

SURAH AS A STORY



Surah Al-Ahzab

The Confederates

The complete journey — the trench, the trust, and the excellent example —
told the way a loving elder shares it with a child



Surah No. 33 • 73 Ayahs • Medinan

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The Surah at a Glance

Wa kafal-laahul-mu'mineenal-qitaal

25. And Allah sufficed the believers in fighting.

*Laqad kaana lakum fee Rasoolil-laahi uswatun
hasanah*

21. There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of
Allah an excellent pattern.

*Maa kaana Muhammadun abaaa
ahadim-mir-rijaalikum wa laakir-Rasoolal-laahi
wa Khaataman-Nabiyyeen*

40. Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but
the Messenger of Allah and Seal of the Prophets.

*Yaaa ayyuhal-lazeena aamanuz-kurul-laaha
zikran kaseeraa*

41. O you who believe, remember Allah with much
remembrance.

*Innal-laaha wa malaaa'ikatahoo yusalloona
'alan-Nabiyy*

56. Indeed, Allah and His angels send blessings upon the
Prophet.



*Innaa 'aradnal-amaanata 'alas-samaawaati
wal-ardi wal-jibaal*

72. Indeed, We offered the Trust to the heavens, the
earth and the mountains...

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Fear Allah, and Not the People

Beta, this surah was revealed in Madinah, in a year that tested the Muslims more severely than any before it.

And it opens with a command to the Prophet ﷺ himself:

'YA AYYUHAN-NABIYYUT-TAQILLAHA WA LA
TUTI'IL-KAFIREENA WAL-MUNAFIQEEN — O Prophet,
FEAR ALLAH and do NOT OBEY the disbelievers and the
hypocrites — INNALLAHA KANA 'ALEEMAN
HAKEEMA — indeed, Allah is Knowing and Wise —
WATTABI' MA YOOHA ILAYKA MIN RABBIK — and
FOLLOW what is revealed to you from your Lord — WA
TAWAKKAL 'ALALLAH — AND RELY UPON ALLAH —
WA KAFA BILLAHI WAKEELA — and sufficient is Allah



as a DISPOSER OF AFFAIRS.'

Beta, notice the pattern given here: fear Allah, refuse pressure from people, follow what is revealed, and put your trust in Him. That is the complete posture of a believer under pressure — and it is exactly what the rest of this surah will demonstrate in practice.

The surah then abolishes several practices of the age of ignorance. Among them, adoption in the sense of making a child legally your own son, with the family name changed: 'WA MA JA'ALA AD'IYA'AKUM ABNA'AKUM — and He has not made your ADOPTED SONS your (real) SONS — ZALIKUM QAWLUKUM BI-AFWAHIKUM — that is merely your statement by your mouths — WALLAHU YAQOOLUL-HAQQA WA HUWA YAHDIS-SABEEL — but Allah says the TRUTH, and He guides to the way.'

'UD'OOHUM LI-ABA'IHIM HUWA AQSATU 'INDALLAH — CALL THEM BY THEIR FATHERS' NAMES; THAT IS MORE JUST IN THE SIGHT OF ALLAH.'



Beta, understand what Islam did here, because it is often misunderstood. It did not forbid raising an orphan — the Prophet ﷺ said that he and the one who cares for an orphan will be in Paradise like these two, and he joined his fingers. What was corrected is the ERASING of a child's lineage. A child has a right to know who his father was. And Allah adds: 'FA-IN LAM TA'LAMOO ABA'AHUM FA-IKHWANUKUM FID-DEENI WA MAWALEEKUM — and if you do not know their fathers, then they are your BROTHERS IN RELIGION and your allies.'

The Trench, and the Eyes That Shifted

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

In the fifth year after hijrah, the tribes of Arabia combined — Quraysh, Ghatafan and their allies — into one enormous army, 'al-Ahzab', the Confederates. Ten thousand men marched on Madinah, where the Muslims numbered around three thousand. It was intended as the final blow.



On the advice of Salman al-Farisi (radiyallahu anhu), the Muslims dug a trench across the exposed side of the city. The Prophet ﷺ dug with them, carrying earth on his own back, and they tied stones to their stomachs from hunger — and it is reported he tied two.

And Allah describes the siege with a precision that anyone who has felt fear will recognise:

'IZ JA'OOKUM MIN FAWQIKUM WA MIN ASFALA MINKUM — when they came at you from ABOVE you and from BELOW you — WA IZ ZAGHATIL-ABSARU WA BALAGHATIL-QULOOBUL-HANAJIRA — and when the EYES SHIFTED (in fear) and the HEARTS REACHED THE THROATS — WA TAZUNNOONA BILLAHIZ-ZUNOONA — and you ASSUMED about Allah various assumptions.'

Beta, feel how honest this description is. Allah does not portray the companions as fearless supermen. He records that their eyes darted, that their hearts rose into their throats, and that doubts crossed their minds.



'HUNALIKAB-TULIYAL-MU'MINOONA WA ZULZILOO
ZILZALAN SHADEEDA — THERE the believers were
TESTED and SHAKEN with a SEVERE SHAKING.'

Beta, that is a comfort for you. Fear is not the opposite of faith. These were the best of this ummah, and they were terrified. The question is never whether you feel fear — it is what you DO while afraid.

And the hypocrites showed themselves: 'WA IZ
YAQOOLUL-MUNAFIQOONA WAL-LAZINA FEE
QULOBIHIM MARADUN MA WA'ADANALLAHU WA
RASOOLUHU ILLA GHUROORA — when the hypocrites
and those in whose hearts is disease said: Allah and His
Messenger promised us nothing but DELUSION.' And
others said: 'INNA BUYOOTANA 'AWRAH — our houses
are EXPOSED' — while, Allah says, they were not
exposed; they only wanted to flee.

And the believers, facing the same terror, said the
opposite: 'WA LAMMA
RA'AL-MU'MINOONAL-AHZABA QALOO HAZA MA



WA'ADANALLAHU WA RASOOLUHU WA
 SADAQALLAHU WA RASOOLUH — and when the
 believers SAW THE CONFEDERATES, they said: THIS IS
 WHAT ALLAH AND HIS MESSENGER PROMISED US,
 and Allah and His Messenger spoke the truth — WA MA
 ZADAHUM ILLA IMANAN WA TASLEEMA — AND IT
 ONLY INCREASED THEM IN FAITH AND SUBMISSION.'

Beta, look at this carefully. Two groups, one situation,
 opposite readings. The same army on the horizon: one
 group saw proof that the promise was empty; the other
 saw proof that it was true. Hardship does not create
 character — it REVEALS it.

'MINAL-MU'MINEENA RIJALUN SADAQOO MA
 'AHADULLAHA 'ALAYH — among the believers are men
 TRUE to what they promised Allah — FA-MINHUM
 MAN QADA NAHBAHU WA MINHUM MAN YANTAZIR
 — some have fulfilled their vow, and some are STILL
 WAITING — WA MA BADDALOO TABDEELA — and
 they have NOT ALTERED by any alteration.'



And then the ending: 'WA RADDALLAHUL-LAZINA KAFAROO BI-GHAYZIHIM LAM YANALOO KHAYRA — and Allah TURNED BACK those who disbelieved IN THEIR RAGE; they gained NO GOOD — WA KAFALLAHUL-MU'MINEENAL-QITAL — AND ALLAH SUFFICED THE BELIEVERS IN FIGHTING.'

Beta, how did the siege end? A bitter wind came at night, tearing out tents, overturning cooking pots, and their alliance broke apart. Not one great battle. 'Wa kafallahul-mu'mineenal-qital' — Allah spared the believers the fighting.

Beta, remember this the next time you are bracing yourself for a confrontation you dread. Sometimes Allah handles it with a wind.

An Excellent Example

And in the middle of this account of the siege, beta, Allah places one of the most quoted ayahs in the Quran:



'LAQAD KANA LAKUM FEE RASOOLILLAHI USWATUN HASANAH — THERE HAS CERTAINLY BEEN FOR YOU IN THE MESSENGER OF ALLAH AN EXCELLENT PATTERN TO FOLLOW — LI-MAN KANA YARJULLAHA WAL-YAWMAL-AKHIRA WA ZAKARALLAHA KATHEERA — for anyone whose HOPE is in Allah and the Last Day, and who REMEMBERS ALLAH OFTEN.'

Beta, notice WHERE this ayah appears: not in a chapter about prayer or manners, but in the middle of a siege — when the Prophet ﷺ was digging in the trench with the others, hungry, in the cold, encouraging exhausted men.

So the 'excellent example' being pointed to here is his conduct UNDER PRESSURE. Any of us can behave well when things are easy.

And look at the condition attached: this example benefits 'one whose hope is in Allah and the Last Day, and who remembers Allah often'. Beta, following the Sunnah is not merely copying outward actions; it flows from where your hope is placed.



The Seal of the Prophets

The surah then addresses matters concerning the Prophet's ﷺ household — and beta, at the centre of it is a legal reform that had to be demonstrated in the most public way possible.

Zayd ibn Harithah (radiyallahu anhu) had been the Prophet's ﷺ adopted son, and people called him 'Zayd ibn Muhammad'. When adoption in that sense was abolished, he became 'Zayd ibn Harithah' again. His marriage to Zaynab bint Jahsh (radiyallahu anha) did not succeed, and after it ended, Allah commanded the Prophet ﷺ to marry her — to demonstrate practically that an adopted son's former wife is not forbidden the way a real son's would be.

'FA-LAMMA QADA ZAYDUN MINHA WATARAN
ZAWWAJNAKAHA — so when Zayd had no further need
of her, WE MARRIED HER TO YOU — LI-KAY LA
YAKOONA 'ALAL-MU'MINEENA HARAJUN FEE AZWAJI
AD'IYA'IHIM — so that there would be no DIFFICULTY



for the believers concerning the wives of their adopted sons.'

Beta, note that the Quran records the Prophet ﷺ had felt hesitation about how people would react, and Allah corrected him: 'WA TAKHSHAN-NASA WALLAHU AHAQQU AN TAKHSHAH — and you FEARED THE PEOPLE, while ALLAH HAS MORE RIGHT THAT YOU FEAR HIM.'

Beta, think how remarkable it is that this ayah is in the Quran at all. A man inventing a religion does not record his own moment of hesitation and a correction from above. This is the honesty of revelation.

And then, beta, the ayah that closes prophethood forever: 'MA KANA MUHAMMADUN ABA AHADIN MIN RIJALIKUM — Muhammad is not the father of any of your men — WA LAKIN RASOOLALLAHI WA KHATAMAN-NABIYYEEN — BUT the MESSENGER OF ALLAH and the SEAL OF THE PROPHETS — WA KANALLAHU BI-KULLI SHAY'IN 'ALEEMA — and Allah



is Knowing of all things.'

Beta, 'Khataman-Nabiyyeen' — the SEAL of the prophets. A seal is what closes a letter after it is finished; nothing is added afterwards. And the Prophet ﷺ himself explained it with a beautiful image: my example among the prophets is like a man who built a house and completed it beautifully, except for the place of one brick in a corner. People walk around it admiring it and say: if only this brick were placed. He said: I am that brick, and I am the last of the prophets.

Beta, this is a settled matter in Islam: no prophet comes after him ﷺ. Anyone claiming prophethood after him has stepped outside what the Quran states plainly here.

The Wives of the Prophet, and the Believing Women

The surah addresses the Mothers of the Believers directly: 'YA NISA'AN-NABIYYI LASTUNNA KA-AHADIN MINAN-NISA' — O wives of the Prophet, you are NOT LIKE ANYONE among women —



INIT-TAQAYTUNN — IF YOU FEAR ALLAH.'

Beta, note the condition: their honour is tied to taqwa, not merely to their marriage. And they were offered a choice — the life of the world with a fine settlement, or Allah and His Messenger and the home of the Hereafter. Every one of them chose Allah and His Messenger.

'INNAMA YUREEDULLAHU LI-YUZHIBA

'ANKUMUR-RIJSA AHLAL-BAYTI WA

YUTAHHIRAKUM TATHEERA — Allah intends only to remove from you the impurity, O PEOPLE OF THE HOUSEHOLD, and to PURIFY YOU with (extensive) purification.'

And then, beta, comes an ayah that lists what a believing man or woman actually looks like — ten qualities, mentioned for both, equally:

'INNAL-MUSLIMEENA WAL-MUSLIMAT — the

Muslim men and Muslim women —

WAL-MU'MINEENA WAL-MU'MINAT — the believing men and believing women — WAL-QANITEENA



WAL-QANITAT — the obedient men and obedient women — WAS-SADIQEENA WAS-SADIQAT — the truthful men and truthful women — WAS-SABIREENA WAS-SABIRAT — the patient men and patient women — WAL-KHASHI'EENA WAL-KHASHI'AT — the humble men and humble women — WAL-MUTASADDIQEENA WAL-MUTASADDIQAT — the charitable men and charitable women — WAS-SA'IMEENA WAS-SA'IMAT — the fasting men and fasting women — WAL-HAFIZEENA FUROOJAHUM WAL-HAFIZAT — the men who guard their chastity and the women who do so — WAZ-ZAKIREENALLAHA KATHEERAN WAZ-ZAKIRAT — and the men who remember Allah OFTEN and the women who do so — A'ADDALLAHU LAHUM MAGHFIRATAN WA AJRAN 'AZEEMA — Allah has prepared for them FORGIVENESS AND A GREAT REWARD.'

Beta, ten qualities, each one named twice — once for men, once for women. It is reported that this ayah came after some of the women asked why the Quran seemed



to address men, and Allah answered by naming both, ten times over.

And note that the list ends with dhikr — remembering Allah often — which is exactly what the next passage commands: 'YA AYYUHAL-LAZINA AMANUZ-KURULLAHA ZIKRAN KATHEERA — O YOU WHO BELIEVE, REMEMBER ALLAH WITH MUCH REMEMBRANCE — WA SABBIHOOHU BUKRATAN WA ASEELA — and glorify Him morning and evening.'

Beta, of all the acts of worship, dhikr is the only one Allah commands with the word 'katheeran' — MUCH, abundantly. Because it costs nothing, needs no place or condition, and can fill the gaps of an entire day.

'HUWAL-LAZI YUSALLEE 'ALAYKUM WA MALA'IKATUHU LI-YUKHRIJAKUM MINAZ-ZULUMATI ILAN-NOOR — HE is the One who SENDS BLESSINGS UPON YOU, and His angels, to BRING YOU OUT OF DARKNESS INTO LIGHT — WA KANA BIL-MU'MINEENA RAHEEMA — and He is ever



Merciful to the believers.'

Beta, sit with that: when you remember Allah, Allah remembers you — and the ayah says He sends His blessings upon YOU.

Send Blessings Upon Him, and the Trust

And then, beta, one of the most honoured ayahs in the Quran:

'INNALLAHA WA MALA'IKATAHU YUSALLOONA
'ALAN-NABIYY — INDEED, ALLAH AND HIS ANGELS
SEND BLESSINGS UPON THE PROPHET — YA
AYYUHAL-LAZINA AMANOO SALLOO 'ALAYHI WA
SALLIMOO TASLEEMA — O YOU WHO HAVE
BELIEVED, SEND BLESSINGS UPON HIM AND ASK
ALLAH TO GRANT HIM PEACE.'

Beta, look at the structure. Allah first tells you what HE and His angels are doing — and then invites you to join them. It is the only act of worship described this way.



And when this ayah was revealed, the companions asked how they should send salawat, and he ﷺ taught them the words we still say in every prayer: 'Allahumma salli 'ala Muhammadin wa 'ala ali Muhammad...'

And he ﷺ said: whoever sends blessings upon me once, Allah sends blessings upon him TEN TIMES. Beta, ten returns for a few words. A man once asked him how much of his dua he should devote to salawat, and when he said 'all of it', the Prophet ﷺ told him: then your worries will be taken care of and your sins forgiven.

And the surah closes, beta, with an ayah that describes the weight of being human:

'INNA 'ARADNAL-AMANATA 'ALAS-SAMAWATI
WAL-ARDI WAL-JIBALI — INDEED, WE OFFERED THE
TRUST TO THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH AND THE
MOUNTAINS — FA-ABAYNA AN YAHMILNAHA WA
ASHFAQNA MINHA — AND THEY REFUSED TO BEAR
IT AND FEARED IT — WA HAMALAHAL-INSAN — BUT
MAN BORE IT — INNAHU KANA ZALOOMAN JAHoola



— indeed, he was UNJUST and IGNORANT.'

Beta, 'al-amanah' — the Trust. The scholars explained it as the obligations of the religion: the responsibility of choice, of being commanded and held accountable, of carrying Allah's law in a body with desires.

And look at the response of the rest of creation: the heavens, the earth and the mountains — the largest and strongest things we know — were offered it and DECLINED, out of fear.

And this small creature, made from a drop of water, said yes.

Beta, this is either the greatest honour ever given to a species, or the heaviest weight ever picked up — and it is both. You are carrying something the mountains were afraid of.

And the description of man — 'zalooman jahoola', greatly unjust and very ignorant — is not a compliment, but it is honest: we took on more than we understood.



So what do you do with that, beta? The very next words tell you the purpose:
'LI-YU'AZZIBALLAHUL-MUNAFIQEENA... WA
YATOOBALLAHU 'ALAL-MU'MINEENA
WAL-MU'MINAT — ...and that Allah may accept the
repentance of the believing men and believing women.
WA KANALLAHU GHAFOORAN RAHEEMA — and Allah
is ever Forgiving, Merciful.'

Beta, look at where the surah ends: with tawbah and forgiveness. You picked up something too heavy for you — and the arrangement includes a door of repentance for exactly that reason. The Trust was never given on the assumption that you would carry it perfectly. It was given with a Ghafoor and Raheem attached.

What This Surah Teaches Us

1. A child's lineage is his right: care for orphans generously, but never erase who their father was.
2. Fear is not the opposite of faith — the best of this ummah had their hearts in their throats.



3. Hardship does not create character, it reveals it: two groups saw the same army and read it in opposite ways.

4. Sometimes Allah settles what you dread with a wind: 'and Allah sufficed the believers in fighting'.

5. The 'excellent example' is pointed out in the trench — judge yourself by how you behave under pressure.

6. Ten qualities, named for men and women equally — the standard of a believer is the same for both.

7. You carry a Trust the mountains refused — and it was entrusted to you with a door of repentance built in.

Allahumma salli wa sallim 'ala nabiyyina Muhammad — Ya Allah, help us carry the Trust and forgive us where we fall short. 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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