

SURAH AS A STORY



Surah Al-Ahqaf

The Sand Dunes

The complete journey — parents, patience, and the cloud that deceived —
told the way a loving elder shares it with a child



Surah No. 46 • 35 Ayahs • Meccan

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The Surah at a Glance

*Haaa-Meeem. Tanzeelul-Kitaabi
minal-laahil-'Azeezil-Hakeem*

1-2. Ha Meem. The revelation of the Book is from Allah,
the Almighty, the Wise.

Wa wassaynal-insaana biwaalidayhi ihsanaa

15. And We have enjoined upon man, to his parents,
good treatment.

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

15. My Lord, enable me to be grateful for Your favour
upon me and upon my parents,

Wa aslih lee fee zurriyyatee

15. And make righteous for me my offspring.

*Falammaa ra-awhu 'aaridam-mustaqbila
awdiyatihim qaaloo haazaa
'aaridum-mumtirunaa*

24. Then when they saw it as a cloud approaching their
valleys, they said: this is a cloud bringing us rain!

Fasbir kamaa sabara ulul-'azmi minar-Rusul



35. So be patient, as were those of determination among the messengers.

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

Show Me Something You Created

Beta, this surah opens with 'Ha Meem' and the declaration that this Book is revealed from Allah, 'al-'Azeezil-Hakeem' — the Almighty, the Wise. And then it moves quickly to a challenge that is impossible to answer.

'QUL ARA'AYTUM MA TAD'OONA MIN DOONILLAHI ARONEE MAZA KHALAQOO MINAL-ARD — SAY: have you considered those you invoke besides Allah? SHOW ME what they have CREATED of the earth — AM LAHUM SHIRKUN FIS-SAMAWAT — or do they have a PARTNERSHIP in the heavens?'

Beta, the challenge is beautifully simple. You call upon something for help — so show me one thing it made. One ant. One leaf. One grain of sand. If it created



nothing, on what basis do you ask it for anything?

'ITOONEE BI-KITABIN MIN QABLI HAZA AW
ATHARATIN MIN 'ILMIN IN KUNTUM SADIQEEEN —
BRING ME A SCRIPTURE from before this, or a TRACE
OF KNOWLEDGE, if you are truthful.'

Beta, notice the standard of evidence Allah demands:
either revealed text, or transmitted knowledge with a
chain. Not 'this is what we have always done'. Not
'everyone believes it'. Not feelings. This is the Quran
teaching us how to accept a religious claim — the same
principle our scholars later built into the entire science
of hadith.

'WA MAN ADALLU MIMMAN YAD'OO MIN
DOONILLAHI MAN LA YASTAJEEBU LAHU ILA
YAWMIL-QIYAMAH — and who is more astray than
one who invokes, besides Allah, those who will NOT
RESPOND to him until the Day of Resurrection — WA
HUM 'AN DU'A'IHIM GHAFILOON — and THEY ARE
UNAWARE of their supplication?'



Beta, that is the loneliest picture in the Quran: a man calling out, year after year, to something that does not even know he is calling. And worse: 'WA IZA HUSHIRAN-NASU KANOO LAHUM A'DA'AN WA KANOO BI-'IBADATIHIM KAFIREEN — and when people are gathered, they will be ENEMIES to them, and will DENY their worship of them.'

Thirty Years for One Dua

And now, beta, the passage that is the treasure of this surah — and every son and daughter should memorise it.

'WA WASSAYNAL-INSANA BI-WALIDAYHI IHSANA — and WE HAVE ENJOINED upon man, toward his PARENTS, GOOD TREATMENT.'

Beta, 'ihsan' — not merely obedience, not merely support: EXCELLENCE. To do more than duty requires, and to do it beautifully.



And then Allah gives a reason — and He chooses the mother's side of it: 'HAMALAT-HU UMMUHU KURHAN WA WADA'AT-HU KURHA — HIS MOTHER CARRIED HIM WITH HARDSHIP and DELIVERED HIM WITH HARDSHIP — WA HAMLUHU WA FISALUHU THALATHOONA SHAHRA — and his BEARING and WEANING is THIRTY MONTHS.'

Beta, sit with that word 'kurhan' — with difficulty, with distress, against the natural ease of the body. Twice it is repeated: carrying, and delivering. The Quran does not romanticise it; it names the pain. Nine months of a body reshaped, and then a passage of pain that language cannot carry.

And 'thirty months' — the scholars derived from this ayah, combined with the ayah of two full years of suckling, that the minimum period of pregnancy is six months. Ali (radiyallahu anhu) is famously reported to have used exactly this reasoning to save a woman who had been accused when she delivered at six months.



Then the ayah moves forward in time: 'HATTA IZA BALAGHA ASHUDDAHU WA BALAGHA ARBA'EENA SANAH — until, when he reaches his FULL STRENGTH and reaches FORTY YEARS...'

Beta, forty — the age of maturity, when a person has seen enough of life to understand it. And what does the mature believer say at forty? Allah records his dua, and it is one of the most complete duas in the Quran:

'RABBI AWZI'NEE AN ASHKURA NI'MATAKAL-LATEE 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.'

Beta, notice the first request: not wealth, not health — the ABILITY TO BE GRATEFUL. Because gratitude itself is a gift that must be granted. And notice he asks for the favours on his parents to be counted too — he understands that everything good in him arrived through them.



'WA AN A'MALA SALIHAN TARDAH — and that I may do RIGHTEOUSNESS OF WHICH YOU APPROVE.' Not deeds that impress people — deeds HE accepts.

'WA ASLIH LEE FEE ZURRIYYATEE — and MAKE RIGHTEOUS FOR ME MY OFFSPRING.' Beta, a man at the peak of his life, and this is what he asks for: not his children's success, but their RIGHTEOUSNESS. And note the wording — 'aslih LEE', make them righteous FOR ME — because righteous children are a benefit that continues reaching a parent after death.

'INNI TUBTU ILAYKA WA INNI MINAL-MUSLIMEEN — indeed, I have REPENTED to You, and I am of the Muslims.'

Beta, this dua is a complete life plan in one sentence: gratitude for the past, accepted deeds in the present, righteous children for the future, and tawbah covering all of it. Learn it in Arabic, and say it — especially if you are near forty, and especially if you are a parent.



And Allah's response to such a person:

'ULA'IKAL-LAZINA NATAQABBALU 'ANHUM AHSANA
MA 'AMILOO — those are the ones from whom We
ACCEPT the BEST of what they did — WA
NATAJAWAZU 'AN SAYYI'ATIHIM — and We
OVERLOOK their misdeeds.'

The Son Who Refused

And then, beta, immediately after this beautiful portrait,
the Quran shows the opposite — the child who rejects.

'WAL-LAZI QALA LI-WALIDAYHI UFFIN LAKUMA —
and the one who says to his PARENTS: UFF to you! A
TA'IDANANEE AN UKHRAJA WA QAD
KHALATIL-QUROONU MIN QABLEE — do you promise
me that I will be brought out (of the grave), when
generations have already passed away before me?'

Beta, 'uff' — that small sound of irritation, the exact
word Allah forbade in Surah Al-Isra. Here it is said by a
son mocking his parents' faith.



And look at what the parents do: 'WA HUMA YASTAGHEETHANILLAHA WAYLAKA AMIN — and they both CRY OUT TO ALLAH FOR HELP, (saying to him): WOE TO YOU! BELIEVE! INNA WA'DALLAHI HAQQ — indeed, the promise of Allah is TRUE.'

Beta, feel that scene: two believing parents, begging Allah for their son and begging their son to believe. And he answers: 'MA HAZA ILLA ASATEERUL-AWWALEEN — this is nothing but legends of the ancients.'

And beta, there is something important to say here. Some of the early scholars connected this passage to a specific individual, while others — and Aisha (radiyallahu anha) rejected that identification firmly — held that it describes a TYPE, not a named person. The wording is general, and that is how it should be read: a portrait of any child who mocks the faith of his parents.

Beta, and there is comfort in these two passages standing side by side. Some parents give everything and receive gratitude; some give everything and receive 'uff'.



If you are a parent whose child has turned away — you are in the Quran, and so is your dua. Keep calling on Allah as those parents did. And if you are a child — read both portraits and choose which one you want recorded.

The Cloud That Was Not Rain

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

'WAZKUR AKHA 'AAD — and MENTION THE BROTHER OF 'AAD — IZ ANZARA QAWMAHU BIL-AHQAF — when he WARNED his people in AL-AHQAF — the SAND DUNES.'

The 'brother of 'Aad' is the Prophet Hud (alaihis salam), beta. And 'al-Ahqaf' means the curved, rolling sand dunes — the region in southern Arabia where his people lived.

He warned them: 'ALLA TA'BUDOO ILLALLAH — worship none but Allah — INNI AKHAFU 'ALAYKUM 'AZABA YAWMIN 'AZEEM — indeed, I FEAR FOR YOU the punishment of a terrible Day.'



Beta, note the phrase: 'I fear FOR YOU.' Not 'I threaten you'. The prophets warned out of concern, the way a man shouts at someone standing on a railway line.

Their reply: 'A JI'TANA LI-TA'FIKANA 'AN ALIHATINA — have you come to TURN US AWAY from our gods? FA'TINA BIMA TA'IDUNA IN KUNTA MINAS-SADIQEEN — then BRING US what you promise, if you are truthful!'

Beta, they DEMANDED the punishment. As people often do — 'if this is true, let it happen'. He said:

'INNAMAL-'ILMU 'INDALLAH — the knowledge is only with Allah — WA UBALLIGHUKUM MA URSILTU BIH — and I convey to you what I was sent with — WA LAKINNEE ARAKUM QAWMAN TAJHALOON — but I see you are a people behaving ignorantly.'

And then, beta, comes the moment — and it is one of the most chilling scenes in the Quran:

'FA-LAMMA RA'AWHU 'ARIDAN MUSTAQBILA
AWDIYATIHIM QALOO HAZA 'ARIDUN MUMTIRUNA



— then when they saw it as a CLOUD approaching their VALLEYS, they said: THIS IS A CLOUD BRINGING US RAIN!'

Beta, picture it. A long drought, dry valleys, a desert people — and then a great cloud appears on the horizon, moving toward them. They came out of their houses, they pointed, they REJOICED. Rain at last! Some narrations describe their happiness.

And Allah answers: 'BAL HUWA MASTA'JALTUM BIH — RATHER, IT IS THAT WHICH YOU WERE ASKING TO HASTEN — REEHUN FEEHA 'AZABUN ALEEM — a WIND, within it a PAINFUL PUNISHMENT.'

'TUDAMMIRU KULLA SHAY'IN BI-AMRI RABBIHA — DESTROYING EVERYTHING by the command of its Lord — FA-ASBAHOO LA YURA ILLA MASAKINUHUM — and by morning NOTHING COULD BE SEEN EXCEPT THEIR DWELLINGS.'

Beta, empty houses standing in the sand. That was all that remained of the most powerful people of their age.



And here is the lesson, beta, and it is a heavy one: **THEY SMILED AT THEIR OWN DESTRUCTION.** They came out to greet it. What they thought was mercy arriving was the punishment they had personally requested.

So be careful what you rejoice at, beta. That opportunity you are celebrating — is it rain, or is it a wind? That money, that connection, that easy shortcut? We are not able to tell the cloud from the punishment. Which is why the Prophet ﷺ, whenever he saw a strong wind or a gathering cloud, would show concern on his face and pray: 'Allahumma inni as'aluka khayraha wa khayra ma feeha... wa a'oozu bika min sharriha' — O Allah, I ask You for its good and the good in it, and I seek refuge from its evil. Aisha (radiyallahu anha) asked him why he did not rejoice like others at clouds — and he reminded her of exactly this: the people of 'Aad said 'a cloud bringing us rain'.

'WA LAQAD MAKKANNAHUM FEEMA IN MAKKANNAKUM FEEH — and We had ESTABLISHED THEM in ways We have NOT established you — WA



JA'ALNA LAHUM SAM'AN WA ABSARAN WA AF'IDAH
 — and We gave them HEARING and VISION and
 HEARTS — FA-MA AGHNA 'ANHUM SAM'UHUM WA
 LA ABSARUHUM WA LA AF'IDATUHUM MIN SHAY'IN
 — but their hearing, vision and hearts AVAILED THEM
 NOTHING — IZ KANOO YAJHADOONA BI-AYATILLAH
 — since they were REJECTING the signs of Allah.'

Beta, they had better faculties than us and they used them to deny. Faculties are only as good as what you point them at.

Be Patient as the Determined Ones Were

The surah then tells of a group of JINN who came and listened to the Quran: 'FA-LAMMA HADAROOHU QALOO ANSITOO — when they attended it, they said: BE SILENT AND LISTEN.' Beta, look at their adab: their first instruction to each other was silence. And after listening, 'WALLAW ILA QAWMIHIM MUNZIREEN — they returned to their people as WARNERS.'



And their message: 'YA QAWMANA AJEEBOO
DA'IYALLAHI WA AMINOO BIH — O our people,
RESPOND to the caller of Allah and BELIEVE in him —
YAGHFIR LAKUM MIN ZUNOOBIKUM WA YUJIRKUM
MIN 'AZABIN ALEEM — He will forgive you your sins
and protect you from a painful punishment.'

Beta, they heard once, and became callers immediately.
They did not wait for permission or qualifications. What
you learn, you pass on.

And then, beta, the final ayah of the surah — an
instruction to the Prophet ﷺ that has held up every
worker for the deen since:

'FASBIR KAMA SABARA ULUL-'AZMI MINAR-RUSUL
— SO BE PATIENT, AS WERE THOSE OF
DETERMINATION AMONG THE MESSENGERS — WA
LA TASTA'JIL LAHUM — and do NOT ASK FOR IT TO BE
HASTENED for them.'

Beta, 'Ulul-'Azm' — the messengers of firm resolve. The
scholars name them as Nuh, Ibrahim, Musa, 'Isa and



Muhammad ﷺ — the five who carried the heaviest loads and endured the longest.

And notice: Allah does not say 'be patient'. He says be patient AS THEY WERE. Look at their standard: Nuh for nine hundred and fifty years; Ibrahim thrown into fire and asked to sacrifice his son; Musa between a tyrant and an ungrateful nation; 'Isa rejected and plotted against; and our Prophet ﷺ, who buried his children, lost his wife and uncle, was starved in a boycott, stoned at Ta'if, and driven from his home.

Beta, that is the company Allah is placing you in when He tells you to be patient. Your hardship is not unique, and it is not unprecedented — you are walking on a road already worn smooth by the feet of the greatest.

'WA LA TASTA'JIL LAHUM' — and do not seek to hasten it for them. Beta, even the wish for your opponents' punishment to arrive quickly is restrained. Leave the timing to the One who owns it.



'KA-ANNAHUM YAWMA YARAWNA MA YOO'ADOONA LAM YALBATHOO ILLA SA'ATAN MIN NAHAR — on the Day they see what they are promised, it will be as though they had not remained (in the world) except an HOUR of a day. BALAGH — a NOTICE. FA-HAL YUHLAKU ILLAL-QAWMUL-FASIQOON — then will any be destroyed except the defiantly disobedient people?'

Beta, so the surah ends as it should: a whole life compressed into the feeling of one hour, and the reminder that Allah destroys no one unjustly. Everything that happened to 'Aad, they walked out of their houses to greet.

What This Surah Teaches Us

1. Demand evidence for religious claims — revealed text or transmitted knowledge, never 'this is what we always did'.
2. Honour your parents with ihsan, not mere duty — the Quran names your mother's pain twice so you never forget it.



3. Learn the dua of the believer at forty: gratitude, accepted deeds, righteous offspring, and tawbah.
4. If your child has turned away, your situation is in the Quran — and so is the parents' cry to Allah.
5. Never celebrate a 'cloud' before you know what is inside it; the people of 'Aad came out smiling at their own destruction.
6. Faculties are only as good as what you point them at — 'Aad had better hearing, sight and hearts than us.
7. Be patient AS THE ULUL-'AZM WERE — you are walking a road already worn smooth by the greatest feet.

Rabbi awzi'nee an ashkura ni'matak — Ya Allah, make us grateful, make our children righteous, and grant us the patience of those of determination. 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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