

SURAH AS A STORY



Surah An-Naml

The Ant

The complete journey — an ant, a bird, and a queen —
told the way a loving elder shares it with a child



Surah No. 27 • 93 Ayahs • Meccan

NOORANI ILM

nooraniilm.com • free sadaqah jariyah ebook

The Surah at a Glance

*Qaalat namlatuny-yaaa ayyuhan-namludkhuloo
masaakinakum*

18. An ant said: O ants, enter your dwellings...

*Rabbi awzi'neee an ashkura ni'matakal-lateee
an'amta 'alayya*

19. My Lord, enable me to be grateful for Your favour
which You have bestowed upon me.

*Innee wajattum-ra'atan tamlikuhum wa ootiyat
min kulli shay'*

23. Indeed, I found a woman ruling them, and she has
been given of all things.

*Qaala haazaa min fadli Rabbee liyabluwaneee
a-ashkuru am akfur*

40. He said: this is from the favour of my Lord, to test me
whether I am grateful or ungrateful.

*Amman yujeebul-mudtarra iza da'aahu wa
yakshifus-sooo'*

62. Or who responds to the distressed when he calls
upon Him and removes evil?



*Qul laa ya'lamu man fis-samaawaati
wal-ardil-ghayba illal-laah*

65. Say: none in the heavens and earth knows the
unseen except Allah.

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

We Have Been Taught the Speech of Birds

Beta, this surah opens with 'Ta Seen' and the Quran described as 'hudan wa bushra lil-mu'mineen' — guidance and good tidings for the believers. And then it moves quickly into stories — and the stories in this surah involve some very small creatures teaching very large lessons.

It begins with Musa (alaihi salam) at the fire, and then turns to Dawud and Sulayman: 'WA LAQAD ATAYNA DAWOODA WA SULAYMANA 'ILMA — and We gave Dawud and Sulayman KNOWLEDGE — WA QALAL-HAMDU LILLAHIL-LAZI FADDALANA 'ALA



KATHEERIN MIN 'IBADIHIL-MU'MINEEN — and they said: PRAISE TO ALLAH, who has favoured us over many of His believing servants.'

Beta, note that their response to being given knowledge was praise — and note that they compared themselves to Allah's BELIEVING servants, not to the general population. Even in acknowledging a favour, there was no arrogance in it.

'WA WARITHA SULAYMANU DAWOOD — and Sulayman INHERITED from Dawud — WA QALA YA AYYUHAN-NASU 'ULLIMNA MANTIQAT-TAYRI WA OOTEENA MIN KULLI SHAY' — and he said: O PEOPLE, WE HAVE BEEN TAUGHT THE SPEECH OF BIRDS, and we have been given of ALL THINGS — INNA HAZA LA-HUWAL-FADLUL-MUBEEN — indeed, this is EVIDENT BOUNTY.'

Beta, notice: he announced his gifts publicly — and immediately labelled them 'fadl', bounty from Allah. He did not say 'I have achieved'. He said: this was given.



An Ant Speaks, and a Prophet Smiles

And now, beta, the scene that gives this surah its name — and it is one of the most charming and most instructive moments in the whole Quran.

Sulayman's armies were gathered — jinn, humans and birds — and they marched in ordered ranks.

'HATTA IZA ATAW 'ALA WADIN-NAMLI — until, when they came upon the VALLEY OF THE ANTS — QALAT NAMLATUN YA AYYUHAN-NAMLUD-KHULOO MASAKINAKUM — AN ANT SAID: O ANTS, ENTER YOUR DWELLINGS — LA YAHTIMANNAKUM SULAYMANU WA JUNOODUHU WA HUM LA YASH'UROON — LEST SULAYMAN AND HIS SOLDIERS CRUSH YOU WHILE THEY PERCEIVE NOT.'

Beta, look at how much wisdom is packed into one ant's warning.

She identified the danger. She gave a clear instruction. She named who was coming. And then — this is the



beautiful part — she DEFENDED them: 'while they perceive not'. She made sure her people did not think badly of Sulayman and his army. They are not cruel; they simply will not see you.

Beta, an ant taught husn az-zann — thinking well of others. How often do we assume malice where there was only inattention? Someone did not reply, did not greet us, did not invite us — and we build an entire case. The ant said: they do not perceive.

'FA-TABASSAMA DAHIKAN MIN QAWLIHA — SO HE SMILED, AMUSED at her speech.'

Beta, feel this moment. The greatest king in history, at the head of an army of humans and jinn, hears a single ant — and smiles.

And then look at what her words made him do: 'WA QALA RABBI AWZI'NEE AN ASHKURA NI'MATAKAL-LATI AN'AMTA 'ALAYYA WA 'ALA WALIDAYYA — MY LORD, ENABLE ME TO BE GRATEFUL FOR YOUR FAVOUR WHICH YOU HAVE



BESTOWED UPON ME AND UPON MY PARENTS — WA
AN A'MALA SALIHAN TARDAH — AND THAT I MAY
DO RIGHTEOUSNESS OF WHICH YOU APPROVE — WA
ADKHILNEE BI-RAHMATIKA FEE
'IBADIKAS-SALIHEEN — AND ADMIT ME BY YOUR
MERCY AMONG YOUR RIGHTEOUS SERVANTS.'

Beta, notice three things in this dua. First, he asks for the ABILITY to be grateful — the same request as in Surah Al-Ahqaf. Second, he includes his parents. And third — the greatest king on earth asks to be admitted 'BY YOUR MERCY' among the righteous servants. Not by his kingdom, not by his prophethood. By mercy.

Beta, memorise this dua. It is short, and it covers gratitude, accepted deeds, parents, and a humble entry into Jannah.

The Hoopoe's Report

Then Sulayman inspected the birds and found the hoopoe missing, and he was firm about it — accountability applied even to the smallest soldier. And



the hoopoe returned with news:

'AHATTU BIMA LAM TUHIT BIHI — I HAVE ENCOMPASSED (in knowledge) THAT WHICH YOU HAVE NOT — WA JI'TUKA MIN SABA'IN BI-NABA'IN YAQEEN — and I have come to you from SABA with CERTAIN NEWS.'

Beta, a bird said to a prophet-king: I know something you do not. And Sulayman listened. Beta, that is greatness — a leader who accepts information from the lowest rank.

'INNI WAJATTUM-RA'ATAN TAMLIKUHUM WA OOTIYAT MIN KULLI SHAY'IN WA LAHA 'ARSHUN 'AZEEM — indeed, I FOUND A WOMAN RULING THEM, and she has been given of all things, and she has a GREAT THRONE — WAJADTUHA WA QAWMAHA YASJUDOONA LISH-SHAMSI MIN DOONILLAH — I found her and her people PROSTRATING TO THE SUN instead of Allah.'



Beta, note the hoopoe's concern: not her wealth or her power — her WORSHIP. The bird's objection was theological.

Sulayman sent a letter, and the queen — Bilqis, as the historians name her — gathered her chiefs. And beta, look at her leadership:

'QALAT YA AYYUHAL-MALA'U INNI ULQIYA ILAYYA KITABUN KAREEM — she said: O chiefs, a NOBLE LETTER has been delivered to me.' She read them its contents, and then: 'YA AYYUHAL-MALA'U AFTOONEE FEE AMREE MA KUNTU QATI'ATAN AMRAN HATTA TASH-HADOON — ADVISE ME IN MY AFFAIR; I would not decide a matter until you are present with me.'

Beta, that is shura in practice — from a queen who had absolute power.

Her chiefs replied that they were strong warriors, but left the decision to her. And she said something so wise that Allah preserved it: 'INNAL-MULOOKA IZA DAKHALOO QARYATAN AFSADOOHA WA JA'ALOO



A'IZZATA AHLIHA AZILLAH — indeed, KINGS, WHEN THEY ENTER A CITY, RUIN IT AND MAKE THE HONOURABLE OF ITS PEOPLE HUMILIATED — WA KAZALIKA YAF'ALOON — and thus do they do.'

Beta, that is a summary of the history of conquest, spoken by a woman surrounded by generals eager for war. And she chose diplomacy first: she sent a gift, to test whether he was a king seeking wealth or a prophet seeking faith.

And Sulayman's answer, beta, is magnificent: 'A TUMIDDOONANI BI-MALIN FA-MA ATANIYALLAHU KHAYRUN MIMMA ATAKUM — do you provide me with WEALTH? BUT WHAT ALLAH HAS GIVEN ME IS BETTER THAN WHAT HE HAS GIVEN YOU — BAL ANTUM BI-HADIYYATIKUM TAFRAHOON — rather, it is YOU who rejoice in your gift.'

Before Your Glance Returns to You

And then, beta, one of the most extraordinary incidents in the Quran.



Sulayman asked his assembly: 'AYYUKUM YA'TEENEE BI-'ARSHIHA QABLA AN YA'TOONEE MUSLIMEEN — which of you will bring me her THRONE before they come to me in submission?'

'QALA 'IFREETUN MINAL-JINNI ANA ATEEKA BIHI QABLA AN TAQOOMA MIN MAQAMIK — an 'IFREET from the jinn said: I will bring it to you BEFORE YOU RISE FROM YOUR PLACE — WA INNI 'ALAYHI LA-QAWIYYUN AMEEN — and I am for it strong and trustworthy.'

Beta, note that he used exactly those two words again — 'qawiyyun ameen', strong and trustworthy. That is how you present a capability.

'QALAL-LAZI 'INDAHU 'ILMUN MINAL-KITABI ANA ATEEKA BIHI QABLA AN YARTADDA ILAYKA TARFUK — SAID THE ONE WHO HAD KNOWLEDGE FROM THE SCRIPTURE: I WILL BRING IT TO YOU BEFORE YOUR GLANCE RETURNS TO YOU.'



'FA-LAMMA RA'AHU MUSTAQIRAN 'INDAHU — and when he SAW IT SETTLED BEFORE HIM...'

Beta, look at the contrast the Quran is drawing. The 'ifreet — a powerful jinn — offered speed measured in minutes. A man with KNOWLEDGE FROM THE SCRIPTURE did it faster than an eye can blink.

The lesson is unmistakable: knowledge of revelation outmatches raw physical power. Beta, whatever strength a person has, the one connected to Allah's Book is operating on a different level entirely.

And now, beta, Sulayman's reaction — and this is the ayah I most want you to take from this surah:

'QALA HAZA MIN FADLI RABBEE — HE SAID: THIS IS FROM THE FAVOUR OF MY LORD — LI-YABLUWANEE A ASHKURU AM AKFUR — TO TEST ME WHETHER I WILL BE GRATEFUL OR UNGRATEFUL — WA MAN SHAKARA FA-INNAMA YASHKURU LI-NAFSIH — and whoever is grateful is grateful for his own benefit — WA MAN KAFARA FA-INNA RABBEE GHANIYYUN



KAREEM — and whoever is ungrateful — my Lord is Free of need, Generous.'

Beta, absorb what he said at that moment. A miracle has just occurred in his own court. Anyone else would have felt honoured, chosen, superior.

He said: this is a TEST.

Beta, this is the difference between a servant and a person impressed with himself. We treat blessings as REWARDS — proof that we deserve them. He treated a blessing as an EXAMINATION: now let us see whether I am grateful.

Apply that to your own life. The promotion, the house, the health, the intelligence, the good family — each one is a question being asked of you: what will you do with this? Every gift is an exam paper handed over with your name on it.

A Palace of Glass



The queen arrived, and her throne had been disguised. She recognised it — 'KA-ANNAHU HUWA', it is as though it were the same — and she showed her intelligence in not committing herself.

Then: 'QEELA LAHAD-KHULIS-SARH — it was said to her: ENTER THE PALACE — FA-LAMMA RA'AT-HU HASIBAT-HU LUJJATAN WA KASHAFAT 'AN SAQAYHA — and when she SAW IT she THOUGHT IT WAS A BODY OF WATER and uncovered her shins — QALA INNAHU SARHUN MUMARRADUN MIN QAWAREER — he said: it is a palace PAVED WITH GLASS.'

Beta, the floor was smooth glass over water — and she mistook the appearance for the reality.

And that was the final lesson she needed. She had built her life on what she could see: the sun she worshipped, the throne she owned, the power she held. And here, in one step, she learned that appearance and reality are not the same thing.



'QALAT RABBI INNI ZALAMTU NAFSEE — SHE SAID:
MY LORD, I HAVE WRONGED MYSELF — WA
ASLAMTU MA'A SULAYMANA LILLAHI
RABBIL-'ALAMEEN — AND I SUBMIT WITH
SULAYMAN TO ALLAH, LORD OF THE WORLDS.'

Beta, notice her wording: 'with Sulayman TO ALLAH'.
Not to Sulayman. Even at the moment of submission,
her tawheed was precise.

Who Answers the Distressed?

The surah then recalls Thamud and the people of Lut,
and comes to a passage of questions that no one can
answer, beta — each ending with 'is there a deity with
Allah?'

'AMMAN KHALAQAS-SAMAWATI WAL-ARDA WA
ANZALA LAKUM MINAS-SAMA'I MA'AN — WHO
created the heavens and the earth and sent down rain
for you from the sky? FA-ANBATNA BIHI HADA'IQA
ZATA BAHJAH — and We caused to grow gardens of
BEAUTY AND DELIGHT — MA KANA LAKUM AN



TUNBITOO SHAJARAHA — it was NOT FOR YOU TO
CAUSE TO GROW their trees.'

'AMMAN JA'ALAL-ARDA QARARAN WA JA'ALA
KHILALHA ANHARA — who made the earth a STABLE
GROUND and placed within it rivers — WA JA'ALA
LAHA RAWASIYA WA JA'ALA BAYNAL-BAHRAIN
HAJIZA — and made for it firm mountains and placed
between the two seas a BARRIER?'

And then, beta, comes the ayah that has been recited by
every desperate believer for fourteen centuries:

'AMMAN YUJEEBUL-MUDTARRA IZA DA'AHU WA
YAKSHIFUS-SOO'A WA YAJ'ALUKUM
KHULAFAL-ARD — OR WHO RESPONDS TO THE
DISTRESSED ONE WHEN HE CALLS UPON HIM, AND
REMOVES THE EVIL, AND MAKES YOU SUCCESSORS
ON THE EARTH? A ILAHUN MA'ALLAH — IS THERE A
DEITY WITH ALLAH? QALEELAN MA TAZAKKAROON
— LITTLE DO YOU REMEMBER.'



Beta, take apart the word 'AL-MUDTARR'. It comes from 'darurah' — necessity, compulsion, being FORCED into a corner. A 'mudtarr' is someone who has no options left: every door tried, every person asked, every plan failed.

And Allah describes Himself as the One who ANSWERS that person.

Beta, notice something extraordinary in the wording. It does not say 'who answers the righteous' or 'who answers the scholar'. It says: the DISTRESSED. The only qualification mentioned is desperation.

So a sinner in a corner qualifies. A person who has not prayed in years qualifies. Whoever is truly cornered and calls — this ayah is about him.

Beta, and there is a hard truth in it too: most of us only become 'mudtarr' when everything else has failed. Allah does not reject us for arriving late — but imagine calling on Him with that intensity BEFORE the corner, not only inside it.



'QUL LA YA'LAMU MAN FIS-SAMAWATI
WAL-ARDIL-GHAYBA ILLALLAH — SAY: NONE IN THE
HEAVENS AND EARTH KNOWS THE UNSEEN EXCEPT
ALLAH — WA MA YASH'UROONA AYYANA
YUB'ATHOON — and they do not perceive when they
will be resurrected.'

Say: Praise Be to Allah

And the surah closes, beta, with the Prophet ﷺ being told how to conduct himself and how to finish.

'WA IN KAZZABOOKA FA-QUL LEE 'AMALEE WA
LAKUM 'AMALUKUM — and if they deny you, then
say: FOR ME ARE MY DEEDS, AND FOR YOU ARE YOUR
DEEDS — ANTUM BAREE'OONA MIMMA A'MALU WA
ANA BAREE'UN MIMMA TA'MALOON — you are
disassociated from what I do, and I from what you do.'

Beta, a dignified separation without hostility. You are not required to win every argument; you are required to be clear.



'INNAKA LA TUSMI'UL-MAWTA WA LA
TUSMI'US-SUMMAD-DU'A'A IZA WALLAW
MUDBIREEN — indeed, you cannot make the DEAD
hear, nor make the DEAF hear the call when they turn
away in flight.'

'FA-TAWAKKAL 'ALALLAH — SO RELY UPON ALLAH
— INNAKA 'ALAL-HAQQIL-MUBEEN — indeed, you are
upon the CLEAR TRUTH.'

And the final ayah of the surah, beta: 'WA
QULIL-HAMDU LILLAHI SA-YUREEKUM AYATIHI
FA-TA'RIFOONAHA — AND SAY: ALL PRAISE IS DUE
TO ALLAH. HE WILL SHOW YOU HIS SIGNS, AND YOU
WILL RECOGNISE THEM — WA MA RABBUKA
BI-GHAFILIN 'AMMA TA'MALOON — AND YOUR LORD
IS NOT UNAWARE OF WHAT YOU DO.'

Beta, look at the instruction: after all the denial, the
mockery, and the long years of struggle — SAY:
AL-HAMDU LILLAH.



That is the posture this whole surah has been teaching. An ant's warning made a king say alhamdulillah. A throne appearing made him say 'this is a test'. And a Messenger facing rejection is told to say alhamdulillah.

Beta, whatever the situation gives you — a small warning, a great blessing, or an outright rejection — the believer's response is the same sentence.

What This Surah Teaches Us

- 1.** An ant taught husn az-zann: 'while they perceive not' — assume inattention before you assume malice.
- 2.** A great leader listens to the lowest rank and acts on it.
- 3.** A queen surrounded by generals chose consultation and diplomacy over war — and named exactly what conquest does to a city.
- 4.** Knowledge from the Scripture outmatched the strength of an 'ifreet — the one connected to revelation operates on another level.



5. 'This is from the favour of my Lord, to TEST me' — every blessing is an exam paper with your name on it.

6. Appearance is not reality: a glass floor was mistaken for water by a queen who trusted only her eyes.

7. He answers 'al-mudtarr' — the only qualification named is being cornered. Call on Him before the corner, not only inside it.

Ya Allah, make us grateful for what You give and answer us as You answer the distressed. 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

