

SURAH AS A STORY



Surah Al-A'raf

The Heights

The complete journey — the covenant every soul made —
told the way a loving elder shares it with a child



Surah No. 7 • 206 Ayahs • Meccan

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The Surah at a Glance

*Yaa Baneee Aadama khuzoo zeenatakum 'inda
kulli masjidin*

31. O children of Adam, take your adornment at every place of prayer.

*Wa kuloo washraboo wa laa tusrifoo; innahoo laa
yuhibbul-musrifeen*

31. And eat and drink, but be not excessive. Indeed, He likes not those who commit excess.

Ud'oo Rabbakum tadarru'anw-wa khufyah

55. Call upon your Lord in humility and privately.

Inna rahmatal-laahi qareebum-minal-muhsineen

56. Indeed, the mercy of Allah is near to the doers of good.

Alastu bi-Rabbikum; qaaloo balaa shahidnaa

172. Am I not your Lord? They said: Yes, we have testified.

*Khuzil-'afwa wa'mur bil-'urfi wa a'rid
'anil-jaahileen*

199. Take what is easy, enjoin what is good, and turn away from the ignorant.



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The Weighing, and the First Refusal

Beta, this is a long surah, and it walks you through the entire story of the human race — from the first prostration in the heavens to the Day the scales are set up.

It opens by telling the Messenger ﷺ not to feel constricted by this Book, and then it puts a scene in front of you:

'WAL-WAZNU YAWMA'IZINIL-HAQQ — AND THE
WEIGHING THAT DAY WILL BE THE TRUTH —
FA-MAN THAQULAT MAWAZEENUHU FA-ULA'IKA
HUMUL-MUFLIHOON — so those whose scales are
HEAVY, it is they who will be successful — WA MAN
KHAFFAT MAWAZEENUHU FA-ULA'IKAL-LAZINA
KHASIROO ANFUSAHUM — and those whose scales are
LIGHT — THEY ARE THE ONES WHO HAVE LOST
THEMSELVES.'



Beta, note the phrase for failure: 'khasiroo ANFUSAHUM' — they lost THEMSELVES. Not their wealth, not their opportunity. Their own selves.

And then the surah goes back to the beginning: the command to prostrate to Adam, and Iblees's refusal — 'ANA KHAYRUN MINHU KHALAQTAKEE MIN NARIN WA KHALAQTAHU MIN TEEN', the same argument of material we have met before.

And then his plan is stated in a way found only here: 'THUMMA LA-ATYANNAHUM MIN BAYNI AYDEEHIM WA MIN KHALFIHIM WA 'AN AYMANIHIM WA 'AN SHAMA'ILIHIM — THEN I WILL COME TO THEM FROM BEFORE THEM AND FROM BEHIND THEM, AND FROM THEIR RIGHT AND FROM THEIR LEFT — WA LA TAJIDU AKTHARAHUM SHAKIREEN — AND YOU WILL NOT FIND MOST OF THEM GRATEFUL.'

Beta, four directions of attack. The scholars explained: from the front — making them doubt the Hereafter;



from behind — making them greedy for this world;
from the right — confusing them in matters of religion;
from the left — beautifying sin.

And note what he expects to strip from them:

GRATITUDE. That is his target — 'you will not find most of them GRATEFUL'. Beta, so a grateful person is one who has escaped him.

And the scholars observed something beautiful: he did not say 'from above them or below them' — because from above comes Allah's mercy, and below is where a servant prostrates.

Adam, and the Two Kinds of Clothing

Adam and his wife were placed in the Garden, and told to eat freely except from one tree. And shaytan whispered to them: 'MA NAHAKUMA RABBUKUMA 'AN HAZIHISH-SHAJARATI ILLA AN TAKOONA MALAKAYNI AW TAKOONA MINAL-KHALIDEEN — your Lord did not forbid you this tree except that you should become angels, or become of the IMMORTALS —



WA QASAMAHUMA INNI LAKUMA
LA-MINAN-NASIHEEN — AND HE SWORE TO THEM:
INDEED, I AM TO YOU FROM AMONG THE SINCERE
ADVISERS.'

Beta, note two things. He offered PERMANENCE — that
is always his product. And he SWORE BY ALLAH that he
was giving sincere advice.

Beta, a liar who takes an oath is more dangerous than
one who does not, and this was the first oath of that
kind ever sworn.

'FA-DALLAHUMA BI-GHUROOR — SO HE MADE THEM
FALL THROUGH DECEPTION — FA-LAMMA
ZAQAS-SHAJARATA BADAT LAHUMA SAW'ATUHUMA
WA TAFIQA YAKHSIFANI 'ALAYHIMA MIN
WARAQIL-JANNAH — and when they tasted of the tree,
their private parts became apparent to them, and they
began to fasten over themselves from the leaves of the
Garden.'



Beta, the first consequence of the first sin was SHAME, and the first instinct was to COVER.

And their repentance, beta, is the du'a of every human being who has slipped: 'RABBANA ZALAMNA ANFUSANA WA IN LAM TAGHFIR LANA WA TARHAMNA LA-NAKOONANNA MINAL-KHASIREEN — OUR LORD, WE HAVE WRONGED OURSELVES, AND IF YOU DO NOT FORGIVE US AND HAVE MERCY UPON US, WE WILL SURELY BE AMONG THE LOSERS.'

Beta, compare this to Iblees's response when he was in the wrong. Iblees argued and blamed; Adam confessed and asked. Same situation, two responses — and they produced two completely different destinies. That is the choice you make every time you slip.

And then, beta, Allah addresses all of us:

'YA BANEE ADAMA QAD ANZALNA 'ALAYKUM LIBASAN YUWAREE SAW'ATIKUM WA REESHA — O CHILDREN OF ADAM, WE HAVE BESTOWED UPON YOU CLOTHING TO COVER YOUR PRIVATE PARTS AND



AS ADORNMENT — WA LIBASUT-TAQWA ZALIKA
KHAYR — BUT THE CLOTHING OF RIGHTEOUSNESS —
THAT IS BEST.'

Beta, two garments are named. The outer one covers the body. The inner one — 'libasut-taqwa' — covers the soul. And a person can be perfectly dressed in the first and completely naked in the second.

'YA BANEE ADAMA LA
YAFTINANNAKUMUSH-SHAYTANU KAMA AKHRAJA
ABAWAYKUM MINAL-JANNATI YANZI'U 'ANHUMA
LIBASAHUMA — O children of Adam, DO NOT LET
SHAYTAN TEMPT YOU AS HE REMOVED YOUR
PARENTS FROM THE GARDEN, STRIPPING THEM OF
THEIR CLOTHING — INNAHU YARAKUM HUWA WA
QABEELUHU MIN HAYTHU LA TARAWNAHUM —
INDEED, HE SEES YOU, HE AND HIS TRIBE, FROM
WHERE YOU DO NOT SEE THEM.'

Beta, that is why the fight is unequal in one direction —
he sees you and you do not see him. Which is exactly



why your protection is not vigilance but seeking refuge in the One who sees him.

Take Your Adornment, and Do Not Be Excessive

And then, beta, an ayah that some scholars called the foundation of medicine and of good living:

'YA BANEE ADAMA KHUZOO ZEENATAKUM 'INDA KULLI MASJIDIN — O CHILDREN OF ADAM, TAKE YOUR ADORNMENT AT EVERY PLACE OF PRAYER — WA KULOO WASHRABOO WA LA TUSRIFOO — AND EAT AND DRINK, BUT BE NOT EXCESSIVE — INNAHU LA YUHIIBBUL-MUSRIFEEN — indeed, He does not like those who commit excess.'

Beta, three instructions in one line.

'Khuzoo zeenatakum 'inda kulli masjid' — dress well for prayer. The people of that time would circle the House in a state of undress and consider it religious. And Islam said: come to Allah's house properly dressed. Beta, we



sometimes dress carefully for a wedding and go to the masjid in whatever was nearest. This ayah reverses that.

'Wa kuloo washraboo' — EAT AND DRINK. Beta, notice: enjoyment is permitted, and commanded. This is not a religion of deprivation.

'WA LA TUSRIFOO' — but do not be excessive. And it is reported that this half-ayah was described as containing the whole of medicine: the diseases of plenty come from crossing this line.

And then the surah asks a question that settles the matter of what is permitted: 'QUL MAN HARRAMA ZEENATALLAHIL-LATI AKHRAJA LI-'IBADIHI WAT-TAYYIBATI MINAR-RIZQ — SAY: WHO HAS FORBIDDEN THE ADORNMENT OF ALLAH WHICH HE HAS PRODUCED FOR HIS SERVANTS, AND THE GOOD THINGS OF PROVISION?'

Beta, the default in this deen is permission. What Allah made good and beautiful was made for you. Only what He specifically forbade is forbidden — and no one has



the right to add to that list.

'QUL INNAMA HARRAMA RABBIYAL-FAWAHISHA MA ZAHARA MINHA WA MA BATAN — say: my Lord has only forbidden immoralities, what is apparent of them and what is concealed — WAL-ITHMA WAL-BAGHYA BI-GHAYRIL-HAQQ — and sin, and oppression without right — WA AN TUSHRIKOO BILLAHI MA LAM YUNAZZIL BIHI SULTANA — and that you associate with Allah that for which He has sent down no authority — WA AN TAQOOLOO 'ALALLAHI MA LA TA'LAMOON — AND THAT YOU SAY ABOUT ALLAH WHAT YOU DO NOT KNOW.'

Beta, note that last one, placed in the same list as shirk and oppression: speaking about Allah without knowledge. Saying 'Allah says' or 'this is haram' or 'Allah will not forgive that person' — without knowledge.

Call Upon Him Humbly and Privately



The surah then describes creation and the succession of night and day, and gives instructions on du'a, beta — and this passage is precious:

'UD'OO RABBAKUM TADARRU'AN WA KHUFYAH —
CALL UPON YOUR LORD IN HUMILITY AND
PRIVATELY — INNAHU LA YUHIBBUL-MU'TADEEN
— indeed, He does not like transgressors.'

Beta, two conditions for du'a: 'tadarru' — humility, lowliness, the posture of a beggar; and 'khufyah' — QUIETLY, privately, not for anyone else to hear.

Beta, the loudness of a du'a adds nothing. You are not calling someone far away.

'WA LA TUFSIDOO FIL-ARDI BA'DA ISLAHIHA — and do not cause corruption on the earth after its reformation — WAD'OOHU KHAWFAN WA TAMA'AN — AND CALL ON HIM IN FEAR AND HOPE — INNA RAHMATALLAHI QAREEBUN MINAL-MUHSINEEN — INDEED, THE MERCY OF ALLAH IS NEAR TO THE DOERS OF GOOD.'



Beta, 'qareebun minal-muhsineen' — His mercy is NEAR to those who do good. Beta, that phrase should draw you toward ihsan: mercy is not distributed at random; it stands close to a certain kind of person.

And then a beautiful sign, beta: 'WA HUWAL-LAZI YURSILUR-RIYAH BUSHRAN BAYNA YADAY RAHMATIH — and it is He who sends the winds as good tidings BEFORE HIS MERCY — HATTA IZA AQALLAT SAHABAN THIQALAN SUQNAHU LI-BALADIN MAYYITIN FA-ANZALNA BIHIL-MA'A FA-AKHRAJNA BIHI MIN KULLITH-THAMARAT — until, when they carry heavy clouds, We DRIVE THEM TO A DEAD LAND and send down rain and bring forth every kind of fruit — KAZALIKA NUKHRIJUL-MAWTA LA'ALLAKUM TAZAKKAROON — THUS WILL WE BRING FORTH THE DEAD; PERHAPS YOU WILL BE REMINDED.'

Beta, note the wind is called 'good tidings BEFORE His mercy' — the breeze that comes before rain is announcing something. And the rain itself is called RAHMAH — mercy.



'WAL-BALADUT-TAYYIBU YAKHRUJU NABATUHU
BI-IZNI RABBIH — AND THE GOOD LAND — ITS
VEGETATION EMERGES BY PERMISSION OF ITS LORD
— WAL-LAZI KHABUTHA LA YAKHRUJU ILLA NAKIDA
— BUT THAT WHICH IS BAD — NOTHING EMERGES
EXCEPT SPARSELY, WITH DIFFICULTY.'

Beta, the same rain again, two soils. This surah and Ar-Ra'd both come back to this point, because it is the whole question of why the same guidance produces different people.

Nations Before You

The surah then recounts the messengers in sequence, beta — Nuh, Hud, Salih, Lut, Shu'ayb — and each account carries something to keep.

Nuh (alaihis salam) said: 'INNI AKHAFU 'ALAYKUM
'AZABA YAWMIN 'AZEEM' — I fear for you the
punishment of a tremendous Day. And they called him
misguided. And he answered: 'YA QAWMI LAYSA BEE
DALALATUN WA LAKINNI RASOOLUN MIN



RABBIL-'ALAMEEN — O my people, there is no error in me, but I am a messenger from the Lord of the worlds — UBALLIGHUKUM RISALATI RABBEE WA ANSAHU LAKUM — I CONVEY TO YOU THE MESSAGES OF MY LORD AND ADVISE YOU — WA A'LAMU MINALLAHI MA LA TA'LAMOON — and I know from Allah what you do not know.'

Beta, note his self-description: 'I advise you.' Every one of these men saw himself as an ADVISER to people who were insulting him.

Hud (alaihis salam) was told: 'INNA LA-NARAKA FEE SAFAHATIN WA INNA LA-NAZUNNUKA MINAL-KAZIBEEN — we see you in FOOLISHNESS, and we think you are a liar.' And his reply: 'YA QAWMI LAYSA BEE SAFAHATUN WA LAKINNI RASOOLUN MIN RABBIL-'ALAMEEN — there is no foolishness in me.'

Beta, calm denial, no insult returned. That is how a man answers when he is sure of his ground.



Salih (alaihis salam) and the she-camel; and note the ayah about their society:

'QALAL-MALA'UL-LAZINAS-TAKBAROO MIN QAWMIHI LILLAZINAS-TUD'IFOO LI-MAN AMANA MINHUM — THE ARROGANT AMONG HIS PEOPLE SAID TO THE OPPRESSED — TO THOSE AMONG THEM WHO BELIEVED — A TA'LAMOONA ANNA SALIHAN MURSALUN MIN RABBIH — do you know that Salih is sent from his Lord? QALOO INNA BIMA URSILA BIHI MU'MINOON — THEY SAID: INDEED WE, IN THAT WITH WHICH HE WAS SENT, ARE BELIEVERS.'

Beta, notice the pattern in every one of these societies: the arrogant chiefs reject, and the oppressed believe.

And Shu'ayb (alaihis salam), whose people threatened to expel him unless he returned to their ways: 'QAD IFTARAYNA 'ALALLAHI KAZIBAN IN 'UDNA FEE MILLATIKUM BA'DA IZ NAJJANALLAHU MINHA — we would have invented a lie about Allah if we returned to your religion after Allah had saved us from it — 'ALALLAHI TAWAKKALNA — UPON ALLAH WE HAVE



RELIED — RABBANAF-TAH BAYNANA WA BAYNA
 QAWMINA BIL-HAQQI WA ANTA
 KHAYRUL-FATIHEEN — OUR LORD, DECIDE
 BETWEEN US AND OUR PEOPLE IN TRUTH, AND YOU
 ARE THE BEST OF DECIDERS.'

And then, beta, a principle that explains why blessings
 come and go: 'WA LAW ANNA AHLAL-QURA AMANOO
 WATTAQAW LA-FATAHNA 'ALAYHIM BARAKATIN
 MINAS-SAMA'I WAL-ARD — AND IF ONLY THE
 PEOPLE OF THE CITIES HAD BELIEVED AND FEARED
 ALLAH, WE WOULD HAVE OPENED UPON THEM
 BLESSINGS FROM THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH —
 WA LAKIN KAZZABOO FA-AKHAZNAHUM BIMA
 KANOO YAKSIBOON — but they denied, so We seized
 them for what they were earning.'

Beta, iman and taqwa are described here as opening
 blessings from ABOVE and BELOW — rain from the sky
 and growth from the ground. Prosperity has a spiritual
 dimension the world does not measure.



Musa, and the Mountain

The surah then gives a long account of Musa (alaihis salam), beta, and there are several moments in it to hold on to.

The magicians were defeated and prostrated, and Firaun threatened them. And they said: 'RABBANA AFRIGH 'ALAYNA SABRAN WA TAWAFFANA MUSLIMEEN — our Lord, POUR UPON US PATIENCE, and let us die as Muslims.'

And then the plagues came upon Firaun's people, and each time they came to Musa asking him to pray for their removal, promising belief — and each time they broke the promise once relief came.

Beta, remember that pattern. Promises made in the middle of a crisis are the easiest promises in the world to make, and the easiest to forget.

And the Children of Israel were saved, and then — beta, this is astonishing — they crossed the sea, and came



upon a people devoted to idols, and said: 'YA MOOSAJ-'AL LANA ILAHAN KAMA LAHUM ALIHAH — O MUSA, MAKE FOR US A GOD JUST AS THEY HAVE GODS.'

Beta, the water had barely dried on them. And Musa said: 'INNAKUM QAWMUN TAJHALOON — indeed, you are a people behaving ignorantly.'

Then Musa went to the appointed meeting with his Lord for forty nights, and he asked: 'RABBI ARINEE ANZUR ILAYK — MY LORD, SHOW ME YOURSELF, THAT I MAY LOOK AT YOU.'

'QALA LAN TARANEE WA LAKINIZ-ZUR ILAL-JABALI FA-INISTAQARRA MAKANAHU FA-SAWFA TARANEE — HE SAID: YOU WILL NOT SEE ME, BUT LOOK AT THE MOUNTAIN; IF IT REMAINS IN PLACE, THEN YOU WILL SEE ME.'

'FA-LAMMA TAJALLA RABBUHU LIL-JABALI JA'ALAHU DAKKAN WA KHARRA MOOSA SA'IQA — AND WHEN HIS LORD APPEARED TO THE MOUNTAIN, HE MADE



IT LEVEL, AND MUSA FELL UNCONSCIOUS.'

Beta, a mountain — solid rock — crumbled to dust at a manifestation. And a prophet fell senseless. That is the scale of what we are dealing with when we say the word 'Allah'.

And when he recovered: 'SUBHANAKA TUBTU ILAYKA WA ANA AWWALUL-MU'MINEEN — EXALTED ARE YOU! I HAVE REPENTED TO YOU, AND I AM THE FIRST OF THE BELIEVERS.'

And then the calf, beta, while he was away — and his return in anger, and his seizing of his brother's head, and Harun's plea. And Musa's du'a: 'RABBIGH-FIR LEE WA LI-AKHEE WA ADKHILNA FEE RAHMATIKA WA ANTA ARHAMUR-RAHIMEEN — my Lord, forgive me and my brother and admit us into Your mercy, and You are the Most Merciful of the merciful.'

And then, beta, the du'a that produced one of the greatest ayahs in the Quran. Musa asked: 'WAKTUB LANA FEE HAZIHID-DUNYA HASANATAN WA



FIL-AKHIRAH — AND DECREE FOR US GOOD IN THIS WORLD AND IN THE HEREAFTER.'

And Allah answered: 'AZABEE USEEBU BIHI MAN ASHA' — MY PUNISHMENT — I AFFLICT WITH IT WHOM I WILL — WA RAHMATEE WASI'AT KULLA SHAY' — BUT MY MERCY ENCOMPASSES ALL THINGS.'

Beta, 'wa rahmatee wasi'at KULLA SHAY'" — MY MERCY HAS ENCOMPASSED EVERYTHING. Everything, beta. There is nothing in existence that is outside it.

'FA-SA-AKTUBUHA LILLAZINA YATTAQOONA WA YU'TOONAZ-ZAKATA WAL-LAZINA HUM BI-AYATINA YU'MINOON — so I will decree it (specially) for those who fear Me and give zakah and believe in Our verses.'

Am I Not Your Lord?

And now, beta, one of the most profound passages in the entire Quran — and it explains something about yourself that you have always half-known.



'WA IZ AKHAZA RABBUKA MIN BANEE ADAMA MIN ZUHOORIHIM ZURRIYYATAHUM WA ASH-HADAHUM 'ALA ANFUSIHIM — AND WHEN YOUR LORD TOOK FROM THE CHILDREN OF ADAM, FROM THEIR LOINS, THEIR DESCENDANTS, AND MADE THEM TESTIFY ABOUT THEMSELVES:'

'ALASTU BI-RABBIKUM — AM I NOT YOUR LORD? — QALOO BALA SHAHIDNA — THEY SAID: YES, WE HAVE TESTIFIED.'

'AN TAQOOLOO YAWMAL-QIYAMATI INNA KUNNA 'AN HAZA GHAFILEEN — LEST YOU SHOULD SAY ON THE DAY OF RESURRECTION: WE WERE UNAWARE OF THIS.'

Beta, every human soul was brought before its Lord and asked one question — and every one of us answered yes.

Beta, and this is why nobody will be able to say 'I was never told'. The testimony was taken from the soul itself, before it entered this world.



And beta, this explains something you have felt. Why does a human being, in a moment of terror, call out to God even if he has denied Him all his life? Why does the heart, at the deepest level, know it did not make itself? Because a promise was made, and something in you remembers it.

Beta, the fitrah we read about in Surah Ar-Rum is this: the residue of that 'BALA' — that YES.

And then, beta, a warning about knowledge without action, given as one of the most disturbing parables in the Quran:

'WATLU 'ALAYHIM NABA'AL-LAZI ATAYNAHU
AYATINA FANSALAKHA MINHA — and recite to them
the news of one to whom We GAVE OUR SIGNS, BUT HE
SLIPPED OUT OF THEM —
FA-ATBA'AHUSH-SHAYTANU FA-KANA
MINAL-GHAWEEN — so shaytan pursued him, and he
became of the deviators.'



Beta, 'fansalakha minha' — he SLID OUT of them, the way a snake slides out of its skin. He had the knowledge and he stepped out of it and left it behind him.

'WA LAW SHI'NA LA-RAFA'NAHU BIHA WA LAKINNAHU AKHLADA ILAL-ARDI WATTABA'A HAWAH — and if We had willed, We could have raised him by them, BUT HE CLUNG TO THE EARTH AND FOLLOWED HIS OWN DESIRE.'

Beta, 'akhlada ilal-ard' — he became attached to the ground, sank down toward it. His knowledge could have lifted him and he chose to stay down.

'FA-MATHALUHU KA-MATHALIL-KALBI IN TAHMIL 'ALAYHI YALHATH AW TATRUK-HU YALHATH — SO HIS EXAMPLE IS LIKE THAT OF A DOG: IF YOU DRIVE IT AWAY, IT PANTS; AND IF YOU LEAVE IT ALONE, IT PANTS.'

Beta, that is a devastating comparison, and its meaning is precise: a state of permanent, restless craving that never resolves. Whether he is given or denied, warned or



left alone — the panting never stops. That is what happens to a person who has knowledge and no taqwa: nothing ever satisfies him.

Beta, and note that the ayah is a warning specifically to people who HAVE been given knowledge. The higher you climb, the further the slide.

The Heights

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

On that Day, a partition will separate the people of Paradise from the people of the Fire. And on its heights — 'al-A'raf' — there will be men.

'WA BAYNAHUMA HIJAB — AND BETWEEN THEM WILL BE A PARTITION — WA 'ALAL-A'RAFI RIJALUN YA'RIFOONA KULLAN BI-SEEMAHUM — AND ON THE HEIGHTS ARE MEN WHO RECOGNISE ALL BY THEIR MARK.'



They call out to the people of Paradise: 'SALAMUN 'ALAYKUM' — peace be upon you — not having entered it, but longing for it. And when their eyes are turned toward the people of the Fire, they say: 'RABBANA LA TAJ'ALNA MA'AL-QAWMIZ-ZALIMEEN — OUR LORD, DO NOT PLACE US WITH THE WRONGDOING PEOPLE.'

Beta, the scholars discussed who these people are, and the most widely held view is that their good and bad deeds were equal, and they are held at this place for a time before Allah admits them to Paradise by His mercy.

And the surah records the exchange between the two sides: the people of Paradise call out: 'QAD WAJADNA MA WA'ADANA RABBUNA HAQQAN FA-HAL WAJADTUM MA WA'ADA RABBUKUM HAQQA — WE HAVE FOUND WHAT OUR LORD PROMISED US TO BE TRUE. HAVE YOU FOUND WHAT YOUR LORD PROMISED TO BE TRUE?' And they say: yes.

And the people of the Fire will call to the people of Paradise: 'AN AFEEDOO 'ALAYNA MINAL-MA'I AW



MIMMA RAZAQAKUMULLAH — POUR UPON US SOME WATER, OR SOMETHING OF WHAT ALLAH HAS PROVIDED YOU.' And the answer: 'INNALLAHA HARRAMAHUMA 'ALAL-KAFIREEN — Allah has forbidden them both to the disbelievers.'

Beta, that is a scene to keep in mind on a hot afternoon when you take a glass of cold water for granted.

The Unlettered Prophet

The surah then describes the Prophet ﷺ as he was written of in earlier scripture, beta — and this description is worth memorising:

'ALLAZINA YATTABI'OONAR-RASOOLAN-NABIYYAL-UMMIYYAL-LAZI YAJIDOONAHU MAKTOOBAN 'INDAHUM FIT-TAWRATI WAL-INJEEL — THOSE WHO FOLLOW THE MESSENGER, THE UNLETTERED PROPHET, WHOM THEY FIND WRITTEN IN WHAT THEY HAVE OF THE TORAH AND THE GOSPEL:'



'YA'MURUHUM BIL-MA'ROOFI WA YANHAHUM
 'ANIL-MUNKAR — HE ENJOINS UPON THEM WHAT IS
 RIGHT AND FORBIDS THEM WHAT IS WRONG — WA
 YUHILLU LAHUMUT-TAYYIBATI WA YUHARRIMU
 'ALAYHIMUL-KHABA'ITH — AND MAKES LAWFUL
 FOR THEM THE GOOD THINGS AND FORBIDS THEM
 THE FILTHY — WA YADA'U 'ANHUM ISRAHUM
 WAL-AGHLALAL-LATI KANAT 'ALAYHIM — AND HE
 RELIEVES THEM OF THEIR BURDEN AND THE
 SHACKLES THAT WERE UPON THEM.'

Beta, look at that final phrase: he came to REMOVE
 burdens and BREAK shackles.

So any presentation of this deen that leaves people more
 burdened, more chained, more crushed than before, has
 misunderstood the mission of the man who brought it.

'FA-ALLAZINA AMANOO BIHI WA 'AZZAROOHU WA
 NASAROOHU WATTABA'UN-NOORAL-LAZI UNZILA
 MA'AHU ULA'IKA HUMUL-MUFLIHOON — so those
 who believe in him, honour him, support him, AND



FOLLOW THE LIGHT WHICH WAS SENT DOWN WITH HIM — IT IS THEY WHO ARE THE SUCCESSFUL.'

Take What Is Easy

And now, beta, the surah moves to its close with three of the most practical instructions ever given to a human being. The scholars said that this single ayah gathers the whole of good character:

'KHUZIL-'AFWA — TAKE WHAT IS EASY, what comes readily, and pardon — WA'MUR BIL-'URFI — AND ENJOIN WHAT IS GOOD, what is recognised as right — WA A'RID 'ANIL-JAHILEEN — AND TURN AWAY FROM THE IGNORANT.'

Beta, take each one.

'KHUZIL-'AFWA' — the word carries both meanings: accept what people give of themselves without demanding their maximum, AND pardon their faults. Beta, do not require perfection from anyone — not your spouse, not your children, not your employees, not your



friends. Take what comes easily from them.

'WA'MUR BIL-'URF' — enjoin what is good and recognised. Not with harshness; 'urf' is what people already recognise as decent.

'WA A'RID 'ANIL-JAHILEEN' — turn away from the ignorant. Not answer them, not correct them, not defeat them. TURN AWAY.

Beta, when this ayah was revealed, the Prophet ﷺ asked Jibreel about it, and the reports relate that the explanation given was: connect with the one who cuts you off, give to the one who deprives you, and pardon the one who wrongs you.

Beta, if you took nothing else from this long surah, this one ayah would be enough to transform a household.

And then, beta, the follow-up — because the instruction to turn away is hard, and something inside will push back:



'WA IMMA YANZAGHANNAKA MINASH-SHAYTANI
NAZGHUN FASTA'IZ BILLAH — AND IF AN EVIL
SUGGESTION COMES TO YOU FROM SHAYTAN, THEN
SEEK REFUGE IN ALLAH — INNAHU SAMEE'UN
'ALEEM — indeed, He is Hearing, Knowing.'

'INNAL-LAZINAT-TAQAW IZA MASSAHUM TA'IFUN
MINASH-SHAYTANI TAZAKKAROO FA-IZA HUM
MUBSIROON — INDEED, THOSE WHO FEAR ALLAH —
WHEN A TOUCH FROM SHAYTAN REACHES THEM,
THEY REMEMBER, AND AT ONCE THEY ARE SEEING.'

Beta, look at that description of a righteous person. He is not immune to the whisper — 'when a touch reaches them'. The difference is what happens next:

'tazakkaroo' — they REMEMBER — 'fa-iza hum
mubsiroon' — and instantly they can SEE again.

Beta, that is the whole skill: not never being tempted, but catching yourself quickly. The gap between the whisper and the remembering — that is what you are training.



And the surah closes with a command about this Book:
'WA IZA QURI'AL-QUR'ANU FASTAMI'OO LAHU WA
ANSITOO LA'ALLAKUM TURHAMOON — AND WHEN
THE QURAN IS RECITED, LISTEN TO IT AND BE
SILENT, THAT YOU MAY RECEIVE MERCY.'

And the final ayah, beta, is one of prostration:
'INNAL-LAZINA 'INDA RABBIKA LA YASTAKBIROONA
'AN 'IBADATIHI WA YUSABBIHOONAHU WA LAHU
YASJUDOON — INDEED, THOSE WHO ARE NEAR YOUR
LORD ARE NOT PREVENTED BY ARROGANCE FROM
HIS WORSHIP, AND THEY EXALT HIM, AND TO HIM
THEY PROSTRATE.'

Beta, and look at the arc of this surah. It began with a creature who refused to prostrate out of arrogance. It ends with those nearest to Allah, in whom there is no arrogance at all, prostrating.

Between those two points lies the whole of human history — and your own life is somewhere on that line.

What This Surah Teaches Us



1. Shaytan attacks from four sides, and his stated target is your GRATITUDE — so a grateful person has escaped him.
2. Iblees argued and blamed; Adam confessed and asked. Same slip, two destinies.
3. There is an outer garment and 'libasut-taqwa' — a man can be perfectly dressed and completely naked.
4. Dress well for prayer, eat and drink — and do not be excessive; and never say about Allah what you do not know.
5. Call on Him humbly and QUIETLY — you are not addressing someone far away; and His mercy stands near the doers of good.
6. Every soul answered 'BALA' before it came here — that is why nobody can plead ignorance, and why the heart still remembers.
7. 'Khuzil-'afwa wa'mur bil-'urfi wa a'rid 'anil-jahileen' — take what comes easily, enjoin good, and turn away from the ignorant.



Ya Allah, do not let us slide out of what You taught us,
and keep us among those who remember the moment
the whisper comes. 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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