

SURAH AS A STORY



Surah Al-'Ankabut

The Spider

The complete journey — the test that proves the claim —
told the way a loving elder shares it with a child



Surah No. 29 • 69 Ayahs • Meccan

NOORANI ILM

nooraniilm.com • free sadaqah jariyah ebook

The Surah at a Glance

*Ahasiban-naasu any-yutrakooo any-yaqoolooo
aamannaa wa hum laa yuftanoon*

2. Do people think they will be left to say: we believe —
and they will not be tested?

*Man kaana yarjoo liqaaa'al-laahi fa-inna
ajalal-laahi la-aat*

5. Whoever hopes for the meeting with Allah — indeed,
the term of Allah is coming.

*Wa mathalul-lazeenat-takhazoo min doonil-laahi
awliyaaa'a kamasalil-'ankaboot*

41. The example of those who take allies besides Allah is
like the spider...

Wa inna awhanal-buyooti labaytul-'ankaboot

41. And indeed, the weakest of houses is the house of the
spider.

*Innas-salaata tanhaa 'anil-fahshaaa'i
wal-munkar*

45. Indeed, prayer prohibits immorality and
wrongdoing.

*Wallazeena jaahadoo feenaa lanahdiyannahum
subulanaa*



69. And those who strive for Us — We will surely guide them to Our ways.

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

Did You Think You Would Not Be Tested?

Beta, this surah opens with a question that answers one of the most common complaints a believer ever makes.

'ALIF LAM MEEM. A HASIBAN-NASU AN YUTRAKOO AN YAQOOLOO AMANNA WA HUM LA YUFTANON — DO PEOPLE THINK THAT THEY WILL BE LEFT ALONE SAYING: WE BELIEVE — AND THEY WILL NOT BE TESTED?'

Beta, feel the force of that question. It anticipates exactly what we think: I have believed, I pray, I try to be good — so why is my life difficult?

And the Quran answers: did you imagine that saying it was the end of the matter?



'WA LAQAD FATANNAL-LAZINA MIN QABLIHIM — and We have certainly TESTED THOSE BEFORE THEM — FA-LA-YA'LAMANNALLAHUL-LAZINA SADAQOO WA LA-YA'LAMANNAL-KAZIBEEN — and Allah will SURELY MAKE EVIDENT those who are TRUTHFUL, and He will surely make evident the LIARS.'

Beta, understand what the test is FOR. Allah already knows who is truthful — He does not need information. The testing makes it EVIDENT: it brings out what was inside a person, into the open, so the claim becomes a demonstrated fact rather than a sentence.

Anyone can say 'I trust Allah' in comfort. The words cost nothing. Then the diagnosis arrives, or the job is lost, or the marriage strains — and now we find out what the sentence was actually worth.

Beta, so the difficulty in your life is not a sign that Allah is displeased with you. It is the examination hall. And notice — this is the SECOND ayah of the surah, placed right at the start, so a believer knows what to expect



from the very beginning.

'MAN KANA YARJOO LIQA'ALLAHI FA-INNA
AJALALLAHI LA-AAT — whoever HOPES FOR THE
MEETING WITH ALLAH — indeed, the TERM SET BY
ALLAH IS COMING — WA HUWAS-SAMEE'UL-'ALEEM
— and He is the Hearing, the Knowing.'

Beta, and a beautiful principle follows: 'WA MAN
JAHADA FA-INNAMA YUJAHIDU LI-NAFSIH — and
whoever STRIVES, only strives FOR HIS OWN BENEFIT
— INNALLAHA LA-GHANIYYUN 'ANIL-'ALAMEEN —
indeed, Allah is Free of need of the worlds.'

Every hardship you endure for His sake is an investment
in yourself. He gains nothing from your struggle; you
gain everything.

Parents, and the Limit of Obedience

The surah then addresses a specific and painful test —
the one faced by those in Makkah whose own families
pressured them to leave Islam:



'WA WASSAYNAL-INSANA BI-WALIDAYHI HUSNA — and We have enjoined upon man GOODNESS to his parents — WA IN JAHADAKA LI-TUSHRIKA BEE MA LAYSA LAKA BIHI 'ILMUN FA-LA TUTI'HUMA — but if they endeavour to make you associate with Me that of which you have no knowledge, DO NOT OBEY THEM — ILAYYA MARJI'UKUM FA-UNABBI'UKUM BIMA KUNTUM TA'MALOON — to Me is your return, and I will inform you of what you used to do.'

Beta, the same principle as in Surah Luqman, and it is repeated because it was so painfully real: young men and women in Makkah being worked on daily by mothers and fathers they loved.

And then a portrait of the shallow believer: 'WA MINAN-NASI MAN YAQOOLU AMANNA BILLAH — and among the people is he who says: WE BELIEVE IN ALLAH — FA-IZA OOZIYA FILLAHI JA'ALA FITNATAN-NASI KA-'AZABILLAH — but when he is HARMED for the sake of Allah, he considers the TRIAL OF THE PEOPLE as the PUNISHMENT OF ALLAH.'



Beta, read that carefully. He treats people's mockery, people's pressure, people's rejection — as though it were Allah's punishment. He fears the crowd the way one should fear Allah. And so he retreats.

'WA LA-IN JA'A NASRUN MIN RABBIKA
LA-YAQOOLUNNA INNA KUNNA MA'AKUM — but if
victory comes from your Lord, they will surely say: WE
WERE WITH YOU!'

Beta, there they are: absent in the difficulty, present at the celebration. Every generation knows this type. And Allah's comment: 'A WA LAYSALLAHU BI-A'LAMA BIMA FEE SUDOORIL-'ALAMEEN — is not Allah most knowing of what is within the breasts of all creatures?'

The Weakest of Houses

And now, beta, the image that gives this surah its name — and it is one of the most precise comparisons in the Quran.



'MATHALUL-LAZINAT-TAKHAZOO MIN DOONILLAHI
AWLIYA'A KA-MATHALIL-'ANKABOOTIT-TAKHAZAT
BAYTA — the example of those who take PROTECTORS
other than Allah is like the SPIDER who takes a HOUSE
— WA INNA AWHANAL-BUYOOTI
LA-BAYTUL-'ANKABOOT — AND INDEED, THE
WEAKEST OF HOUSES IS THE HOUSE OF THE SPIDER
— LAW KANOO YA'LAMOON — if only they knew.'

Beta, think about why this comparison is so exact.

A spider's web LOOKS impressive. It is intricate,
patterned, carefully engineered — beautiful in morning
light. From a distance it seems like real architecture.

And yet it offers nothing that a house is supposed to
offer. It gives no shelter from rain, no protection from
wind, no warmth, no safety. A child's finger destroys it.
A breath of wind carries it away.

Beta, that is what every attachment other than Allah is
like. The savings you consider your security. The
connection you believe will protect you. The reputation



you have spent years building. The person you rely on completely. All of it looks like a structure — and then one gust of a decree passes through it.

And there is a further layer the scholars pointed to: the spider's web is a house built for TRAPPING, not for sheltering. Whoever enters it does not find refuge; he finds himself caught. Beta, that is what these false securities do — they promise protection and end up holding you prisoner.

'INNALLAHA YA'LAMU MA YAD'OONA MIN DOONIHI MIN SHAY'IN WA HUWAL-'AZEEZUL-HAKEEM — indeed, Allah knows whatever they invoke besides Him, and He is the Almighty, the Wise.'

'WA TILKAL-AMTHALU NADRIBUHA LIN-NASI WA MA YA'QILUHA ILLAL-'ALIMOON — and these EXAMPLES We present to the people, but NONE WILL UNDERSTAND THEM EXCEPT THOSE OF KNOWLEDGE.'

Prayer Prohibits Immorality



And then, beta, comes one of the most quoted and most misunderstood ayahs about salah:

'UTLU MA OOHIYA ILAYKA MINAL-KITABI WA
AQIMIS-SALAH — RECITE what has been revealed to
you of the Book, and ESTABLISH PRAYER —
INNAS-SALATA TANHA 'ANIL-FAHSHA'I
WAL-MUNKAR — INDEED, PRAYER PROHIBITS
IMMORALITY AND WRONGDOING — WA
LA-ZIKRULLAHI AKBAR — AND THE REMEMBRANCE
OF ALLAH IS GREATER — WALLAHU YA'LAMU MA
TASNA'OON — and Allah knows what you do.'

Beta, people ask: I pray, so why do I still sin?

And the answer is in the word Allah chose:

'AQIMIS-SALAH' — ESTABLISH the prayer. Not
'perform' it, not 'get through' it. Iqamah means to set
something up properly, straight and complete — with
its conditions, its times, its humility, its presence of
heart.



A prayer that is 'established' works on a person like water on a stone: slowly, invisibly, and unmistakably over time. It puts you before Allah five times a day, and a person who genuinely stands before his Lord at dawn finds it harder to cheat at noon.

And the scholars said something important, beta: if a person's prayer is not restraining him at all, he should not abandon the prayer — he should FIX it. The problem is not the medicine; it is that it is being swallowed without being taken.

And then: 'wa la-zikrullahi akbar' — and the remembrance of Allah is GREATER. The scholars explained this in more than one way, and the most beautiful is this: greater than everything else you could be doing — and greater still is that ALLAH REMEMBERS YOU when you remember Him.

Beta, hold on to that thought. In the middle of your salah, in your dhikr while walking, in the words you say before sleep — the Lord of the worlds mentions you.



Argue in the Best Manner

The surah then gives instructions on how to speak to those who differ with us — and beta, this is desperately needed in our time:

'WA LA TUJADILOO AHLAL-KITABI ILLA BILLATI HIYA AHSAN — and do NOT ARGUE with the People of the Scripture EXCEPT IN A WAY THAT IS BEST — ILLAL-LAZINA ZALAMOO MINHUM — except those among them who commit injustice.'

'WA QOOLOO AMANNA BILLAZI UNZILA ILAYNA WA UNZILA ILAYKUM — and SAY: WE BELIEVE IN WHAT WAS REVEALED TO US AND REVEALED TO YOU — WA ILAHUNA WA ILAHUKUM WAHIDUN WA NAHNU LAHU MUSLIMOON — AND OUR GOD AND YOUR GOD IS ONE, AND WE ARE MUSLIMS (in submission) TO HIM.'

Beta, look at the method. When you speak with someone of another faith, you are instructed to begin with what is SHARED — the revelation, the one God — rather than



opening with attack. That is not weakness; it is intelligence and adab. You cannot pull someone toward you while pushing him away.

The surah also reminds them of the Prophet's ﷺ own credentials: 'WA MA KUNTA TATLOO MIN QABLIHI MIN KITABIN WA LA TAKHUTTUHU BI-YAMEENIK — and you did not RECITE any Scripture before it, nor did you WRITE it with your right hand — IZAN LA-RTABAL-MUBTILOON — otherwise the falsifiers would have doubted.'

Beta, that is an argument from his very unletteredness: a man who could not read or write produced a Book that has never been matched. Had he been a scholar of scriptures, someone could have claimed he assembled it.

Those Who Strive for Us

The surah then recalls prophets who were tested — Nuh among his people for nine hundred and fifty years, Ibrahim thrown into the fire, Lut among a corrupt people, Shu'ayb, 'Aad, Thamud, Qarun, Firaun — and



after listing how each was seized, Allah says something remarkable:

'FA-KULLAN AKHAZNA BI-ZAMBIH — so EACH We seized for his sin — FA-MINHUM MAN ARSALNA 'ALAYHI HASIBA — among them was he upon whom We sent a storm of stones — WA MINHUM MAN AKHAZAT-HUS-SAYHAH — and among them was he who was seized by the blast — WA MINHUM MAN KHASAFNA BIHIL-ARD — and among them was he whom We caused the earth to swallow — WA MINHUM MAN AGHRAQNA — and among them was he whom We drowned — WA MA KANALLAHU LI-YAZLIMAHUM WA LAKIN KANOO ANFUSAHUM YAZLIMOON — AND ALLAH WOULD NOT HAVE WRONGED THEM, BUT IT WAS THEY WHO WERE WRONGING THEMSELVES.'

Beta, four different endings — and one identical conclusion: nobody was wronged.

And regarding Ibrahim (alaihis salam), the surah records a sentence of his that should be written on the



wall of every home. When his people plotted to burn him: 'FA-MA KANA JAWABA QAWMIHI ILLA AN QALUQ-TULOOHU AW HARRIQOOHU FA-ANJAHULLAHU MINAN-NAR — the answer of his people was only that they said: kill him or burn him! BUT ALLAH SAVED HIM FROM THE FIRE.'

And now, beta, the final ayah of the surah — and it is one of the great promises of the Quran:

'WAL-LAZINA JAHADOO FEENA LA-NAHDIYANNAHUM SUBULANA — AND THOSE WHO STRIVE FOR US — WE WILL SURELY GUIDE THEM TO OUR WAYS — WA INNALLAHA LA-MA'AL-MUHSINEEN — AND INDEED, ALLAH IS WITH THE DOERS OF GOOD.'

Beta, take this apart, because it is the answer to the question this surah opened with.

'Jahadoo FEENA' — those who strive FOR US, in Our cause, for Our sake. 'Jihad' here in its broad meaning: struggling against your own laziness to get up for Fajr,



struggling to keep your tongue clean, struggling to earn halal when haram is easier, struggling to learn this deen when you are tired.

'LA-NAHDIYANNAHUM' — WE WILL SURELY GUIDE THEM. The Arabic carries a double emphasis: certainly, definitely, without fail.

'SUBULANA' — OUR WAYS, plural. Beta, not one road — many. He opens paths you had not seen: a teacher appears, a book falls into your hands, a conversation changes your direction, an obstacle turns into a door.

And notice the ORDER, beta, because this is the key to the whole ayah. The striving comes FIRST, and the guidance comes AFTER.

Most people wait for it the other way round: 'when I feel more faith, I will start praying properly.' 'When my heart softens, I will read Quran.' This ayah says: MOVE, and the guidance will meet you.



Beta, take one step toward Him with what little you have, and He opens roads. That is the promise this surah ends on — and it is the answer to the test it began with. You will be tested; and if you strive through it, you will be guided.

'Wa innallaha la-ma'al-muhsineen' — and Allah is WITH the doers of good. Not merely watching them. WITH them.

What This Surah Teaches Us

1. Saying 'I believe' is the beginning, not the end — the test is what turns a claim into a fact.
2. Trials do not mean Allah is displeased with you; they are the examination hall.
3. Beware of fearing people's disapproval the way one should fear Allah — that is what makes a shallow believer retreat.
4. Every attachment besides Allah is a spider's web: intricate to look at, useless as shelter, and built to trap



rather than protect.

5. If your prayer is not restraining you, fix the prayer — do not abandon it; 'establish' means to set it up properly.

6. Argue in the best manner and begin with what is shared — you cannot pull someone toward you while pushing him away.

7. Strive FIRST and the guidance follows: 'those who strive for Us, We will surely guide them to Our ways.'

Ya Allah, make us truthful under testing, remove our reliance on spider-web houses, and guide us to Your ways as we strive. 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

