

SURAH AS A STORY



Surah Al-Isra

The Night Journey

The complete journey — the commandments given on a night of honour —
told the way a loving elder shares it with a child



Surah No. 17 • 111 Ayahs • Meccan

NOORANI ILM

nooraniilm.com • free sadaqah jariyah ebook

The Surah at a Glance

*Subhaanal-lazeee asraa bi'abdihee
laylam-minal-Masjidil-Haraami
ilal-Masjidil-Aqsaa*

1. Exalted is He who took His servant by night from
al-Masjid al-Haram to al-Masjid al-Aqsa.

*Wa qadaa Rabbuka allaa ta'budo illaaa iyyaahu
wa bil-waalidayni ihsaanaa*

23. And your Lord has decreed that you worship none
but Him, and to parents good treatment.

*Wa qur-Rabbir-hamhumaa kamaa rabbayaanee
sagheeraa*

24. And say: my Lord, have mercy upon them as they
brought me up when I was small.

Wa laa taqfu maa laysa laka bihee 'ilm

36. And do not pursue that of which you have no
knowledge.

*Wa nunazzilu minal-Qur'aani maa huwa
shifaaa'unw-wa rahmatul-lil-mu'mineen*

82. And We send down of the Quran that which is
healing and mercy for the believers.

Wa qul jaaa'al-haqqu wa zahaqal-baatil



81. And say: truth has come, and falsehood has departed.

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

Exalted Is He Who Took His Servant by Night

Beta, this surah opens with a single ayah describing one of the most extraordinary nights in human history — and to understand it you must know what year it was.

The Prophet ﷺ had just lived through the hardest period of his life. His uncle Abu Talib, who had protected him, had died. His wife Khadijah (radiyallahu anha), who had comforted him for twenty-five years, had died. The scholars call it the Year of Sorrow. He went to Ta'if seeking help and was driven out with stones.

And it was after all of that, beta, that Allah honoured him with this night.

'SUBHANAL-LAZI ASRA BI-'ABDIHI LAYLAN
MINAL-MASJIDIL-HARAMI



ILAL-MASJIDIL-AQSAL-LAZI BARAKNA HAWLAHU —
EXALTED IS HE WHO TOOK HIS SERVANT BY NIGHT
FROM AL-MASJID AL-HARAM TO AL-MASJID AL-AQSA,
WHOSE SURROUNDINGS WE HAVE BLESSED —
LI-NURIYAHU MIN AYATINA — TO SHOW HIM OF
OUR SIGNS — INNAHU HUWAS-SAMEE'UL-BASEER —
indeed, He is the Hearing, the Seeing.'

Beta, notice the title used for him at the height of his honour: 'ABDIHI' — HIS SERVANT. Not 'His messenger', not 'His beloved'. On the greatest night of his life, he is called a servant. Because that is the highest thing a creature can be.

And beta, note what happened on that journey: he led the prophets in prayer at al-Aqsa, and he was raised through the heavens, and the five daily prayers were given — the only obligation given directly, above the heavens, without an angel bringing it down.

Beta, think about the timing. After the worst year of his life, he was taken on a journey and given SALAH. When



a person is at his lowest, Allah gave him a way to stand before Him five times a day. That tells you what prayer is FOR.

And beta, one more thing about that night. When he told the people of Makkah in the morning, many mocked him. They went to Abu Bakr (radiyallahu anhu) expecting him to abandon his friend, and he said: if he said it, then it is true. And from that day he was called As-Siddiq, the one who affirms the truth.

The surah then recalls the Children of Israel, and warns of two occasions of corruption in the land followed by consequences — and it states the principle that governs all of it: 'IN AHSANTUM AHSANTUM LI-ANFUSIKUM WA IN ASA'TUM FA-LAHA — IF YOU DO GOOD, YOU DO GOOD FOR YOURSELVES; AND IF YOU DO EVIL, IT IS FOR YOURSELVES.'

And then: 'INNA HAZAL-QUR'ANA YAHDEE LILLATI HIYA AQWAM — INDEED, THIS QURAN GUIDES TO THAT WHICH IS MOST UPRIGHT.'



Beta, 'aqwam' — the most straight, the most sound, the most stable. Not merely 'good', but the SOUNDEST of the available options in every matter.

Every Man's Record on His Neck

The surah then makes a series of statements about how human beings are dealt with, beta, and each one is worth pausing on.

'WA YAD'UL-INSANU BISH-SHARRI DU'A'AHU
BIL-KHAYR — AND MAN SUPPLICATES FOR EVIL AS
HE SUPPLICATES FOR GOOD — WA KANAL-INSANU
'AJoola — AND MAN IS EVER HASTY.'

Beta, how often have we begged for something that would have destroyed us? A job, a marriage, a decision — asked for with the same intensity we ask for good. And the ayah names the reason: haste. We want it NOW, before we understand it.

Beta, so when a du'a is delayed or refused, consider that it may be the answer.



'WA KULLA INSANIN ALZAMNAHU TA'IRAHU FEE
'UNUQIH — AND EVERY MAN — WE HAVE FASTENED
HIS RECORD TO HIS OWN NECK — WA NUKHRIJU
LAHU YAWMAL-QIYAMATI KITABAN YALQAHU
MANSHOORA — and We will produce for him on the
Day of Resurrection a BOOK which he will encounter
SPREAD OPEN.'

'IQRA' KITABAK — READ YOUR RECORD — KAFA
BI-NAFSIKAL-YAWMA 'ALAYKA HASEEBA —
SUFFICIENT IS YOURSELF AGAINST YOU THIS DAY AS
AN ACCOUNTANT.'

Beta, feel the weight of that. Not a prosecutor, not a
witness — YOU will read your own file. No arguing,
because the evidence is in your own handwriting, so to
speak.

'MANIH-TADA FA-INNAMA YAHTADEE LI-NAFSIH —
whoever is guided is only guided for himself — WA
MAN DALLA FA-INNAMA YADILLU 'ALAYHA — and
whoever goes astray only does so against himself — WA



LA TAZIRU WAZIRATUN WIZRA UKHRA — AND NO BEARER OF BURDENS WILL BEAR THE BURDEN OF ANOTHER — WA MA KUNNA MU'AZZIBEENA HATTA NAB'ATHA RASOOLA — AND WE NEVER PUNISH UNTIL WE HAVE SENT A MESSENGER.'

Beta, that last line is a statement about Allah's justice that should settle many questions: nobody is held accountable for a message that never reached them.

The Commandments

And now, beta, we come to the heart of this surah — a series of commandments so complete that many scholars have called them the Ten Commandments of the Quran. Read each one slowly.

'WA QADA RABBUKA ALLA TA'BUDOO ILLA IYYAHU — AND YOUR LORD HAS DECREED THAT YOU WORSHIP NONE BUT HIM — WA BIL-WALIDAYNI IHSANA — AND TO PARENTS, GOOD TREATMENT.'



Beta, look at the pairing. Worship of Allah, and kindness to parents — joined in a single sentence. Nothing else in creation is placed beside the right of Allah in this way.

'IMMA YABLUGHANNA 'INDAKAL-KIBARA
AHADU HUMA AW KILAHUMA — IF ONE OR BOTH OF
THEM REACH OLD AGE WITH YOU — FA-LA TAQUL
LAHUMA UFFIN — DO NOT SAY TO THEM SO MUCH
AS 'UFF' — WA LA TANHARHUMA — AND DO NOT
REPEL THEM — WA QUL LAHUMA QAWLAN
KAREEMA — AND SPEAK TO THEM A NOBLE WORD.'

Beta, 'uff' is not an insult. It is not abuse or a curse. It is the smallest possible sound of irritation — a sigh, a 'tsk', the noise a tired person makes when asked to repeat something for the fourth time.

And Allah forbade it.

Beta, think about what that means. If the smallest expression of annoyance is forbidden, then everything above it is unthinkable: raising your voice, the impatient tone, the sarcastic reply, the eye-roll, the pretending not



to hear.

And notice the specific setting: 'when one or both reach old age WITH YOU'. This is aimed exactly at the situation where patience is hardest — when they are slow, repetitive, forgetful, physically dependent, and you are busy and tired.

'WAKHFID LAHUMA JANAAH-ZULLI
MINAR-RAHMAH — AND LOWER TO THEM THE
WING OF HUMILITY OUT OF MERCY.'

Beta, what an image. A bird lowers its wing to shelter its young — the same gesture your parents made over you. Now you lower yours over them.

'WA QUL RABBIR-HAMHUMA KAMA RABBAYANEE
SAGHEERA — AND SAY: MY LORD, HAVE MERCY
UPON THEM AS THEY BROUGHT ME UP WHEN I WAS
SMALL.'

Beta, memorise this du'a and say it daily, for living parents and for those who have passed. And notice its



logic: you are asking Allah to treat them as they treated you — because you know you cannot repay it yourself.

'RABBUKUM A'LAMU BIMA FEE NUFOOSIKUM —
YOUR LORD IS MOST KNOWING OF WHAT IS WITHIN
YOURSELVES — IN TAKOONOO SALIHEENA
FA-INNAHU KANA LIL-AWWABEENA GHAFOORA — if
you are righteous, then He is forgiving to those who
return.'

Beta, that comes right after the parents' ayahs — a
mercy for anyone who has failed with his parents and
wants to make it right.

'WA ATI ZAL-QURBA HAQQAHU WAL-MISKEENA
WABNAS-SABEEL — AND GIVE THE RELATIVE HIS
RIGHT, AND THE POOR PERSON AND THE TRAVELLER
— WA LA TUBAZZIR TABZEERA — AND DO NOT
SPEND WASTEFULLY — INNAL-MUBAZZIREENA
KANOO IKHWANASH-SHAYATEEN — INDEED, THE
WASTEFUL ARE BROTHERS OF THE DEVILS.'



Beta, note the strength of that: 'brothers of the devils'. Because waste is the destruction of a blessing that someone else needed.

'WA LA TAJ'AL YADAKA MAGHLOOLATAN ILA
'UNUQIKA WA LA TABSUT-HA KULLAL-BAST — AND
DO NOT MAKE YOUR HAND CHAINED TO YOUR NECK,
NOR EXTEND IT COMPLETELY — FA-TAQ'UDA
MALOOMAN MAHSOORA — lest you sit blamed and
destitute.'

Beta, two pictures of failure: a hand tied to the neck (the miser who cannot give) and a hand flung wide open (the one who gives until he himself is ruined). The believer's hand is somewhere in between.

'WA LA TAQTULOO AWLADAKUM KHASHYATA IMLAQ
— AND DO NOT KILL YOUR CHILDREN FOR FEAR OF
POVERTY — NAHNU NARZUQUHUM WA IYYAKUM
— WE PROVIDE FOR THEM AND FOR YOU.'

Beta, note the order: We provide for THEM and for you. Their provision is mentioned first — it does not come



out of yours.

'WA LA TAQRABUZ-ZINA — AND DO NOT COME NEAR
UNLAWFUL INTIMACY — INNAHU KANA
FAHISHATAN WA SA'A SABEELA — indeed, it is an
immorality and an evil way.'

Beta, notice the wording: 'do not COME NEAR'. Not 'do not do it'. Because this is a sin nobody falls into suddenly. There is always a road leading to it — a glance, a private message, a meeting arranged, a boundary quietly removed. And Allah forbade the ROAD, not merely the destination.

'WA LA TAQTULUN-NAFSAL-LATI HARRAMALLAHU
ILLA BIL-HAQQ — and do not kill the soul which Allah
has forbidden, except by right.'

'WA LA TAQRABOO MALAL-YATEEMI ILLA BILLATI
HIYA AHSANU HATTA YABLUGHA ASHUDDAH — AND
DO NOT APPROACH THE ORPHAN'S PROPERTY
EXCEPT IN A WAY THAT IS BEST until he reaches
maturity — WA AWFOO BIL-'AHD — AND FULFIL THE



COVENANT — INNAL-'AHDA KANA MAS'OOLA —
INDEED, THE COVENANT WILL BE QUESTIONED
ABOUT.'

Beta, 'innal-'ahda kana mas'oola' — the promise itself
will be asked about. Imagine that: the commitment you
made stands up and is questioned.

'WA AWFUL-KAYLA IZA KILTUM WA ZINOO
BIL-QISTASIL-MUSTAQEEM — AND GIVE FULL
MEASURE WHEN YOU MEASURE, AND WEIGH WITH
AN EVEN BALANCE — ZALIKA KHAYRUN WA
AHSANU TA'WEELA — that is the best and fairest in
result.'

Do Not Pursue What You Do Not Know

And then, beta, comes an ayah that is desperately
needed in the age of forwarded messages:

'WA LA TAQFU MA LAYSA LAKA BIHI 'ILM — AND DO
NOT PURSUE THAT OF WHICH YOU HAVE NO
KNOWLEDGE — INNAS-SAM'A WAL-BASARA



WAL-FU'ADA KULLU ULA'IKA KANA 'ANHU
MAS'oola — INDEED, THE HEARING, THE SIGHT AND
THE HEART — ABOUT ALL THOSE ONE WILL BE
QUESTIONED.'

Beta, 'la taqfu' means do not follow the tracks of something, do not trail after it. So: do not repeat what you have not verified, do not accuse on suspicion, do not testify to what you did not see, do not build an opinion about a person from a rumour.

And then the three organs that will be questioned: your EARS (what did you choose to listen to?), your EYES (what did you choose to look at?), and your HEART (what did you allow to settle in it — what suspicions, what grudges, what beliefs did you hold without evidence?).

Beta, in an age where a false claim can travel to a thousand people before you finish your tea, this single ayah is a complete code of conduct.



'WA LA TAMSHI FIL-ARDI MARAHA — AND DO NOT WALK UPON THE EARTH EXULTANTLY — INNAKA LAN TAKHRIQAL-ARDA WA LAN TABLUGHAL-JIBALA TOOLA — INDEED, YOU WILL NEVER TEAR THE EARTH APART, AND YOU WILL NEVER REACH THE MOUNTAINS IN HEIGHT.'

Beta, what a way to deflate arrogance. You strut across the ground — you cannot even crack it. You hold your head high — you are not as tall as a hill. The ayah simply measures a proud man against the nearest available objects.

And then Allah closes the whole list with a single verdict: 'KULLU ZALIKA KANA SAYYI'UHU 'INDA RABBIKA MAKROOHA — ALL THAT — THE EVIL OF IT — IS HATEFUL IN THE SIGHT OF YOUR LORD.'

Beta, note the word: 'makrooha' — DISLIKED, detested by Allah. These are not merely rules on a list. Each one is something your Lord finds hateful. That changes how a believer relates to them.



Say That Which Is Best

The surah then gives an instruction about speech, beta, that would end most of the fighting among Muslims if we applied it:

'WA QUL LI-'IBADI YAQOOLULLATI HIYA AHSAN — AND TELL MY SERVANTS TO SAY THAT WHICH IS BEST — INNASH-SHAYTANA YANZAGHU BAYNAHUM — INDEED, SHAYTAN INDUCES DISCORD AMONG THEM — INNASH-SHAYTANA KANA LIL-INSANI 'ADUWWAN MUBEENA — indeed, shaytan is to man a clear enemy.'

Beta, notice: not 'say what is true' — 'say what is BEST'. Something can be perfectly true and still be the wrong thing to say, or the wrong way to say it.

And notice the reason given: shaytan gets in through the GAPS BETWEEN WORDS. A sharp sentence in a family, a cutting reply in a group — that is his opening. He rarely needs to make people commit great sins; he only needs to get them to talk to each other badly.



The surah then answers the Makkans' demand for miracles, and records their strange challenges — bring us a spring, a garden, a house of gold, make the sky fall in pieces. And the answer given is: 'QUL SUBHANA RABBEE HAL KUNTU ILLA BASHARAN RASOOLA — say: exalted is my Lord! Was I ever but a human messenger?'

And then a beautiful correction of how we address Allah: 'QULID-'ULLAHA AWID-'UR-RAHMAN — SAY: CALL UPON ALLAH OR CALL UPON AR-RAHMAN — AYYAN MA TAD'OO FA-LAHUL-ASMA'UL-HUSNA — WHICHEVER YOU CALL — TO HIM BELONG THE MOST BEAUTIFUL NAMES.'

Beta, some had objected to the name Ar-Rahman. And Allah says: whichever of His beautiful names you call Him by, He is One.

'WA LA TAJHAR BI-SALATIKA WA LA TUKHAFIT BIHA WABTAGHI BAYNA ZALIKA SABEELA — and do not recite too loudly in your prayer, nor too quietly, but seek



a way between.'

Healing and Mercy

And now, beta, an ayah about this Book that every believer should know:

'WA NUNAZZILU MINAL-QUR'ANI MA HUWA SHIFA'UN WA RAHMATUN LIL-MU'MINEEN — AND WE SEND DOWN OF THE QURAN THAT WHICH IS HEALING AND MERCY FOR THE BELIEVERS — WA LA YAZEEDUZ-ZALIMEENA ILLA KHASARA — BUT IT DOES NOT INCREASE THE WRONGDOERS EXCEPT IN LOSS.'

Beta, 'shifa' — healing. And note the scholars' point: healing of hearts before bodies. It treats the diseases nothing else can reach — anxiety about provision, envy of others, arrogance, despair, the emptiness a person cannot name.

And note the second half, which is sobering: the SAME words that heal one person increase another in loss. The



Quran does not leave you where it found you; you move in one direction or the other when you engage with it.

The surah then observes something about human beings that is uncomfortably accurate: 'WA IZA AN'AMNA 'ALAL-INSANI A'RADA WA NA'A BI-JANIBIHI — and when We bestow favour upon man, HE TURNS AWAY AND DISTANCES HIMSELF — WA IZA MASSAHUSH-SHARRU KANA YA'OOSA — AND WHEN EVIL TOUCHES HIM, HE IS EVER DESPAIRING.'

Beta, that is the cycle of a person without a firm relationship with Allah: forgetful in ease, hopeless in hardship. And the believer is meant to break it — grateful in ease, patient in hardship.

'WA YAS'ALoonAKA 'ANIR-ROOH — AND THEY ASK YOU ABOUT THE SOUL — QULIR-ROOHU MIN AMRI RABBEE — SAY: THE SOUL IS OF THE AFFAIR OF MY LORD — WA MA OOTEETUM MINAL-'ILMI ILLA QALEELA — AND YOU HAVE NOT BEEN GIVEN OF KNOWLEDGE EXCEPT A LITTLE.'



Beta, this ayah is worth remembering in every age that considers itself very advanced. The thing closest to you — the fact that you are ALIVE, that there is a 'you' inside your body — remains beyond explanation. And Allah's comment stands: you have been given only a little.

And then the great challenge, beta: 'QUL
LA'INIJ-TAMA'ATIL-INSU WAL-JINNU 'ALA AN YA'TOO
BI-MITHLI HAZAL-QUR'ANI LA YA'TOONA
BI-MITHLIHI WA LAW KANA BA'DUHUM LI-BA'DIN
ZAHEERA — SAY: IF MANKIND AND THE JINN
GATHERED TOGETHER TO PRODUCE THE LIKE OF
THIS QURAN, THEY COULD NOT PRODUCE THE LIKE
OF IT, EVEN IF THEY SUPPORTED ONE ANOTHER.'

Beta, that challenge was issued in the language's own heartland, to the greatest poets who ever used Arabic, who had every motive to answer it. And it has stood ever since.

A Praised Station



And now, beta, the surah moves toward its close with an instruction that is a gift for anyone carrying a heavy load:

'WA MINAL-LAYLI FA-TAHAJJAD BIHI NAFILATAN
LAKA — AND FROM PART OF THE NIGHT, PRAY WITH
IT AS ADDITIONAL WORSHIP FOR YOU — 'ASA AN
YAB'ATHAKA RABBUKA MAQAMAN MAHMOODA —
IT IS EXPECTED THAT YOUR LORD WILL RAISE YOU TO
A PRAISED STATION.'

Beta, 'al-maqamul-mahmood' is understood by the scholars as the station of the great intercession on the Day of Judgement, granted to the Prophet ﷺ. And notice what it is attached to: the night prayer.

And then a du'a to say at every beginning and every ending, beta:

'WA QUL RABBI ADKHILNI MUDKHALA SIDQIN WA
AKHRIJNI MUKHRAJA SIDQIN — AND SAY: MY LORD,
CAUSE ME TO ENTER A SOUND ENTRANCE AND TO
EXIT A SOUND EXIT — WAJ'AL LEE MIN LADUNKA



SULTANAN NASEERA — AND GRANT ME FROM YOURSELF A SUPPORTING AUTHORITY.'

Beta, this du'a was made by the Prophet ﷺ, and the scholars connect it to the hijrah: leaving Makkah in a way that is true, entering Madinah in a way that is true. And you can say it for every entry and exit in your life — a new job, a new city, a decision entered into, a chapter left behind. Let me come in cleanly and leave cleanly.

'WA QUL JA'AL-HAQUU WA ZAHAQAL-BATIL — AND SAY: TRUTH HAS COME, AND FALSEHOOD HAS DEPARTED — INNAL-BATILA KANA ZAHOOQA — INDEED, FALSEHOOD IS EVER BOUND TO DEPART.'

Beta, the Prophet ﷺ recited this on the day Makkah was conquered, as the idols around the Ka'bah were being brought down.

And look at the wording: 'zahaqal-batil' — falsehood VANISHED, evaporated, was destroyed. And then: 'innal-batila kana zahooqa' — falsehood is BY ITS



NATURE something that perishes. It has no staying power of its own. It survives only while truth is absent.

The surah closes with a description of those who recognised the truth: 'INNAL-LAZINA OOTUL-'ILMA MIN QABLIHI IZA YUTLA 'ALAYHIM YAKHIRROONA LIL-AZQANI SUJJADA — indeed, those who were given knowledge before it — when it is recited to them, THEY FALL UPON THEIR FACES IN PROSTRATION — WA YAQOOLONA SUBHANA RABBINA IN KANA WA'DU RABBINA LA-MAF'oola — and they say: EXALTED IS OUR LORD! INDEED, THE PROMISE OF OUR LORD IS FULFILLED — WA YAKHIRROONA LIL-AZQANI YABKOON — AND THEY FALL UPON THEIR FACES, WEEPING — WA YAZEEDUHU KHUSHOO'A — AND IT INCREASES THEM IN HUMILITY.'

Beta, note: knowledge increased them in HUMILITY. That is the test of real knowledge, in every century.

And the final ayah, beta: 'WA QULIL-HAMDU LILLAHIL-LAZI LAM YATTAKHIZ WALADAN WA LAM



YAKUN LAHU SHAREEKUN FIL-MULKI WA LAM
YAKUN LAHU WALIYYUN MINAZ-ZULLI — AND SAY:
PRAISE TO ALLAH, WHO HAS NOT TAKEN A SON, AND
HAS NO PARTNER IN DOMINION, AND HAS NO
PROTECTOR OUT OF WEAKNESS — WA KABBIRHU
TAKBEERA — AND MAGNIFY HIM WITH ALL
MAGNIFICATION.'

Beta, so the surah that began with 'SUBHAN' — exalted
is He — ends with 'kabbirhu takbeera' — magnify Him
greatly. It opens and closes by putting Allah in His place.

And in between, beta, it gave you the commandments to
live by: worship Him alone, do not say 'uff' to your
parents, give the relative his right, do not waste, do not
come near what leads to sin, keep your promises, weigh
honestly, do not repeat what you have not verified, and
do not strut across a ground you cannot crack.

That is the deen delivered on the back of the most
honoured night in history.

What This Surah Teaches Us



- 1.** On his greatest night he was called 'His SERVANT' — and after his hardest year he was given SALAH.
 - 2.** We often beg for what would harm us, because we are hasty — a delayed du'a may be the answer.
 - 3.** 'Uff' is the smallest sound of irritation, and it is forbidden — so everything above it is unthinkable.
 - 4.** Say daily: 'Rabbir-hamhuma kama rabbayanee sagheera.'
 - 5.** Allah forbade coming NEAR the sin, not only the sin — because nobody falls into it suddenly.
 - 6.** Your ears, eyes and heart will each be questioned — do not repeat what you have not verified.
 - 7.** Say what is BEST, not merely what is true — shaytan enters through the gaps between our words.
- Rabbi adkhilni mudkhala sidqin wa akhrijni mukhreja
sidqin waj'al lee min ladunka sultan naseera.
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. —

Noorani Ilm • nooraniilm.com • Free to share — sadaqah jariyah

