُبَارَكٌ فَاتَّبِعُوهُ

‘And this is a Book We have revealed which is blessed — so follow it.’

Sūra al-An‘ām 6:155

The Ṣaḥāba would learn ten verses from the Prophet ﷺ and would not move on to the next ten until they had acted upon those ten. Recitation without application is leaving a manual on the shelf.

Introspect: How much of this manual am I actually following?

Rukū' — The Bowing

A posture of humility before Allah

The Prophet ﷺ bowed with his back straight , his head level with his back , his knees firmly clasped , his fingers spread , and his arms separated from his torso .

It was narrated from ‘Alī " رضي الله عنه: When the Messenger of Allah ﷺ bowed, if a glass of water were placed on his back, it would not spill."

Musnad Ahmad

A posture that belongs to Allah alone

Bowing to anything other than Allah is forbidden. If done as glorification, it is *shirk*. If done as mere respect, it is still a sin. This posture belongs to Allah alone.

The primary *dhikr*

سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيَ الْعَظِيمِ

‘How perfect is my Lord, the Magnificent.’

Rabbiyy — "my Lord." The personal pronoun creates a quiet warmth. This magnificent, transcendent God is also my individual Lord — the One who provides for me, heals me, guides me, forgives me.

Al-‘Azīm — "The One of Unshakable Glory." In this position — physically unstable, bent forward, off-balance — we remember Allah's unshakable power and might. The body is bowed; the heart is steadied.

Standing After Rukū'

When the imām declares — and we respond

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "When the imām says 'Samī‘ Allāhu li-man ḥamida,' say 'Allāhumma Rabbanā lakal-ḥamd' — for indeed, whoever coincides in saying this with the angels, his past sins will be forgiven."

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī

Thirty-something angels racing to write it first

Rifā‘a b. Rāfi‘ رضي الله عنه narrated: "One day we were praying behind the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. When he raised his head from *rukū'*, he ﷺ said Samī‘ Allāhu li-man ḥamida. A man behind him said: 'Rabbanā wa-laka al-ḥamd, ḥamdan kathīran ṭayyiban mubārakan fih.' When he ﷺ finished, he asked: 'Who uttered those words?' The man replied: 'Me.' The Prophet ﷺ said: 'I saw some thirty-something angels racing to write it first.' " (Bukhārī)

What the imām says — and what those behind respond

سَمِعَ اللَّهُ لِمَنْ حَمِدَهُ

(The imām says): "May Allah respond to the one who praises Him."

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّنَا لَكَ الْحَمْدُ

(Those behind reply): "O Allah, our Lord, to You alone belongs all praise."

The longer version — the one the angels raced to write

رَبَّنَا وَلَكَ الْحَمْدُ ، حَمْدًا كَثِيرًا طَيِّبًا مُبَارَكًا فِيهِ

'Our Lord, to You alone belongs all praise — abundant, pure, and blessed praise.'

Sajda — The Prostration

The closest a servant comes to his Lord

'The closest a servant is to his Lord is when he is in prostration — so increase your supplication in it.'

Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim

Every prostration raises a degree and removes a sin

'Make many prostrations to Allah — for you will not prostrate to Allah once except that He raises you one degree because of it, and removes one sin from you because of it.'

Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim

The mark of prostration

سِيمَاهُمْ فِي وُجُوهِهِمْ مِّنْ أَثَرِ السُّجُودِ

'Their distinguishing feature — as a result of prostration — is on their faces.'

Sūra al-Fatḥ 48:29

The fire cannot consume what prostrated to Allah

Allah has made the Hellfire ḥarām for the face which prostrates itself to Him.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Hellfire will consume all of the son of Ādam except the mark of prostration. Allah has forbidden the Fire to consume the mark of prostration."

Sunan Ibn Māja

Sins falling away with every sajda

'When the slave stands to pray, all of his sins are brought and placed on his head and shoulders. Whenever he bows or prostrates, they fall off him.'

al-Ṭabarānī

The path to the Prophet's ﷺ company in Paradise

Rabī'a b. Ka'b رضي الله عنه used to spend the night in the service of the Prophet ﷺ, bringing him water for his purification. Once the Prophet ﷺ said to him: "Ask!"

Rabī'a said: "I ask you for your company in Paradise."

The Prophet ﷺ asked if he would like anything else. He replied: "Only that."

The Prophet ﷺ then told him: "Then help me to achieve this for you through abundant *sujūd*." (Muslim)

An example to learn from

Abu al-Dardā' رضي الله عنه said: "Indeed I make *du'ā'* for thirty of my brothers whilst I am in *sujūd* — with their names and their fathers' names."

Why this posture is the most powerful

We are doing what the rest of creation does. The mountains, the trees, the stars — all prostrate. In *sajda* we rejoin them.

It makes Shayṭān angry and jealous. He refused to do it once; we do it dozens of times a day.

It connects us to our origin. We were created from dust — and in *sajda*, dust touches dust again.

Every single limb is humbled. Every atom of us is lowering itself.

The position itself limits distractions. The world is literally shut out — and there is only Allah.

Sajda is the station of *du'ā'*

Open, honest, intimate communication with Allah. Speak to Him as your Creator and your Lord — as the One you love and the One you need. Tell Him your fears, your aspirations, your struggles. Tell Him what keeps you awake at night. Tell Him what you have missed and what you hope for.

Sajda is the release of burdens , the removal of anxiety , the place where *du‘ā* is answered and where sukūn — tranquility of heart, body, and soul — is found. It is, in every sense, the healing of the injured heart.

The primary *dhikr*

سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيَ الْأَعْلَى

‘Glory be to my Lord, the Most High.’

Authentic variations of *dhikr* in sajda

سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّنَا وَبِحَمْدِكَ ، اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِي

‘How Perfect are You, O Allah our Lord, and for You is all praise. O Allah, forgive me.’

اللَّهُمَّ لَكَ سَجَدْتُ ، وَبِكَ آمَنْتُ ، وَلَكَ أَسْلَمْتُ ، سَجَدَ وَجْهِي
لِلَّذِي خَلَقَهُ وَصَوَّرَهُ وَشَقَّ سَمْعَهُ وَبَصَرَهُ ، تَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنُ
الْخَالِقِينَ

‘O Allah, for You alone I have prostrated, in You alone I have believed, and to You alone I have submitted. My face has prostrated to the One who created and fashioned it, and who formed its hearing and sight. Blessed is Allah, the Best of Creators.’

Between the Two Sajdahs

The ambition of the believer

Such is the ambition of the believer that even after sajda — the most intimate moment of nearness — he continues to ask Allah.

The weight of one word — Maghfira

Maghfira carries two meanings: to cover up , and to protect .

So when we say "Rabbi-ghfir lī" — we are asking: O my Lord, cover up my faults in this world and the next; and protect me from the bad consequences of my sins.

Sin doesn't just stain the record. It affects mental well-being , finances , relationships , the grave , and our dying moments . To ask for maghfira is to ask for shielding from all of it.

Why two sajdahs?

Sujūd is repeated because it is the most honourable and virtuous element of ṣalāh. So we are given two of them in every *rak'ā*.

And notice: one *rak'ā* begins with recitation (the Qur'ān) and ends with sajda (prostration). This mirrors the very first revelation — Sūra al-‘Alaq — which opened with "Iqra'" ("Read!") and closed with "wa-sjda wa-qtarib" ("Prostrate and draw near"). The structure of every *rak'ā* is the structure of revelation itself.

The shortest form

رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي ، رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي

'My Lord, forgive me. My Lord, forgive me.'

The fuller version — seven requests

اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِي ، وَارْحَمْنِي ، وَعَافِنِي ، وَاهْدِنِي ، وَارْزُقْنِي

'O Allah, forgive me, have mercy on me, grant me well-being, guide me, and grant me sustenance.'

Tashahhud · Ṣalawāt · Du‘ā

Tashahhud — the words & their weight

Taught like a sūra of the Qur'ān

Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنهما said: "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ would teach us the tashahhud just as he would teach us a sūra from the Qur'ān."

The full text

التَّحِيَّاتُ لِلَّهِ ، وَالصَّلَوَاتُ وَالطَّيِّبَاتُ ، السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ
وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ ، السَّلَامُ عَلَيْنَا وَعَلَى عِبَادِ اللَّهِ الصَّالِحِينَ ،
أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ

‘All royal greetings belong to Allah, as do prayers and good deeds and words. May peace, the mercy of Allah, and His blessings be upon you, O Prophet. Peace be upon us and upon the righteous servants of Allah. I bear witness that there is no god worthy of worship except Allah, and I bear witness that Muḥammad is His slave and Messenger.’ (Bukhārī)

Unpacking the conversation

As-salāmu ‘alayka ayyuḥan-Nabī — Peace be upon you, O Prophet.

The best of creation. The one who did us the most favours. O Allah, give him peace, safety, and security. Keep him safe from all harm.

Wa raḥmatullāhi wa barakātuh — And may Allah’s mercy and blessings be upon you too.

As-salāmu ‘alaynā wa ‘alā ‘ibādillāh al-ṣāliḥīn — And upon us, and upon the righteous servants of Allah.

We should strive to be in that category — to receive the daily du‘ās of the entire Ummah.

The shahāda at the end. We ended wuḍū’ with the kalima. We ended the adhān with the kalima. And here too — we ask Allah to make it our final word.

Ṣalawāt — sending blessings on the Prophet ﷺ

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ * كَمَا صَلَّيْتَ عَلَى
إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَعَلَى آلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ * إِنَّكَ حَمِيدٌ مَجِيدٌ * اللَّهُمَّ بَارِكْ
عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ * كَمَا بَارَكْتَ عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ
وَعَلَى آلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ * إِنَّكَ حَمِيدٌ مَجِيدٌ *

‘O Allah, send blessings upon Muḥammad and upon the family of Muḥammad, just as You have sent blessings upon Ibrāhīm and upon the family of Ibrāhīm — indeed, You are the Praiseworthy, the Glorious. O Allah, bless Muḥammad and the family of Muḥammad, just as You have blessed Ibrāhīm and the family of Ibrāhīm — indeed, You are the Praiseworthy, the Glorious.’

Having greeted and paid respect to the Lord of the worlds, we now turn to pay our respect to the best of creation . ﷺ

There is no other act in existence — that we know of — in which humans, angels, and Allah Himself all participate, except sending ṣalawāt upon the Messenger . ﷺ For each one we send, we receive: ten rewards · ten sins forgiven · ten stages elevated in Paradise.

The preferred method of *du‘ā* is to first praise Allah , then send ṣalawāt upon His beloved , ﷺ and only then ask for one’s own needs. That is precisely the structure the prayer teaches us in this sitting.

***Du‘ā* before the Salām**

End by asking for forgiveness for our shortcomings throughout this journey of ṣalāh. The end of the ṣalāh is a time of accepted prayers . It is as though Allah is asking:

Is there anything left that you need to ask for, My beloved servant?

1. For forgiveness

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِي ظُلْمًا كَثِيرًا ، وَلَا يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ ،
فَاغْفِرْ لِي مَغْفِرَةً مِنْ عِنْدِكَ ، وَارْحَمْنِي إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ

‘O Allah, I have wronged myself greatly, and no one forgives sins except You. Grant me forgiveness from You, and have mercy upon me. Indeed, You are the Most Forgiving, the Most Merciful.’

Taught by the Prophet ﷺ to Abū Bakr · رضي الله عنه · Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 834 · Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 2705

2. Seeking protection — from the four great trials

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ عَذَابِ جَهَنَّمَ ، وَمِنْ عَذَابِ الْقَبْرِ ، وَمِنْ
فِتْنَةِ الْمَحْيَا وَالْمَمَاتِ ، وَمِنْ شَرِّ فِتْنَةِ الْمَسِيحِ الدَّجَالِ

‘O Allah, I seek Your protection from the punishment of the Fire, from the punishment of the grave, from the trials of life and death, and from the evil of the trial of al-Masīḥ al-Dajjāl.’

Salām — The Closing

Leaving with peace

The greeting of Janna, the greeting of Allah and the angels, is Salām .
We end the ṣalāh with it.

Who is the salām for?

Our intention should be to convey greetings to the angels on our right and left , and to our fellow congregants when praying in *jamā‘a*.

A bridge back to the world

During ṣalāh, you ascended to great heights — communicating directly with Allah. The salām is the transition that returns you to the world, gently.

No contradiction

It would be a contradiction to spread salām from your prayer — and then still harbour grudges against those around you. Let the salām be real.

The salām itself

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ ، السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ

(Turning to the right, then to the left:) "May the peace and mercy of Allah be upon you."

Part Three — After the Prayer

Astaghfirullāh & Allāhumma anta as-Salām

Immediately after the salām, seek Allah's forgiveness for any shortcomings throughout the ṣalāh:

أَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ ، أَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ ، أَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ

'I seek forgiveness from Allah.' (× 3)

اللَّهُمَّ أَنْتَ السَّلَامُ ، وَمِنْكَ السَّلَامُ ، تَبَارَكْتَ يَا ذَا الْجَلَالِ

وَالْإِكْرَامِ

'O Allah, You are al-Salām (the source of Peace), and from You comes peace. Blessed are You, O Possessor of Majesty and Honour.'

The *Tasbīḥ* of Fāṭima رضي الله عنها

سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ

'How Perfect is Allah.' (× 33)

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ

'All praise is for Allah.' (× 33)

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ

'Allah is the Greatest.' (× 34)

In some narrations the minimum is ten of each. The Prophet ﷺ taught this *dhikr* to Fāṭima رضي الله عنها when she asked him for a servant — telling her this was better than what she had asked for.

Āyat al-Kursī — Nothing prevents Paradise but death

'Whoever recites Āyat al-Kursī after every obligatory prayer — there is nothing that will prevent him from entering Paradise except death.'

al-Nasā'ī, 'Amal al-Yawm wa-l-Layla

Du'ā after Ṣalāh — for help in remembrance

A *du'ā* the Prophet ﷺ taught Mu'ādh رضي الله عنه and told him never to leave

اللَّهُمَّ أَعِنِّي عَلَى ذِكْرِكَ وَشُكْرِكَ وَحُسْنِ عِبَادَتِكَ

'O Allah, help me in remembering You, in being grateful to You, and in worshipping You in an excellent manner.'

Seeking protection from miserliness, cowardice, old age, and the punishment of the grave

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنَ الْبُخْلِ ، وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنَ الْجُبْنِ ، وَأَعُوذُ
بِكَ مِنْ أَنْ أُرَدَّ إِلَى أَرْدَلِ الْعُمُرِ ، وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ فِتْنَةِ الدُّنْيَا ،
وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ عَذَابِ الْقَبْرِ

*'O Allah, I seek Your protection from miserliness, from cowardice, from
being returned to a miserable old age, from the trials of the world, and
from the punishment of the grave.'*

After Maghrib & Fajr — protection for the day or night

اللَّهُمَّ أَجِرْنِي مِنَ النَّارِ

'O Allah, protect me from the Hellfire.' (× 7)

The Prophet ﷺ said: "When you finish Maghrib, say this seven times. If you say it and then die during that night, it will be a protection for you. And after praying Fajr, say the same. If you die on that day, it will be a protection for you."

Sunan Abi Dāwūd 5079

Sunnah & Nawāfil — voluntary prayers around the day

Once the obligatory is in place, the voluntary builds. Each nāfila is a private investment with Allah — and the returns mentioned in the Sunnah are extraordinary.

1. The 12 Sunan al-Rawātib — a house in Paradise

مَنْ ثَابَرَ عَلَى ثِنْتَيْ عَشْرَةَ رَكْعَةً مِنَ السُّنَّةِ بَنَى اللَّهُ لَهُ بَيْتًا فِي
الْجَنَّةِ ، أَرْبَعَ رَكَعَاتٍ قَبْلَ الظُّهْرِ ، وَرَكَعَتَيْنِ بَعْدَهَا ، وَرَكَعَتَيْنِ
بَعْدَ الْمَغْرَبِ ، وَرَكَعَتَيْنِ بَعْدَ الْعِشَاءِ ، وَرَكَعَتَيْنِ قَبْلَ الْفَجْرِ

‘Ā’isha رضي الله عنها reported: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Whoever perseveres in performing twelve rak‘ahs of Sunnah, Allah will build for him a house in Paradise: four rak‘ahs before Zuhrah and two after; two after Maghrib; two after ‘Ishā’; and two before Fajr."

Sunan al-Tirmidhī 414 · also in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 728 · Sunan al-Nasā’ī 1796

2. Four before Zuhrah and four after — shielded from the Fire

مَنْ حَافِظَ عَلَى أَرْبَعِ رَكَعَاتٍ قَبْلَ الظُّهْرِ وَأَرْبَعٍ بَعْدَهَا حَرَّمَهُ اللَّهُ عَلَى النَّارِ

Umm Ḥabība رضي الله عنها reported: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Whoever observes four rak‘ahs before Zuhrah and four after it — Allah will forbid him to the Fire."

Sunan al-Tirmidhī 428 · Sunan Abī Dāwūd 1269 · Sunan al-Nasā’ī 1817 · Sunan Ibn Māja 1160

3. Four before ‘Aṣr — may Allah have mercy

رَحِمَ اللَّهُ امْرَأً صَلَّى قَبْلَ الْعَصْرِ أَرْبَعًا

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "May Allah have mercy on the one who prays four rak‘ahs before ‘Aṣr."

Ibn ‘Umar · رضي الله عنهما · Sunan al-Tirmidhī 395 · graded ḥasan

4. Six rak‘ahs after Maghrib — twelve years of worship

مَنْ صَلَّى بَعْدَ الْمَغْرِبِ سِتَّ رَكَعَاتٍ لَمْ يَتَكَلَّمْ بَيْنَهُنَّ بِسُوءٍ عُذِلَ لَهُ بِعِبَادَةٍ تُنْتَنِي عَشْرَةَ سَنَةً

Abu Hurayra رضي الله عنه reported: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Whoever prays six rak‘ahs after Maghrib, and does not speak any evil between them, they will be counted for him as the worship of twelve years."

Sunan al-Tirmidhī 435 · Sunan Ibn Māja 1374 · (known as Ṣalāt al-Awwābīn)

5. Tahajjud — the best prayer after the obligatory

أَفْضَلُ الصَّلَاةِ بَعْدَ الْفَرِيضَةِ صَلَاةُ اللَّيْلِ

Abu Hurayra رضى الله عنه reported: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "The best prayer after the obligatory prayer is the prayer of the night."

Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 1163

Appendix: Transliteration of the Sūras

The transliteration below follows the key given at the front of this book. In keeping with the convention for transliterating passages meant for recitation, the definite article is here joined and assimilated as it is pronounced (e.g. ar-Raḥmān, wa'ṣ-ṣayf), so that the reader may pronounce each verse correctly. Every Sūra is preceded by the basmala: Bismi 'llāhi 'r-Raḥmāni 'r-Raḥīm.

Sūrat al-Fātiḥa

Bismi 'llāhi 'r-Raḥmāni 'r-Raḥīm

1. *Al-ḥamdu li'llāhi Rabbi 'l-ʿālamīn*
2. *Ar-Raḥmāni 'r-Raḥīm*
3. *Māliki yawmi 'd-dīn*
4. *Iyyāka naʿbudu wa-iyyāka nastaʿīn*
5. *Ihdina 'ṣ-ṣirāṭa 'l-mustaqīm*
6. *Ṣirāṭa 'lladhīna anʿamta ʿalayhim*
7. *Ghayri 'l-maghḍūbi ʿalayhim wa-la 'ḍ-ḍāllīn*

Sūrat al-Zilzāl

1. *Idhā zulzilati 'l-arḍu zilzālahā*
2. *Wa-akhrajati 'l-arḍu athqālahā*
3. *Wa-qāla 'l-insānu mā lahā*
4. *Yawma'idhin tuḥaddithu akhbārahā*
5. *Bi-anna rabbaka awḥā lahā*
6. *Yawma'idhin yaṣḍuru 'n-nāsu asbtātan li-yuraw a'mālahum*
7. *Fa-man ya'mal mithqāla dharratin khayran yara*
8. *Wa-man ya'mal mithqāla dharratin sharran yara*

Sūrat al-‘Ādiyāt

1. *Wa’l-‘ādiyāti dabḥā*
2. *Fa’l-mūriyāti qadhā*
3. *Fa’l-mughīrāti ṣubḥā*
4. *Fa-atḥarna bibī naq‘ā*
5. *Fa-wasaṭna bibī jam‘ā*
6. *Inna ’l-insāna li-rabbihī la-kanūd*
7. *Wa-innabū ‘alā dhālika la-shabīd*
8. *Wa-innabū li-ḥubbi ’l-khayri la-shadīd*
9. *A-fa-lā ya‘lamu idhā bu‘thira mā fi ’l-qubūr*
10. *Wa-ḥuṣṣila mā fi ’ṣ-ṣudūr*
11. *Inna rabbahum bihim yawma’idhin la-khabīr*

Sūrat al-Qāri‘a

1. *Al-qāri‘a*
2. *Ma ’l-qāri‘a*
3. *Wa-mā adrāka ma ’l-qāri‘a*
4. *Yawma yakūnu ’n-nāsu ka’l-farāshi ’l-mabthūth*
5. *Wa-takūnu ’l-jibālu ka’l-‘ihni ’l-manfūsh*
6. *Fa-ammā man thaqulat mawāzīnuh*
7. *Fa-buwa fī ‘ishatin rāḍiya*
8. *Wa-ammā man khaffat mawāzīnuh*
9. *Fa-ummuhū hāwiya*
10. *Wa-mā adrāka mā hiya*
11. *Nārun ḥāmīya*

Sūrat al-Takāthur

1. *Alḥākumu ’t-takāthur*
2. *Ḥattā zurtumu ’l-maqābir*
3. *Kallā sawfa ta‘lamūn*

4. *Thumma kallā sawfa ta'lamūn*
5. *Kallā law ta'lamūna 'ilma 'l-yaqīn*
6. *La-tarawunna 'l-jaḥīm*
7. *Thumma la-tarawunnahā 'ayna 'l-yaqīn*
8. *Thumma la-tus'alunna yawma'idhin 'ani 'n-na'im*

Sūrat al-‘Aṣr

1. *Wa'l-‘aṣr*
2. *Inna 'l-insāna la-fī khusr*
3. *Illa 'lladhīna āmanū wa-‘amilu 'ṣ-ṣāliḥāti wa-tawāṣaw bi'l-ḥaqqi wa-tawāṣaw bi'ṣ-ṣabr*

Sūrat al-Humaza

1. *Waylun li-kulli humazatin lumaza*
2. *Alladhī jama'a mālan wa-‘addada*
3. *Yaḥṣabu anna mālahū akhlada*
4. *Kallā la-yunbadhanna fi 'l-ḥuṭama*
5. *Wa-mā adrāka ma 'l-ḥuṭama*
6. *Nāru 'llāhi 'l-mūqada*
7. *Allatī taṭṭali'u 'ala 'l-afida*
8. *Innahā 'alayhim mu'ṣada*
9. *Fī 'amadin mumaddada*

Sūrat al-Fīl

1. *A-lam tara kayfa fa'ala rabbuka bi-aṣḥābi 'l-fīl*
2. *A-lam yaj'al kaydahum fī tadlīl*
3. *Wa-arsala 'alayhim ṭayran abābīl*
4. *Tarmīhim bi-ḥijāratin min sijjīl*
5. *Fa-ja'alahum ka-‘aṣfin ma'kūl*

Sūrat Quraysh

1. *Li-īlāfi Quraysh*
2. *Īlāfihim riḥlata 'sh-shitā'i wa'-ṣ-ṣayf*
3. *Fa'l-ya'budū rabba ḥādha 'l-bayt*
4. *Alladhī aṭ'amahum min jū'in wa-āmanahum min khawf*

Sūrat al-Mā'ūn

1. *A-ra'ayta 'lladhī yukadhdhibu bi'd-dīn*
2. *Fa-dhālika 'lladhī yadu'u 'l-yatīm*
3. *Wa-lā yaḥuḍḍu 'alā ṭa'āmi 'l-miskīn*
4. *Fa-waylun li'l-muṣallīn*
5. *Alladhīna hum 'an ṣalātihim sābhūn*
6. *Alladhīna hum yurā'ūn*
7. *Wa-yamna'ūna 'l-mā'ūn*

Sūrat al-Kawthar

1. *Innā aṭaynāka 'l-kawthar*
2. *Fa-ṣalli li-rabbika wa'nḥar*
3. *Inna shāni'aka huwa 'l-abtar*

Sūrat al-Kāfirūn

1. *Qul yā ayyuha 'l-kāfirūn*
2. *Lā a'budu mā ta'budūn*
3. *Wa-lā antum 'ābidūna mā a'bud*
4. *Wa-lā ana 'ābidun mā 'ābadtum*
5. *Wa-lā antum 'ābidūna mā a'bud*
6. *Lakum dīnukum wa-liya dīn*

Sūrat al-Naṣr

1. *Idhā jā'a naṣru 'llāhi wa'l-fatḥ*
2. *Wa-ra'ayta 'n-nāsa yadkhubulūna fī dīni 'llāhi afwājā*

3. *Fa-sabbiḥ bi-ḥamdi rabbika wa-’staghfirhu, innahū kāna tawwābā*

Sūrat al-Masad

1. *Tabbat yadā Abī Lahabin wa-tabb*
2. *Mā aghnā ‘anhu māluḥū wa-mā kasab*
3. *Sa-yaṣlā nāran dhāta laḥab*
4. *Wa-’mra’atuhū ḥammālata ’l-ḥaṭab*
5. *Fī jīdihā ḥablun min masad*

Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ

1. *Qul huwa ’llāhu aḥad*
2. *Allāhu ’ṣ-ṣamad*
3. *Lam yalid wa-lam yūlad*
4. *Wa-lam yakun lahū kufuwan aḥad*

Sūrat al-Falaq

1. *Qul a‘ūdhu bi-rabbi ’l-falaq*
2. *Min sharri mā khalaq*
3. *Wa-min sharri ghāsiqin idhā waqab*
4. *Wa-min sharri ’n-naffāthāti fi ’l-’uqad*
5. *Wa-min sharri ḥāsidiḥ idhā ḥasad*

Sūrat al-Nās

1. *Qul a‘ūdhu bi-rabbi ’n-nās*
2. *Maliki ’n-nās*
3. *Ilāhi ’n-nās*
4. *Min sharri ’l-waswāsi ’l-khannās*
5. *Alladhī yuwaswisu fī ṣudūri ’n-nās*
6. *Mina ’l-jinnati wa’n-nās*

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Glossary

ʾĀlim – a scholar with formal training in Islamic Theology, having studied Arabic, Fiqh, Ḥadīth and Qurʾān, and their principles to a high standard. Plural: ʾUlamā

Aya – literally, a miracle, or a sign. In our context, it refers to a ‘verse’ or a ‘sentence’ of the Qurʾān. Plural: *āyāt*

Basmala – the formula “Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm” [In the name of Allāh, the All-Merciful, the Especially Merciful], recited at the start of every good action.

Ḥadīth – a recorded saying, action or approval of the Messenger of Allāh



Ḥāfiẓ – one who has memorised the entire Qurʾān; also an honorific for master ḥadīth scholars.