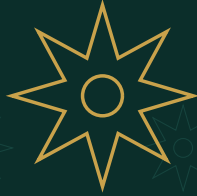


SURAH AS A STORY



Surah Az-Zumar

The Groups

The complete journey — the ayah of greatest hope —
told the way a loving elder shares it with a child



Surah No. 39 • 75 Ayahs • Meccan

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The Surah at a Glance

Alaa lillaahid-deenul-khaalis

3. Unquestionably, for Allah is the pure religion.

*Amman huwa qaanitun aanaaa'al-layli
saajidanw-wa qaaa'ima*

9. Is one who is devoutly obedient during the night,
prostrating and standing...?

*Qul yaa 'ibaadiyal-lazeena asrafoo 'alaaa
anfusihi laa taqnatoo mir-rahmatil-laah*

53. Say: O My servants who have transgressed against
themselves, do not despair of the mercy of Allah.

Innal-laaha yaghfiruz-zunooba jamee'aa

53. Indeed, Allah forgives all sins.

Wa maa qadarul-laaha haqqa qadrih

67. And they did not appraise Allah with true appraisal.

*Wa seeqal-lazeenat-taqaw Rabbahum ilal-Jannati
zumaraa*

73. And those who feared their Lord will be driven to
Paradise in groups.

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



Pure Religion Belongs to Allah

Beta, this surah opens by naming its central concern: 'FA'BUDILLAHA MUKHLISAN LAHUD-DEEN — so WORSHIP ALLAH, being SINCERE to Him in religion — ALA LILLAHD-DEENUL-KHALIS — UNQUESTIONABLY, FOR ALLAH IS THE PURE RELIGION.'

Beta, 'ad-deenul-khalis' — religion that is pure, unmixed, undiluted. The word 'khalis' is used for gold with no other metal in it.

And then Allah quotes the excuse of those who worship others alongside Him: 'MA NA'BUDUHUM ILLA LI-YUQARRIBOONA ILALLAHI ZULFA — we only worship them so that they may bring us NEARER to Allah in position.'

Beta, notice — even the idol worshippers of Makkah believed in Allah. They were not atheists. Their claim was that these intermediaries would carry their needs upward, like ministers who get you an audience with a



king.

And Allah's answer, beta, is the foundation of tawheed: this is not how He works. He is not a distant emperor who needs a courtier to pass on your message. As He says elsewhere, He is nearer than the jugular vein and He answers the caller directly.

'INNALLAHA YAHKUMU BAYNAHUM FEE MA HUM FEEHI YAKHTALIFOON — indeed, Allah will judge between them in that over which they differ.'

And then, beta, a piece of pure logic about Allah having no son: 'LAW ARADALLAHU AN YATTAKHIZA WALADAN LASTAFA MIMMA YAKHLUQU MA YASHA' — if Allah had intended to take a son, He could have chosen from what He creates whatever He willed — SUBHANAH — EXALTED IS HE — HUWALLAHUL-WAHIDUL-QAHHAR — He is Allah, the ONE, the PREVAILING.'

Layers of Darkness



Then the surah describes His creating of us:

'KHALAQAKUM MIN NAFSIN WAHIDATIN THUMMA
JA'ALA MINHA ZAWJAH — He created you from ONE
SOUL, then made from it its mate — WA ANZALA
LAKUM MINAL-AN'AMI THAMANIYATA AZWAJ —
and sent down for you of the grazing livestock EIGHT
MATES.'

'YAKHLUQUKUM FEE BUTOONI UMMAHATIKUM
KHALQAN MIN BA'DI KHALQIN FEE ZULUMATIN
THALATH — HE CREATES YOU IN THE WOMBS OF
YOUR MOTHERS, CREATION AFTER CREATION,
WITHIN THREE DARKNESSES.'

Beta, 'khalqan min ba'di khalq' — one creation after
another, stage upon stage. And 'three darknesses' — the
scholars explained these as the layers enclosing the
growing child, one inside another, in total darkness.

Beta, sit with that: you were formed in complete
darkness, in stages, without your knowledge, by a Hand
you could not see. And then the ayah asks the only



sensible question: 'ZALIKUMULLAHU RABBUKUM LAHUL-MULK — that is Allah, your Lord; to Him belongs dominion — LA ILAHA ILLA HUWA FA-ANNA TUSRAFOON — there is no deity except Him, SO HOW ARE YOU TURNED AWAY?'

'IN TAKFUROO FA-INNALLAHA GHANIYYUN 'ANKUM — if you disbelieve, then indeed Allah is FREE OF NEED of you — WA LA YARDA LI-'IBADIHIL-KUFR — but He does NOT APPROVE of disbelief for His servants — WA IN TASHKUROO YARDAHU LAKUM — and IF YOU ARE GRATEFUL, HE APPROVES IT FOR YOU.'

Beta, feel the tenderness inside that ayah. He needs nothing from you — and yet He does not want you to be ungrateful, and He is PLEASED when you thank Him. A Lord free of all need, who still cares which road you take.

The One Who Stands at Night

'AMMAN HUWA QANITUN ANA'AL-LAYLI SAJIDAN WA QA'IMAN — is one who is DEVOUTLY OBEDIENT



during the HOURS OF THE NIGHT, PROSTRATING and STANDING — YAHZARUL-AKHIRATA WA YARJOO RAHMATA RABBIH — FEARING the Hereafter and HOPING for the mercy of his Lord... (like one who does not)?'

Beta, look at this portrait of a believer at night: prostrating and standing, and inside him two things at once — 'yahzarul-akhirah' (fear) and 'yarjoo rahmata Rabbih' (hope). The two wings of the believing heart, both present in the same prayer.

And then the question that follows has echoed through fourteen centuries: 'QUL HAL YASTAWIL-LAZINA YA'LAMOONA WAL-LAZINA LA YA'LAMOON — SAY: ARE THOSE WHO KNOW EQUAL TO THOSE WHO DO NOT KNOW? INNAMA YATAZAKKARU ULUL-ALBAB — only those of understanding will remember.'

Beta, and notice the context in which this famous ayah about knowledge appears: right after a description of a man praying at night. Which tells you what kind of



'knowledge' is meant — not information collected, but knowledge that puts a person on his feet at night.

Then Allah addresses those who complain that faith is difficult where they live: 'QUL YA 'IBADIL-LAZINA AMANUT-TAQOO RABBAKUM — say: O My servants who have believed, fear your Lord — LILLAZINA AHSANOO FEE HAZIHID-DUNYA HASANAH — for those who do good in this world is good — WA ARDULLAHI WASI'AH — AND THE EARTH OF ALLAH IS SPACIOUS.'

Beta, 'ardullahi wasi'ah' — Allah's earth is wide. This was the ayah that justified migration: if a place makes your faith impossible, move. And beta, it applies in smaller ways too — a job, a circle, a habit-forming environment. If a place is eating your deen, Allah's earth is wide.

'INNAMA YUWAFFAS-SABIROONA AJRAHUM BI-GHAYRI HISAB — indeed, THE PATIENT WILL BE GIVEN THEIR REWARD WITHOUT ACCOUNT.'



Beta, every other deed has a stated multiplier — ten times, seven hundred times. Patience alone is paid 'bi-ghayri hisab' — without measure, without the calculator being brought out. Because patience is not one deed; it is the ingredient inside every other deed.

The Most Hopeful Ayah in the Quran

And now, beta, we come to the ayah for which this surah is most loved — an ayah that has pulled countless people back from the edge of despair.

'QUL YA 'IBADIYAL-LAZINA ASRAFOO 'ALA
ANFUSIHIM — SAY: O MY SERVANTS WHO HAVE
TRANSGRESSED AGAINST THEMSELVES — LA
TAQNATOO MIN RAHMATILLAH — DO NOT DESPAIR
OF THE MERCY OF ALLAH — INNALLAHA
YAGHFIRUZ-ZUNOOBA JAMEE'A — INDEED, ALLAH
FORGIVES ALL SINS — INNAHU
HUWAL-GHAFOORUR-RAHEEM — indeed, He is the
Forgiving, the Merciful.'



Beta, take this apart word by word, because every word is chosen with mercy.

'YA 'IBADI' — O MY SERVANTS. Look at how He addresses them. These are people who have wrecked their lives with sin — and He still calls them 'MY servants', attributing them to Himself with affection. He does not say 'O you sinners' or 'O you criminals'.

'ALLAZINA ASRAFOO 'ALA ANFUSIHIM' — who have been EXCESSIVE against THEMSELVES. Beta, notice: the sin is described as something done to YOURSELF. You did not harm Allah; you injured your own soul. He describes the sinner the way you would describe a person who has been hurting himself.

'LA TAQNATOO MIN RAHMATILLAH' — do not DESPAIR. 'Qunoot' here means the total loss of hope, the conclusion that it is finished, that you are beyond saving. Beta, Allah forbids that. Despair is not humility — it is a bad opinion of Allah's mercy, and it is itself a sin.



'INNALLAHA YAGHFIRUZ-ZUNOOBA JAMEE'A' — Allah forgives ALL sins. ALL, beta. Not 'small sins'. Not 'most sins'. The scholars note the condition understood from the following ayahs and from the whole Quran: with repentance. Turn back, and there is no sin on your record that cannot be erased. Not one.

Ibn Abbas (radiyallahu anhum) and others said this ayah was revealed regarding people who had committed the gravest crimes — murder, shirk — and feared there was no way back for them. And Allah sent down: do not despair.

Beta, understand why this matters so much. Shaytan has two strategies. Before the sin: 'it is small, Allah is Merciful.' After the sin: 'you are finished, you are a hypocrite, there is no point praying now.' Both are traps. The second has destroyed more people than the first, because a man who despairs stops trying.

And notice what comes right after, beta: 'WA ANEEBOO ILA RABBIKUM WA ASLIMOO LAHU MIN QABLI AN



YA'TIYAKUMUL-'AZAB — and RETURN to your Lord and SUBMIT to Him BEFORE the punishment comes upon you.' So the invitation has a deadline. Unlimited mercy, limited time.

'THUMMA LA TUNSAROON — then you will not be helped. WATTABI'OO AHSANA MA UNZILA ILAYKUM MIN RABBIKUM — and FOLLOW THE BEST of what has been revealed to you from your Lord.'

And then the surah records the regret of the one who delayed: 'AN TAQOOLA NAFSUN YA HASRATA 'ALA MA FARRATTU FEE JANBILLAH — lest a soul should say: OH, MY REGRET over what I NEGLECTED regarding Allah!'

Beta, 'ya hasrata' — oh, my grief. Read that ayah slowly, because it is a recording made in advance of words you do not want to be the one saying.

They Did Not Appraise Him Properly



The surah then paints Allah's majesty in an image that stops the heart: 'WA MA QADARULLAHA HAQQA QADRIH — and THEY DID NOT APPRAISE ALLAH WITH TRUE APPRAISAL — WAL-ARDU JAMEE'AN QABDATUHU YAWMAL-QIYAMAH — while the ENTIRE EARTH will be within HIS GRIP on the Day of Resurrection — WAS-SAMAWATU MATWIYYATUN BI-YAMEENIH — and the HEAVENS will be FOLDED IN HIS RIGHT HAND.'

Beta, we affirm this as Allah described it, without asking how and without likening Him to His creation. And the picture is meant to correct our sense of scale: this earth, with its oceans and continents and every empire that ever frightened anybody — held in a grip. The heavens, with everything astronomy has ever measured — folded like a scroll.

'SUBHANAHU WA TA'ALA 'AMMA YUSHRIKON.'

Beta, 'wa ma qadarullaha haqqa qadrih' — they did not estimate Allah as He should be estimated. That is the



root of every sin: a shrunken idea of Allah. We disobey because, in that moment, He seemed small enough to disobey.

'WA NUFIKHA FIS-SOOR FA-SA'IQA MAN
FIS-SAMAWATI WA MAN FIL-ARDI ILLA MAN
SHA'ALLAH — and the Horn will be blown, and
whoever is in the heavens and the earth will FALL DEAD
except whom Allah wills — THUMMA NUFIKHA FEEHI
UKHRA FA-IZA HUM QIYAMUN YANZUROON — then
it will be blown AGAIN, and at once they will be
STANDING, LOOKING ON.'

'WA ASHRAQATIL-ARDU BI-NOORI RABBIHA — AND
THE EARTH WILL SHINE WITH THE LIGHT OF ITS
LORD — WA WUDI'AL-KITABU — and the RECORD
will be placed — WA JEE'A BIN-NABIYYEENA
WASH-SHUHADA' — and the prophets and the
witnesses will be brought — WA QUDIYA BAYNAHUM
BIL-HAQQI WA HUM LA YUZLAMUON — and it will be
judged between them in TRUTH, and THEY WILL NOT
BE WRONGED.'



Driven in Groups

And now, beta, the scene that gives this surah its name — and the difference between two arrivals is contained in a single missing word.

'WA SEEQAL-LAZINA KAFAROO ILA JAHANNAMA ZUMARA — and those who disbelieved will be DRIVEN to Hell in GROUPS — HATTA IZA JA'OOHA FUTIHAT ABWABUHA — UNTIL, WHEN THEY REACH IT, ITS GATES ARE OPENED.'

Beta, note: they arrive, and THEN the gates open. They stand outside waiting, and the doors are opened before them. And the keepers say: 'A LAM YA'TIKUM RUSULUN MINKUM YATLOONA 'ALAYKUM AYATI RABBIKUM — did there not come to you messengers FROM AMONG YOURSELVES, reciting to you the verses of your Lord?' They will say: 'BALA WA LAKIN HAQQAT KALIMATUL-'AZABI 'ALAL-KAFIREEN — yes, but the word of punishment has come into effect upon the disbelievers.'



'QEELAD-KHULOO ABWABA JAHANNAMA
 KHALIDEENA FEEHA — it will be said: ENTER the gates
 of Hell, abiding eternally therein — FA-BI'SA
 MATHWAL-MUTAKABBIREEN — and WRETCHED is
 the residence of the ARROGANT.'

Beta, note the word used for them at the end: the
 ARROGANT. That is the summary of their crime.

And now the other arrival: 'WA
 SEEQAL-LAZINAT-TAQAW RABBAHUM ILAL-JANNATI
 ZUMARA — and those who feared their Lord will be
 driven to Paradise in GROUPS — HATTA IZA JA'OOHA
 WA FUTIHAT ABWABUHA — until, when they reach it,
 AND its gates HAVE BEEN OPENED — WA QALA
 LAHUM KHAZANATUHA SALAMUN 'ALAYKUM
 TIBTUM FADKHULOOHA KHALIDEEN — and its
 keepers say: PEACE BE UPON YOU; YOU HAVE BECOME
 PURE, so ENTER IT, abiding eternally.'

Beta, here is the detail the scholars have marvelled at for
 centuries. For Hell: 'hatta iza ja'ooha FUTIHAT' — until



when they came, it was opened. For Paradise: 'hatta iza ja'ooha WA futihat' — until when they came, AND its gates had ALREADY been opened.

That one extra letter — the 'wa' — changes everything. The gates of Paradise were standing open, waiting for them, before they even arrived. Nobody makes the people of Jannah wait at the door.

And look at the greeting they receive, beta: 'SALAMUN 'ALAYKUM, TIBTUM' — peace be upon you; you have become GOOD, pure, wholesome. Beta, the first words spoken to you at the gate are a declaration that you have been made pure — everything you were ashamed of, gone.

'WA QALUL-HAMDU LILLAHIL-LAZI SADAQANA WA'DAHU WA AWRATHANAL-ARDA NATABAWWA'U MINAL-JANNATI HAYTHU NASHA' — and they will say: ALL PRAISE TO ALLAH, who has FULFILLED HIS PROMISE to us and made us INHERIT the land, settling in Paradise WHEREVER WE WILL — FA-NI'MA



AJRUL-'AMILEEN — and EXCELLENT is the reward of the WORKERS.'

Beta, 'ajrul-'amileen' — the reward of those who WORKED. Not those who merely hoped. And the surah ends with the angels surrounding the Throne, glorifying their Lord, and the final words: 'WA QEELAL-HAMDU LILLAHI RABBIL-'ALAMEEN — and it will be said: ALL PRAISE IS DUE TO ALLAH, LORD OF THE WORLDS.'

Beta, that is how everything ends — the same words that open the Quran. All praise, at the beginning and at the end, to the One who never despaired of us even when we despaired of ourselves.

What This Surah Teaches Us

1. Religion must be 'khalis' — pure and unmixed; Allah needs no intermediary to hear you.
2. He is free of all need, yet He is PLEASED when you thank Him — that is the tenderness of your Lord.



3. Real knowledge is the kind that puts a person on his feet at night.

4. Allah's earth is wide: if a place is eating your deen, move.

5. Patience alone is paid without measure, because it is the ingredient inside every other deed.

6. Never despair: He calls the worst sinners 'My servants' and promises forgiveness for ALL sins — but the invitation has a deadline.

7. Every sin begins with a shrunken idea of Allah — and the gates of Paradise stand open BEFORE its people arrive.

Ya Allah, do not let us despair of Your mercy, and let us be among those greeted with 'salamun 'alaykum, tibtum'. 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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