

SURAH AS A STORY



Surah An-Nahl

The Bee

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



Surah No. 16 • 128 Ayahs • Meccan

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The Surah at a Glance

Ataaa amrul-laahi falaa tasta'jiloo

1. The command of Allah is coming, so do not be impatient for it.

Wa in ta'uddoo ni'matal-laahi laa tuhsoohaa

18. And if you should count the favours of Allah, you could not enumerate them.

Yakhruju mim-butoonihaa

*sharaabum-mukhtalifun alwaanuhoo feehee
shifaaa'ul-linnaas*

69. There emerges from their bellies a drink of varying colours, in which there is healing for people.

*Innal-laaha ya'muru bil-'adli wal-ihsaani wa
eetaaa'i zil-qurbaa*

90. Indeed, Allah orders justice and good conduct and giving to relatives.

*Man 'amila saalihan min zakarin aw unsaa wa
huwa mu'minun falanuhyiyannahoo hayaatan
tayyibah*

97. Whoever does righteousness, male or female, while being a believer — We will surely cause him to live a good life.



*Ud'u ilaa sabeeli Rabbika bil-hikmati
wal-maw'izatil-hasanah*

125. Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and
good instruction.

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

Do Not Be Impatient

Beta, this surah is known among the scholars as 'Surat an-Ni'am' — the surah of BLESSINGS — because from beginning to end it walks you through the favours of Allah, one after another, until you are almost overwhelmed.

But look at how it opens, beta: 'ATA AMRULLAHI FA-LA TASTA'JILOOH — THE COMMAND OF ALLAH IS COMING, SO DO NOT BE IMPATIENT FOR IT — SUBHANAHU WA TA'ALA 'AMMA YUSHRIKON.'

Beta, note the tense: 'ata' — it HAS COME, in the past tense, although it had not yet happened. That is the Quran's way of expressing absolute certainty: it is so



sure that it is spoken of as already done.

The deniers had been mocking, demanding the punishment they were warned about. And Allah says: it is coming — do not rush it.

Beta, and there is a lesson here for us too. We are impatient people. We want the answer to the du'a now, the change now, the relief now, the justice now. And the ayah says: His command comes on its own schedule; do not try to hurry the Owner of time.

'YUNAZZILUL-MALA'IKATA BIR-ROOHI MIN AMRIHI
'ALA MAN YASHA'U MIN 'IBADIHI AN ANZIROO
ANNAHU LA ILAHA ILLA ANA FATTAQOON — He
sends down the angels with the revelation of His
command upon whom He wills of His servants: WARN
THAT THERE IS NO DEITY EXCEPT ME, SO FEAR ME.'

'KHALAQAS-SAMAWATI WAL-ARDA BIL-HAQQ — He
created the heavens and earth in truth — TA'ALA
'AMMA YUSHRIKOON.'



And then, beta, an ayah that has amused readers for centuries because it is so exactly true of us:

'KHALAQAL-INSANA MIN NUTFATIN FA-IZA HUWA KHASEEMUN MUBEEN — HE CREATED MAN FROM A SPERM-DROP, AND AT ONCE HE IS A CLEAR ADVERSARY.'

Beta, from a drop — to an arguer. From something that could be washed away with water, to someone who stands and disputes with his Maker.

Count Them If You Can

And now, beta, the surah begins its long procession of blessings — and watch how it starts with the ordinary things nobody thanks anyone for.

'WAL-AN'AMA KHALAQHA LAKUM FEEHA DIF'UN WA MANAFI'U WA MINHA TA'KULON — AND THE GRAZING LIVESTOCK HE HAS CREATED FOR YOU; IN THEM IS WARMTH AND (numerous) BENEFITS, AND FROM THEM YOU EAT.'



Beta, the FIRST blessing named after creation itself is WARMTH — the wool and hides that keep a body from freezing. Not gold, not power. Clothing.

'WA LAKUM FEEHA JAMALUN HEENA TUREEHOONA
WA HEENA TASRAHOON — AND FOR YOU IN THEM IS
BEAUTY WHEN YOU BRING THEM IN FOR THE
EVENING AND WHEN YOU SEND THEM OUT TO
PASTURE.'

Beta, look at that. Allah mentions the BEAUTY of the scene — animals coming home at dusk and going out at dawn. He is pointing out that He gave you not merely what is useful, but what is lovely to look at.

'WA TAHMILU ATHQALAKUM ILA BALADIN LAM
TAKOONOO BALIGHEEHI ILLA BI-SHIQQIL-ANFUS —
and they carry your loads to a land you could not have
reached except with GREAT DIFFICULTY TO
YOURSELVES — INNA RABBAKUM LA-RA'OOFUN
RAHEEM — indeed, your Lord is KIND and MERCIFUL.'



'WAL-KHAYLA WAL-BIGHALA WAL-HAMEERA
LI-TARKABOOHA WA ZEENAH — and horses, mules
and donkeys for you to ride and as ADORNMENT — WA
YAKHLUQU MA LA TA'LAMOON — AND HE CREATES
THAT WHICH YOU DO NOT KNOW.'

Beta, note that last phrase. Written fourteen centuries
ago, when transport meant animals — and the Quran
leaves the door open: 'He creates what you do not know.'
Every vehicle since is inside that half-sentence.

Then rain: 'HUWAL-LAZI ANZALA MINAS-SAMA'I
MA'AN — LAKUM MINHU SHARABUN — FOR YOU
FROM IT IS DRINK — WA MINHU SHAJARUN FEEHI
TUSEEMOON — and from it grows vegetation in which
you pasture.'

And then the night and day, the sun and moon and
stars: 'WA HUWAL-LAZI SAKHKHARAL-BAHRA
LI-TA'KULOO MINHU LAHMAN TARIYYA — and it is
He who subjected the SEA, that you may eat from it
TENDER MEAT — WA TASTAKHRIJOO MINHU



HILYATAN TALBASOONAH — and extract from it
ORNAMENTS that you wear — WA TARAL-FULKA
MAWAKHIRA FEEH — and you see the ships
PLOUGHING THROUGH IT.'

'WA 'ALAMATIN WA BIN-NAJMI HUM YAHTADOON
— and landmarks; AND BY THE STARS THEY ARE
GUIDED.'

And then, beta, the ayah that sums up everything above
it — and everything you have ever been given:

'WA IN TA'UDDOO NI'MATALLAHI LA TUHSEOHA —
AND IF YOU SHOULD COUNT THE FAVOURS OF ALLAH,
YOU COULD NOT ENUMERATE THEM — INNALLAHA
LA-GHAFOORUN RAHEEM — INDEED, ALLAH IS
FORGIVING AND MERCIFUL.'

Beta, stop at the ending of that ayah, because it is
astonishing. He describes His countless blessings — and
then closes with FORGIVING and MERCIFUL. Why those
two names?



The scholars explained: because He knows we will fail to thank Him for them. He lists the favours, admits we cannot even count them, and immediately mentions His forgiveness for our shortfall in gratitude.

Beta, that is your Lord. He gives, and then forgives you for not noticing.

What the Bee Was Taught

And now, beta, the passage that gives the surah its name — and it is one of the most remarkable in the Quran.

'WA AWWHA RABBUKA ILAN-NAHLI — AND YOUR LORD INSPIRED THE BEE — ANIT-TAKHIZI MINAL-JIBALI BUYOOTAN WA MINASH-SHAJARI WA MIMMA YA'RISHOON — TAKE FOR YOURSELF DWELLINGS AMONG THE MOUNTAINS AND IN THE TREES AND IN WHAT THEY CONSTRUCT.'

Beta, the word used is 'AWHA' — the same root as 'wahy', revelation. Allah REVEALED to the bee. Meaning: this small creature did not learn its craft; it



was TAUGHT, directly, by its Creator.

'THUMMA KULEE MIN KULLIT-THAMARATI
FASLUKEE SUBULA RABBIKI ZULULA — THEN EAT
FROM ALL THE FRUITS AND FOLLOW THE WAYS OF
YOUR LORD, MADE SMOOTH FOR YOU.'

Beta, 'subula Rabbiki zulula' — the paths of your Lord,
made easy and submissive. The bee flies out and
returns to a hidden hive across long distances, and the
ayah calls those routes 'the paths of your LORD'.

'YAKHRUJU MIN BUTOONIHA SHARABUN
MUKHTALIFUN ALWANUHU — THERE EMERGES
FROM THEIR BELLIES A DRINK OF VARYING
COLOURS — FEEHI SHIFA'UN LIN-NAS — IN WHICH
THERE IS HEALING FOR PEOPLE — INNA FEE
ZALIKA LA-AYATAN LI-QAWMIN YATAFAKKAROON
— indeed in that is a sign for a people who REFLECT.'

Beta, several things to notice.

First: 'mukhtalifun alwanuhu' — of DIFFERENT
COLOURS. Honey ranges from almost white to dark



amber depending on the flowers it came from — and the ayah names that variation.

Second: 'feehi shifa'un lin-nas' — in it is healing for PEOPLE, all people, not only believers. The Prophet ﷺ used honey as a remedy and recommended it, and it is reported that he told a man whose brother had a stomach complaint to give him honey.

Third, beta — and this is the deepest point. Look at what the bee is. A creature the size of your fingernail. It takes nectar from a thousand flowers, navigates back to a precise location, builds a structure of perfect hexagons that engineers still study, and produces something that heals human beings.

And it does all of that because Allah 'inspired' it. It has no school, no plan of its own, no ambition. It simply does what it was made to do — and the whole world benefits.

Beta, there is a lesson in that for a believing life. Take only what is pure and good, from many places. Harm



nothing you take from — the flower is not damaged by the bee. Work quietly. And leave behind something that heals people.

The Prophet ﷺ compared a believer to a bee: it eats what is good, produces what is good, and when it lands on a branch it does not break it.

Justice, Excellence, and Kinship

The surah then discusses those who deny, those who invented gods, and it observes something painful about that society: how they received the news of a baby girl, with faces darkened and hiding from people out of shame. And Allah's comment on their judgement: 'ALAS A MA YAHKUMMOON — unquestionably, EVIL IS WHAT THEY DECIDE.'

Beta, Islam came into a world that buried daughters, and this surah names the disease openly.

And then, beta, comes what many scholars have called the most comprehensive ayah in the Quran — and



'Umar ibn Abdul-Aziz (rahimahullah) made it the closing of every Friday khutbah, a practice that continues in masjids to this day:

'INNALLAHA YA'MURU BIL-'ADLI WAL-IHSANI WA EETA'I ZIL-QURBA — INDEED, ALLAH ORDERS JUSTICE, AND EXCELLENCE, AND GIVING TO RELATIVES — WA YANHA 'ANIL-FAHSHA'I WAL-MUNKARI WAL-BAGHY — AND HE FORBIDS IMMORALITY, AND WRONGDOING, AND OPPRESSION — YA'IZUKUM LA'ALLAKUM TAZAKKAROON — HE ADMONISHES YOU THAT PERHAPS YOU WILL BE REMINDED.'

Beta, take it apart, because it is the whole religion in one line.

'AL-'ADL' — JUSTICE: giving every person exactly what they are owed. That is the floor, the minimum. A society that only reaches this is already better than most.

'AL-IHSAN' — EXCELLENCE: giving MORE than what is owed. Forgiving a debt you had the right to collect.



Overlooking a fault you had the right to raise. Doing your work better than anyone will check. Beta, 'adl is the law; ihsan is the beauty on top of it.

'EETA'I ZIL-QURBA' — giving to RELATIVES. And notice it is named separately, above general charity. Because the people nearest to us are often the last to receive our kindness.

And then the three prohibitions:

'AL-FAHSHA' — indecency, the shameful sins, usually private.

'AL-MUNKAR' — what is rejected and known to be wrong, usually public.

'AL-BAGHY' — transgression against people: oppression, taking what is not yours, crossing over someone's rights.

Beta, three things to build and three to remove.

Memorise this ayah. If a person lived by nothing but this line, he would be a good Muslim, a good neighbour, and a good citizen.



The surah then commands fulfilling covenants: 'WA AWFOO BI-'AHDILLAHI IZA 'AHADTUM — and fulfil the covenant of Allah when you have taken it — WA LA TANQUDUL-AYMANA BA'DA TAWKEEDIHA — and do not break oaths after their confirmation.'

And it gives a picture of a promise-breaker, beta: 'WA LA TAKOONOO KALLATI NAQADAT GHAZLAHA MIN BA'DI QUWWATIN ANKATHA — AND DO NOT BE LIKE SHE WHO UNTWISTED HER SPUN THREAD AFTER IT WAS STRONG, INTO UNTWISTED STRANDS.'

Beta, imagine a woman who spends the whole day spinning strong yarn — and then sits and unravels every bit of it back into loose fibre. All that work, undone by her own hands.

That is what breaking your word does. Reputations are spun slowly, thread by thread, over years — and unravelled in one afternoon.

A Good Life



And now, beta, one of the most beautiful promises in the Quran:

'MAN 'AMILA SALIHAN MIN ZAKARIN AW UNTHA
WA HUWA MU'MINUN — WHOEVER DOES
RIGHTEOUSNESS, WHETHER MALE OR FEMALE,
WHILE BEING A BELIEVER — FA-LA-NUHYIYANNAHU
HAYATAN TAYYIBAH — WE WILL SURELY CAUSE HIM
TO LIVE A GOOD LIFE — WA LA-NAJZIYANNAHUM
AJRAHUM BI-AHSANI MA KANOO YA'MALOON —
AND WE WILL SURELY GIVE THEM THEIR REWARD
ACCORDING TO THE BEST OF WHAT THEY USED TO
DO.'

Beta, notice three things.

First: 'min zakarin aw untha' — male or female, stated explicitly. The reward is identical; the door is the same width for both.

Second: 'hayatan tayyibah' — a GOOD LIFE — and note it is promised HERE, in this world, before any mention of the Hereafter. The scholars explained this as



contentment, tranquillity, sufficiency with what you have, and the sweetness of faith.

Beta, and understand what it is NOT. It is not a promise of wealth or an easy life. It is a promise of something better: a life that FEELS good from the inside. Because a person can have everything and be miserable, and another can have very little and sleep peacefully.

Third: 'bi-ahsani ma kanoo ya'maloon' — rewarded according to the BEST of what they did. Beta, Allah takes your finest work as the standard for your whole record. He does not average you out with your worst days.

'FA-IZA QARA'TAL-QUR'ANA FASTA'IZ BILLAHI MINASH-SHAYTANIR-RAJEEM — SO WHEN YOU RECITE THE QURAN, SEEK REFUGE IN ALLAH FROM SHAYTAN, THE EXPELLED.'

Beta, that is the origin of the words we say before every recitation. And it tells you something: shaytan works hardest exactly when you are about to connect with this Book. So you ask for protection first.



The surah then addresses those who invent rules and attribute them to Allah: 'WA LA TAQOOLOO LIMA TASIFU ALSINATUKUMUL-KAZIBA HAZA HALALUN WA HAZA HARAMUN LI-TAFTAROO 'ALALLAHIL-KAZIB — AND DO NOT SAY ABOUT WHAT YOUR TONGUES ASSERT OF UNTRUTH: THIS IS LAWFUL AND THIS IS UNLAWFUL — TO INVENT FALSEHOOD ABOUT ALLAH.'

Beta, this is a serious warning, and it cuts both ways. Declaring something haram that Allah permitted is as dangerous as permitting what He forbade. Both are speaking on His behalf without authority. That is why a believer says 'I do not know' far more often than he says 'this is haram'.

A Nation in One Man

The surah then speaks of Ibrahim (alaihis salam) with a description given to no one else:

'INNA IBRAHEEMA KANA UMMATAN QANITAN
LILLAHI HANEEFAN WA LAM YAKU



MINAL-MUSHRIKEEN — INDEED, IBRAHIM WAS A NATION, devoutly obedient to Allah, inclining toward truth, and he was not of those who associate others with Him — SHAKIRAN LI-AN'UMIH — GRATEFUL FOR HIS FAVOURS.'

Beta, 'kana ummah' — he WAS A NATION. One man, described as an entire community.

Why? Because at a time when the whole earth had turned to idols, he stood alone on the truth. He was a one-man ummah. And from him came nations.

Beta, take heart from this if you ever feel you are the only one in your circle trying to do the right thing. Numbers are not the measure. One person who stands correctly is counted as a nation.

And note what is highlighted about him again: 'shakiran li-an'umih' — GRATEFUL for His favours. In the surah of blessings, gratitude is the quality named.



And then a caution about arguing over the Sabbath and such matters — 'INNA RABBAKA LA-YAHKUMU BAYNAHUM YAWMAL-QIYAMATI FEEMA KANOO FEEHI YAKHTALIFOON' — and then the surah gives its instruction on how to call people to Allah.

Invite With Wisdom

Beta, this is the ayah that governs how every Muslim should speak about his deen:

'UD'U ILA SABEELI RABBIKA BIL-HIKMATI
WAL-MAW'IZATIL-HASANAH — INVITE TO THE WAY
OF YOUR LORD WITH WISDOM AND GOOD
INSTRUCTION — WA JADILHUM BILLATI HIYA
AHSAN — AND ARGUE WITH THEM IN A WAY THAT
IS BEST — INNA RABBAKA HUWA A'LAMU BIMAN
DALLA 'AN SABEELIHI WA HUWA A'LAMU
BIL-MUHTADEEN — indeed, your Lord is most
knowing of who has strayed from His way, and He is
most knowing of who is guided.'

Beta, three levels are given here, in order:



'AL-HIKMAH' — WISDOM: saying the right thing, to the right person, at the right time, in the right amount. Beta, wisdom is often knowing what NOT to say, and when to stay silent.

'AL-MAW'IZATIL-HASANAHA' — GOOD INSTRUCTION: advice that reaches the heart, given gently, without humiliation.

'AL-MUJADALAH BILLATI HIYA AHSAN' — debate, but 'in a way that is BEST'. Only when necessary, and even then, at your finest.

And note how the ayah ends, beta: your Lord knows who is guided and who is not. Meaning: that is not your department. Your job is the manner of your invitation. The result belongs to Him.

Beta, how many people have been pushed away from this deen by someone who was technically right and completely graceless? This ayah exists to prevent exactly that.



And then the law of retaliation and the better option:
 'WA IN 'AQABTUM FA-'AQIBOO BI-MITHLI MA
 'OOQIBTUM BIH — AND IF YOU PUNISH, PUNISH
 WITH AN EQUIVALENT OF THAT WITH WHICH YOU
 WERE HARMED — WA LA'IN SABARTUM LA-HUWA
 KHAYRUN LIS-SABIREEN — BUT IF YOU ARE
 PATIENT, IT IS BETTER FOR THOSE WHO ARE
 PATIENT.'

Beta, note the ceiling and the recommendation. You may respond with EQUAL harm — never more. And then, immediately: but patience is better.

It is reported that this was revealed after the battle of Uhud, when the Prophet ﷺ saw what had been done to his uncle Hamzah (radiyallahu anhu) and spoke of responding in kind — and Allah revealed this, and he chose patience.

And the final ayahs, beta: 'WASBIR WA MA SABRUKA
 ILLA BILLAH — AND BE PATIENT, AND YOUR
 PATIENCE IS NOT BUT THROUGH ALLAH — WA LA



TAHZAN 'ALAYHIM — AND DO NOT GRIEVE OVER
THEM — WA LA TAKU FEE DAYQIN MIMMA
YAMKUROON — AND DO NOT BE IN DISTRESS OVER
WHAT THEY CONSPIRE.'

Beta, 'wa ma sabruka illa billah' — your patience is not from your own strength. It is granted. So when you feel you have run out of it, you are not asking for something you should have had — you are asking Him to give you more of what was always His to give.

'INNALLAHA MA'AL-LAZINAT-TAQAW WAL-LAZINA
HUM MUHSINOON — INDEED, ALLAH IS WITH THOSE
WHO FEAR HIM AND THOSE WHO ARE DOERS OF
GOOD.'

Beta, that is the last line of the surah of blessings. After naming favour upon favour — the cattle, the rain, the sea, the stars, the honey — it ends with the greatest favour of all: that He is WITH you.

Everything else in this surah was something He GAVE.
This last one is Himself.



What This Surah Teaches Us

1. His command comes on His schedule — do not try to hurry the Owner of time.
2. The first blessing named after creation is WARMTH — and He mentions the BEAUTY of a scene, not only its usefulness.
3. 'Count them and you cannot' — and the ayah ends with Forgiving and Merciful, because He knows we will fall short in thanking Him.
4. Be like the bee: take only what is pure, harm nothing you take from, work quietly, and leave behind something that heals.
5. Memorise ayah 90 — justice, excellence, kinship; and against indecency, wrongdoing and oppression. That is the whole deen in one line.
6. A 'hayatan tayyibah' is promised in THIS world — not wealth, but a life that feels good from the inside; and you are rewarded by your BEST work, not your



average.

7. Invite with wisdom and good instruction — guidance is not your department; your manner is.

Ya Allah, make us grateful for what we cannot count, patient by Your help, and among those You are WITH. 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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