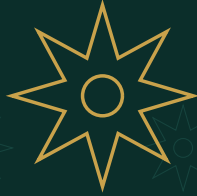


SURAH AS A STORY



Surah Al-Ma'idah

The Table Spread

The complete journey — the surah of covenants —
told the way a loving elder shares it with a child



Surah No. 5 • 120 Ayahs • Medinan

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The Surah at a Glance

Yaaa ayyuhal-lazeena aamanooo awfoo bil-'uqood

1. O you who have believed, fulfil all contracts.

*Al-yawma akmaltu lakum deenakum wa atmamtu
'alaykum ni'matee*

3. This day I have perfected for you your religion and
completed My favour upon you.

I'diloo; huwa aqrabu littaqwaa

8. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness.

*Wa man ahyaahaa fa-ka'annamaaaa ahyana-naasa
jamee'aa*

32. And whoever saves one life, it is as if he had saved all
of mankind.

Fastabiqul-khayraat

48. So race to all that is good.

*Fasawfa ya'til-laahu biqawminy-yuhibbuhum wa
yuhibboonah*

54. Allah will bring forth a people He will love and who
will love Him.

Listen to the Arabic recitation of this Surah, ayah by ayah, with the Qari
— free on nooraniilm.com (Read & Recite section).



Fulfil the Contracts

Beta, this surah is among the last to be revealed, and it is the surah of COVENANTS. It opens with a command that covers every agreement a human being ever enters:

'YA AYYUHAL-LAZINA AMANOO AWFOO BIL-'UQOOD
— O YOU WHO HAVE BELIEVED, FULFIL ALL
CONTRACTS.'

Beta, 'uqood' is the plural of 'aqd' — a knot, a binding. And the scholars said it covers every one of them: your covenant with Allah, your marriage contract, your employment terms, your business agreements, your promise to a child, and the thing you said you would do and never did.

Beta, note that this is the FIRST command in this surah. Before food, before law, before anything else: keep your word.

The surah then details what is lawful to eat and what is not, and forbids violating the sacred symbols and



months. And then, beta, it gives a command about how to treat people you have every reason to resent:

'WA LA YAJRIMANNAKUM SHANA'ANU QAWMIN AN SADDOOKUM 'ANIL-MASJIDIL-HARAMI AN TA'TADOO — AND DO NOT LET THE HATRED OF A PEOPLE FOR HAVING OBSTRUCTED YOU FROM THE SACRED MOSQUE LEAD YOU TO TRANSGRESS.'

Beta, understand who this was about. These were the people who had physically blocked the believers from Makkah, turned them back at Hudaybiyyah, and driven them from their homes. And the instruction is: your hatred of them must not push you across the line.

'WA TA'AWANOO 'ALAL-BIRRI WAT-TAQWA WA LA TA'AWANOO 'ALAL-ITHMI WAL-'UDWAN — AND COOPERATE IN RIGHTEOUSNESS AND PIETY, AND DO NOT COOPERATE IN SIN AND AGGRESSION.'

Beta, memorise this. It is the rule for every partnership, every group, every job. Ask what you are cooperating IN. Being part of a team does not remove your share in what



the team does.

And then, beta, the ayah that came down on the Day of 'Arafah in the Farewell Pilgrimage:

'AL-YAWMA AKMALTU LAKUM DEENAKUM WA
ATMAMTU 'ALAYKUM NI'MATEE WA RADEETU
LAKUMUL-ISLAMA DEENA — THIS DAY I HAVE
PERFECTED FOR YOU YOUR RELIGION AND
COMPLETED MY FAVOUR UPON YOU AND HAVE
APPROVED FOR YOU ISLAM AS RELIGION.'

Beta, it is reported that a man said to 'Umar (radiyallahu anhu) that if this ayah had come to them, they would have taken that day as a festival. And 'Umar said: I know the day it was revealed and the place — it was revealed on the day of 'Arafah, on a Friday.

Beta, and note what 'perfected' means: nothing was left out, and nothing may be added. Anyone who invents a new act of worship and calls it part of this religion is saying, in effect, that something was missing on that day.



Be Just — It Is Nearer to Taqwa

The surah then gives the ayah of wudu, beta — the washing of the face, the arms to the elbows, the wiping of the head, and the feet to the ankles — and the allowance of tayammum when water is not available or one is ill.

And note how that ayah ends: 'MA YUREEDULLAHU LI-YAJ'ALA 'ALAYKUM MIN HARAJIN WA LAKIN YUREEDU LI-YUTAHHIRAKUM WA LI-YUTIMMA NI'MATAHU 'ALAYKUM LA'ALLAKUM TASHKUROON — ALLAH DOES NOT INTEND TO MAKE DIFFICULTY FOR YOU, BUT HE INTENDS TO PURIFY YOU AND COMPLETE HIS FAVOUR UPON YOU, THAT YOU MAY BE GRATEFUL.'

Beta, that is the spirit of the whole law: purification without hardship.

And then, beta, one of the greatest ayahs about justice ever revealed:



'YA AYYUHAL-LAZINA AMANOO KOONOO
QAWWAMEENA LILLAHI SHUHADA'A BIL-QIST — O
YOU WHO HAVE BELIEVED, BE PERSISTENTLY
STANDING FIRM FOR ALLAH, WITNESSES IN JUSTICE
— WA LA YAJRIMANNAKUM SHANA'ANU QAWMIN
'ALA ALLA TA'DILOO — AND DO NOT LET THE
HATRED OF A PEOPLE PREVENT YOU FROM BEING
JUST — I'DILOO HUWA AQRABU LIT-TAQWA — BE
JUST; THAT IS NEARER TO RIGHTEOUSNESS —
WATTAQULLAH — and fear Allah.'

Beta, take this apart, because there is nothing like it.

'Shana'an' is not mild dislike. It is deep-seated hatred,
the kind you have for someone who has genuinely
wronged you.

And Allah does not say 'do not hate them'. He accepts
that the feeling exists — and forbids it from affecting
your JUDGEMENT.

So: you may dislike a person intensely, and you must
still describe him accurately, testify honestly about him,



give him his rights, and not exaggerate his faults.

Beta, look at the world around you and see how rare this is. When we dislike someone, we believe every bad report about him and doubt every good one. When we like someone, we do the reverse. This ayah forbids both.

'I'DILOO HUWA AQRABU LIT-TAQWA' — BE JUST; IT IS NEARER TO TAQWA. Beta, what a phrase. Justice is described as the thing closest to God-consciousness. You want to be close to Allah? Be FAIR — especially to the person you cannot stand.

The First Murder

The surah then recounts the covenant taken from the Children of Israel, and the twelve chiefs, and Allah's words to them: 'INNI MA'AKUM' — INDEED, I AM WITH YOU — conditional on prayer, zakah, belief in the messengers and supporting them, and a goodly loan to Allah.



And it recounts their refusal to enter the holy land, and the reply of the two men who feared Allah: 'UDKHULOO 'ALAYHIMUL-BABA FA-IZA DAKHALTUMOOHU FA-INNAKUM GHALIBOON — ENTER UPON THEM THROUGH THE GATE; WHEN YOU HAVE ENTERED IT, YOU WILL BE PREDOMINANT — WA 'ALALLAHI FA-TAWAKKALOO IN KUNTUM MU'MINEEN — and upon Allah rely, if you should be believers.'

And their people answered: 'FAZ-HAB ANTA WA RABBUKA FA-QATILA INNA HAHUNA QA'IDOOON — GO, YOU AND YOUR LORD, AND FIGHT; WE ARE STAYING RIGHT HERE.'

Beta, and forty years of wandering followed. Some sentences cost a generation.

And then, beta, the surah tells the story of the two sons of Adam — the first murder in human history.

Each offered a sacrifice; one was accepted and the other was not. And the one whose offering was rejected said: 'LA-AQTULANNAK' — I WILL SURELY KILL YOU.



And his brother's reply, beta, is one of the noblest speeches in the Quran:

'INNAMA YATAQABBALULLAHU MINAL-MUTTAQEEN
— ALLAH ONLY ACCEPTS FROM THE RIGHTEOUS.'

Beta, that answer goes to the root. The problem was not the offering. It was the state of the one who offered it.

'LA'IN BASATTA ILAYYA YADAKA LI-TAQTULANEE MA
ANA BI-BASITIN YADIYA ILAYKA LI-AQTULAK — IF
YOU SHOULD RAISE YOUR HAND TOWARD ME TO
KILL ME, I SHALL NOT RAISE MY HAND TOWARD YOU
TO KILL YOU — INNI AKHAFULLAHA
RABBAL-'ALAMEEN — INDEED, I FEAR ALLAH, LORD
OF THE WORLDS.'

Beta, that is not weakness. He explicitly gives his reason:
not fear of his brother — fear of ALLAH. He would not
become a killer.

'FA-TAWWA'AT LAHU NAFSUHU QATLA AKHEEHI
FA-QATALAHU FA-ASBAHA MINAL-KHASIREEN —



AND HIS SOUL PERMITTED TO HIM THE MURDER OF HIS BROTHER, SO HE KILLED HIM AND BECAME AMONG THE LOSERS.'

Beta, 'fa-tawwa'at lahu nafsuhu' — his own soul MADE IT EASY for him, talked him into it. Every great wrong is preceded by that internal negotiation.

And then a crow was sent, scratching the ground to show him how to bury his brother's body. 'YA WAYLATA A 'AJAZTU AN AKOONA MITHLA HAZAL-GHURABI FA-UWARIYA SAW'ATA AKHEE — WOE TO ME! HAVE I FAILED TO BE LIKE THIS CROW AND HIDE MY BROTHER'S BODY? — FA-ASBAHA MINAN-NADIMEEN — AND HE BECAME OF THE REGRETFUL.'

Beta, note the timing of his regret: after the act, and even then it was about the burial, not the killing.

And then, beta, the ayah that follows — one of the most important ayahs in the Quran about human life:



'MIN AJLI ZALIKA KATABNA 'ALA BANEE ISRA'EELA
ANNAHU MAN QATALA NAFSAN BI-GHAYRI NAFSIN
AW FASADIN FIL-ARDI FA-KA-ANNAMA
QATALAN-NASA JAMEE'A — BECAUSE OF THAT, WE
DECREED UPON THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL THAT
WHOEVER KILLS A SOUL — UNLESS FOR A SOUL OR
FOR CORRUPTION IN THE LAND — IT IS AS IF HE HAD
KILLED ALL OF MANKIND — WA MAN AHYAHA
FA-KA-ANNAMA AHYAN-NASA JAMEE'A — AND
WHOEVER SAVES ONE LIFE, IT IS AS IF HE HAD SAVED
ALL OF MANKIND.'

Beta, one soul is weighed against all of humanity. That is the value Allah placed on a single human life.

And note the second half is equally emphatic: saving ONE life counts as saving everyone. So the doctor, the one who pulls someone from a river, the one who talks a person back from the edge of despair, the one who feeds someone who would not have survived — each of them, in Allah's accounting, saved the world.



A Law and a Way

The surah then details rulings on theft and its repentance — 'FA-MAN TABA MIN BA'DI ZULMIHI WA ASLAHA FA-INNALLAHA YATOObU 'ALAYH — but whoever repents after his wrongdoing and reforms — indeed, Allah will turn to him in forgiveness' — and it addresses those who rush toward disbelief, and those who listen eagerly to lies.

And it describes a serious disease: 'SAMMA'OONA LIL-KAZIBI AKKALOONA LIS-SUHT — EAGER LISTENERS TO FALSEHOOD, DEVOURERS OF UNLAWFUL GAIN.'

Beta, 'samma'oona lil-kazib' — people who LISTEN eagerly to lies. The listener is named as a participant, not an innocent party. There would be no market for slander if there were no eager audience.

And then, beta, an ayah that explains the relationship between all the scriptures:



'WA ANZALNA ILAYKAL-KITABA BIL-HAQQI
MUSADDIQAN LIMA BAYNA YADAYHI MINAL-KITABI
WA MUHAYMINAN 'ALAYH — AND WE HAVE
REVEALED TO YOU THE BOOK IN TRUTH,
CONFIRMING WHAT CAME BEFORE IT OF THE
SCRIPTURE AND AS A CRITERION OVER IT.'

Beta, 'muhaymin' — a guardian, a witness, an authority
over. The Quran confirms what was true in earlier
revelation and stands as the final judge over what was
altered.

'LI-KULLIN JA'ALNA MINKUM SHIR'ATAN WA
MINHAJA — TO EACH OF YOU WE PRESCRIBED A LAW
AND A METHOD — WA LAW SHA'ALLAHU
LA-JA'ALAKUM UMMATAN WAHIDATAN WA LAKIN
LI-YABLUWAKUM FEE MA ATAKUM — AND IF ALLAH
HAD WILLED, HE WOULD HAVE MADE YOU ONE
NATION, BUT (He intended) TO TEST YOU IN WHAT
HE HAS GIVEN YOU — FASTABIQUL-KHAYRAT — SO
RACE TO ALL THAT IS GOOD.'



Beta, 'FASTABIQUL-KHAYRAT' — RACE toward good deeds. Not walk. Not intend. RACE.

Beta, we compete over everything else — income, houses, results, recognition. And Allah names the one race worth entering. Beta, ask yourself who you are competing with, and in what.

A People He Will Love

The surah then warns the believers about their alliances and about those who take the religion as amusement, and then, beta, comes an ayah that should be read by anyone worried about the future of this deen:

'YA AYYUHAL-LAZINA AMANOO MAN YARTADDA MINKUM 'AN DEENIHI FA-SAWFA YA'TILLAHU BI-QAWMIN YUHIBBUHUM WA YUHIBBOONAHU — O YOU WHO HAVE BELIEVED, WHOEVER OF YOU SHOULD REVERT FROM HIS RELIGION — ALLAH WILL BRING FORTH A PEOPLE HE WILL LOVE AND WHO WILL LOVE HIM.'



'AZILLATIN 'ALAL-MU'MINEENA A'IZZATIN
'ALAL-KAFIREEN — HUMBLE TOWARD THE
BELIEVERS, MIGHTY AGAINST THE DISBELIEVERS —
YUJAHIDOONA FEE SABEELILLAHI WA LA
YAKHAFOONA LAWMATA LA'IM — THEY STRIVE IN
THE CAUSE OF ALLAH AND DO NOT FEAR THE BLAME
OF A CRITIC — ZALIKA FADLULLAHI YU'TEEHI MAN
YASHA' — THAT IS THE FAVOUR OF ALLAH; HE
BESTOWS IT UPON WHOM HE WILLS.'

Beta, look at the four qualities named:

First: 'yuhibbuhum wa yuhibboonahu' — HE LOVES
THEM, and THEY LOVE HIM. And note the order: His
love comes first. Your love for Him is a response to
something that started with Him.

Second: 'azillatin 'alal-mu'mineen' — LOW, gentle, soft
toward the believers. Not merely polite — lowered, like
a wing.

Third: 'a'izzatin 'alal-kafireen' — dignified and
unyielding where the truth is concerned.



Fourth, and beta, this one is the hardest: 'LA YAKHAFOONA LAWMATA LA'IM' — THEY DO NOT FEAR THE BLAME OF A BLAMER.

Beta, most people can face danger more easily than they can face disapproval. We are ruled by what people will say. This quality is the freedom from that — doing what is right when the room disagrees, when the family disagrees, when the whole age disagrees.

And note the reassurance in the ayah as a whole: if some people leave this deen, it is not damaged. Allah will bring others. The deen does not need us; we need it.

Do Not Forbid the Good Things

The surah then gives an instruction, beta, that guards against a very religious-looking mistake:

'YA AYYUHAL-LAZINA AMANOO LA TUHARRIMOO TAYYIBATI MA AHALLALLAHU LAKUM WA LA TA'TADOO — O YOU WHO HAVE BELIEVED, DO NOT FORBID THE GOOD THINGS WHICH ALLAH HAS MADE



LAWFUL TO YOU, AND DO NOT TRANSGRESS —
INNALLAHA LA YUHIBBUL-MU'TADEEN — indeed,
Allah does not like transgressors.'

Beta, it is reported that some companions had resolved to give up meat, to fast every day, to stay awake in prayer all night, and to abandon marriage — out of sincere devotion. And the Prophet ﷺ corrected them and said that he fasts and breaks his fast, prays and sleeps, and marries women — and whoever turns away from his way is not of him.

Beta, so extremism in worship is named here as TRANSGRESSION. Forbidding yourself what Allah permitted is not extra piety; it is stepping over a line.

The surah then deals with oaths and their expiation, and then, beta, it gives the final and decisive ruling on intoxicants and gambling:

'YA AYYUHAL-LAZINA AMANOO INNAMAL-KHAMRU
WAL-MAYSIRU WAL-ANSABU WAL-AZLAMU RIJSUN
MIN 'AMALISH-SHAYTANI FAJTANIBOOHU



LA'ALLAKUM TUFLIHOON — O YOU WHO HAVE BELIEVED, INTOXICANTS, GAMBLING, IDOL ALTARS AND DIVINING ARROWS ARE DEFILEMENT FROM THE WORK OF SHAYTAN, SO AVOID IT THAT YOU MAY BE SUCCESSFUL.'

'INNAMA YUREEDUSH-SHAYTANU AN YOOQI'A BAYNAKUMUL-'ADAWATA WAL-BAGHDA'A FIL-KHAMRI WAL-MAYSIRI WA YASUDDAKUM 'AN ZIKRILLAH WA 'ANIS-SALAH — SHAYTAN ONLY WANTS TO CAUSE BETWEEN YOU ENMITY AND HATRED THROUGH INTOXICANTS AND GAMBLING, AND TO AVERT YOU FROM THE REMEMBRANCE OF ALLAH AND FROM PRAYER — FA-HAL ANTUM MUNTAHOON — SO WILL YOU NOT DESIST?'

Beta, note the two harms named: they destroy RELATIONSHIPS, and they take you away from PRAYER. Look at any family broken by either of these and you will find both effects.



And note the ending: 'fa-hal antum muntahoon' — SO WILL YOU NOT DESIST? A question, not an order. And it is reported that when this was recited, the companions said: we have desisted, we have desisted — and the wine was poured out into the streets of Madinah that same day.

The Table, and the Final Question

And now, beta, the passage that gives this surah its name.

The disciples of 'Isa (alaihis salam) asked: 'HAL YASTATEE'U RABBUKA AN YUNAZZILA 'ALAYNA MA'IDATAN MINAS-SAMA' — IS YOUR LORD ABLE TO SEND DOWN TO US A TABLE SPREAD WITH FOOD FROM THE HEAVEN?'

And he answered: 'ITTAQULLAHA IN KUNTUM MU'MINEEN — FEAR ALLAH, IF YOU SHOULD BE BELIEVERS.'



They explained that they wished to eat from it, to have their hearts reassured, and to know that he had told them the truth. And he made the du'a: 'ALLAHUMMA RABBANA ANZIL 'ALAYNA MA'IDATAN MINAS-SAMA'I TAKOONU LANA 'EEDAN LI-AWWALINA WA AKHIRINA WA AYATAN MINK — O ALLAH, OUR LORD, SEND DOWN TO US A TABLE FROM THE HEAVEN TO BE FOR US A FESTIVAL FOR THE FIRST OF US AND THE LAST OF US, AND A SIGN FROM YOU.'

And Allah said: 'INNI MUNAZZILUHA 'ALAYKUM — I WILL SEND IT DOWN TO YOU — FA-MAN YAKFUR BA'DU MINKUM FA-INNI U'AZZIBUHU 'AZABAN LA U'AZZIBUHU AHADAN MINAL-'ALAMEEN — BUT WHOEVER DISBELIEVES AFTERWARDS FROM AMONG YOU — THEN INDEED WILL I PUNISH HIM WITH A PUNISHMENT BY WHICH I HAVE NOT PUNISHED ANYONE AMONG THE WORLDS.'

Beta, learn something from this. A miracle you have DEMANDED raises the stakes enormously. Once you



have seen it, there is no room left to waver. That is why Allah, in His mercy, often withholds the signs people demand.

And then, beta, the surah — and the whole discussion of covenants — closes with a scene from the Day of Judgement that will silence every argument.

'WA IZ QALALLAHU YA 'EESAB-NA MARYAMA A ANTA QULTA LIN-NASIT-TAKHIZOONEE WA UMMIYA ILAHAYNI MIN DOONILLAH — AND WHEN ALLAH WILL SAY: O 'ISA, SON OF MARYAM, DID YOU SAY TO THE PEOPLE: TAKE ME AND MY MOTHER AS DEITIES BESIDES ALLAH?'

And his answer, beta — listen to the adab in it:

'SUBHANAKA MA YAKOONU LEE AN AQOOLA MA LAYSA LEE BI-HAQQ — EXALTED ARE YOU! IT WAS NOT FOR ME TO SAY THAT TO WHICH I HAVE NO RIGHT — IN KUNTU QULTUHU FA-QAD 'ALIMTAH — IF I HAD SAID IT, YOU WOULD HAVE KNOWN IT — TA'LAMU MA FEE NAFSEE WA LA A'LAMU MA FEE



NAFSIK — YOU KNOW WHAT IS WITHIN MYSELF,
AND I DO NOT KNOW WHAT IS WITHIN YOURSELF —
INNAKA ANTA 'ALLAMUL-GHUYOOB — indeed, it is
You who is Knower of the unseen.'

'MA QULTU LAHUM ILLA MA AMARTANEE BIHI
ANI'-BUDULLAHA RABBEE WA RABBAKUM — I SAID
NOT TO THEM EXCEPT WHAT YOU COMMANDED ME:
WORSHIP ALLAH, MY LORD AND YOUR LORD — WA
KUNTU 'ALAYHIM SHAHEEDAN MA DUMTU FEEHIM
— and I was a witness over them as long as I was among
them — FA-LAMMA TAWAFFAYTANEE KUNTA
ANTAR-RAQEEBA 'ALAYHIM — but when You took me
up, You were the Observer over them.'

And then, beta, the sentence that has moved every
reader who has understood it:

'IN TU'AZZIBHUM FA-INNAHUM 'IBADUK — IF YOU
SHOULD PUNISH THEM — INDEED, THEY ARE YOUR
SERVANTS — WA IN TAGHFIR LAHUM FA-INNAKA
ANTAL-'AZEEZUL-HAKEEM — AND IF YOU FORGIVE



THEM — INDEED, IT IS YOU WHO IS THE ALMIGHTY, THE WISE.'

Beta, look at the perfection of that answer. He does not plead for them, and he does not condemn them. He states two possibilities and leaves the matter entirely where it belongs.

And notice which names he chose for the second half. You would expect: if You forgive them, You are the Forgiving, the Merciful. Instead he said: THE ALMIGHTY, THE WISE.

The scholars explained: because forgiving them would look, to a human mind, like something requiring justification — and he is saying that Allah's forgiveness is never weakness. He is 'Al-'Azeez', the Almighty, who forgives from a position of total power; and 'Al-Hakeem', the Wise, who does not forgive carelessly.

Beta, it is reported that the Prophet ﷺ stood one night reciting this ayah, repeating it until morning.



'QALALLAHU HAZA YAWMU YANFA'US-SADIQEENA
SIDQUHUM — ALLAH WILL SAY: THIS IS THE DAY
WHEN THE TRUTHFUL WILL BENEFIT FROM THEIR
TRUTHFULNESS.'

Beta, that is the last verdict of this surah. On the Day
when nothing else works — no argument, no wealth, no
connections — what will benefit a person is that he was
TRUE.

And the final ayah, beta: 'LILLAHI
MULKUS-SAMAWATI WAL-ARDI WA MA FEEHINN —
TO ALLAH BELONGS THE DOMINION OF THE
HEAVENS AND THE EARTH AND WHATEVER IS
WITHIN THEM — WA HUWA 'ALA KULLI SHAY'IN
QADEER — and He is over all things competent.'

Beta, so the surah of covenants ends by naming the One
who owns everything. And that is the ground of every
covenant: you keep your word because you belong to
Him, and so does everyone you gave your word to.

What This Surah Teaches Us



1. The first command in the surah is 'fulfil all contracts' — every knot you have tied, with Allah or with people.
 2. Ask what you are cooperating IN — being on a team does not remove your share in what it does.
 3. Hatred is not forbidden; letting it bend your judgement is — 'be just; that is nearer to taqwa'.
 4. One life weighed against all of humanity — and whoever saves one has saved everyone.
 5. 'Fastabiqul-khayrat' — RACE toward good; ask what you are actually competing in.
 6. The hardest of the four qualities He loves: they do not fear the blame of a blamer.
 7. 'If You punish them, they are Your servants; and if You forgive them, You are the Almighty, the Wise' — forgiveness from Allah is never weakness.
- Ya Allah, make us of those who keep their covenants, are just to those they dislike, and are TRUE on the Day



when only truthfulness benefits. Ameen.

— This is a simplified, faithful retelling for understanding, based on the Quran's translation and established tafseer (Ibn Kathir and others). For deeper study, always read with a qualified teacher. —

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