

SURAH AS A STORY



Surah Al-Ma'arij

The Ascending Stairways

The complete journey — the anxious heart and its cure —
told the way a loving elder shares it with a child



Surah No. 70 • 44 Ayahs • Meccan

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The Surah at a Glance

Sa-ala saaa'ilum bi-'azaabinw-waaqi'

1. A questioner demanded a punishment bound to happen

Ta'rujul-malaaa'ikatu war-Roohu ilayhi fee yawmin kaana miqdaaruhoo khamseena alfa sanah

4. The angels and the Spirit ascend to Him in a Day whose measure is fifty thousand years.

Fasbir sabran jameelaa

5. So be patient with a beautiful patience.

Innal-insaana khuliqa haloo'aa

19. Indeed, man was created anxious —

Izaa massahush-sharru jazoo'aa. Wa izaa massahul-khayru manoo'aa

- 20-21. when evil touches him, despairing; and when good touches him, withholding —

Illal-musalleen. Allazeena hum 'alaa salaatihim daaa'imoona

- 22-23. except those who pray — those who are constant in their prayer.



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The Man Who Ordered His Own Punishment

Beta, this surah opens with one of the strangest requests ever recorded: a man demanding his own destruction.

'SA-ALA SA'ILUN BI-'AZABIN WAQI' — a questioner ASKED for a punishment BOUND TO HAPPEN.' The books of tafseer mention that this was said by mockers of Makkah — one narration names An-Nadr ibn al-Harith, who once stood and said: O Allah, if this is the truth from You, then rain stones upon us from the sky, or bring a painful punishment! Not a dua for guidance, beta — a dare.

And Allah's response is chillingly calm:

'LIL-KAFIREENA LAYSA LAHU DAFI' — for the disbelievers; there is no PREVENTER of it.' It is coming, and nothing will hold it back. Then: 'MINALLAHI ZIL-MA'ARIJ — from Allah, the Owner of the



ASCENDING STAIRWAYS' — and the surah takes its name from this: the Lord of the ways of ascent, through which the affairs of creation travel up and down.

And then Allah answers the real question hidden inside their taunt — 'why the delay?' — with a measurement that silences human impatience:

'TA'RUJUL-MALA'IKATU WAR-ROOHU ILAYHI FEE YAWMIN KANA MIQDARUHU KHAMSEENA ALFA SANAH — the ANGELS and the SPIRIT ascend to Him in a Day whose measure is FIFTY THOUSAND YEARS.'

Beta, understand what this is teaching. We measure time with wristwatches; we call a decade 'long'. But near Allah, a single Day is measured in fifty thousand years of our counting. So when a person says, 'if punishment is real, why hasn't it come yet?' — he is judging an eternal timetable with a stopwatch. Delay is not doubt, beta; it is scale. And His delay is also mercy: every hour of it is an open door for tawbah.

Beautiful Patience



And then, to His Messenger ﷺ, and to every believer waiting for a promise to arrive: 'FASBIR SABRAN JAMEELA — so be patient with a BEAUTIFUL patience.'

Beta, learn this phrase and let it shape your character. Sabr jameel — beautiful patience — is patience with no complaint to creation, no bitterness, no ugly face. The scholars described it as sabr without panic and without complaining to people about your Lord. It is the patience of Ya'qub (alaihis salam), who said: 'I only complain of my grief and sorrow TO ALLAH.'

There is a patience that is ugly, beta — the kind that endures while sulking, that keeps score, that broadcasts its wounds to everyone. And there is a patience that is beautiful — quiet, dignified, still worshipping, still smiling at people, taking its complaint upward only. Allah asked for the second.

'INNAHUM YARAWNAHU BA'EEDA — indeed, THEY see it as far off — WA NARAHU QAREEBA — but WE see it as NEAR.' Beta, feel the difference in vision: what



our impatience calls 'distant', Allah calls 'close'. Our whole lifetime is a short paragraph in His book.

The Day No Friend Asks After a Friend

Then the surah shows that Day: 'YAWMA TAKOONUS-SAMA'U KAL-MUHL — the Day the sky will be like MOLTEN BRASS — WA TAKOONUL-JIBALU KAL-'IHN — and the mountains will be like WOOL' — fluffed, weightless, blowing apart.

'WA LA YAS'ALU HAMEEMUN HAMEEMA — and NO FRIEND WILL ASK ABOUT A FRIEND.' Beta, sit with that line a moment. Not that friends will be forbidden to speak — but that no one will even THINK to ask. Every soul will be so consumed by its own situation that the closest companions will pass each other without a question. 'YUBASSAROONAHUM' — they will be SHOWN to each other; they will SEE one another, and still not ask.

And then the desperate offer: the criminal will wish he could ransom himself from the punishment of that Day



'BI-BANEEHI — by his CHILDREN — WA SAHIBATIHI WA AKHEEH — and his WIFE and his BROTHER — WA FASEELATIHIL-LATI TU'WEEH — and his CLAN that SHELTERED him — WA MAN FIL-ARDI JAMEE'AN THUMMA YUNJEEH — and everyone on earth, ALL of them, if it could then SAVE him.'

Beta, look at what a man is willing to trade on that Day: the very people he spent his life protecting, providing for, and sinning for. The bribes he took 'for the family', the compromises he made 'for the children' — on that Day he would hand them all over to escape one moment of the Fire. And it will not be accepted: 'KALLA — NO! Indeed, it is the Flame.' The surah adds that it 'calls' — 'TAD'OO MAN ADBARA WA TAWALLA, WA JAMA'A FA-AW'A' — it calls the one who turned his back and went away, and who COLLECTED wealth and HOARDED it. Two habits, beta: turning away, and collecting-and-locking.

The X-Ray of the Human Heart



And now, beta, comes the passage that makes this surah unforgettable — three ayahs in which Allah photographs the raw human soul more accurately than any psychology book ever written:

'INNAL-INSANA KHULIQA HALOO'A — indeed, MAN was created HALOO'A — anxious, impatient, restless, grasping. IZA MASSAHUSH-SHARRU JAZOO'A — when EVIL touches him, he is DESPAIRING. WA IZA MASSAHUL-KHAYRU MANOO'A — and when GOOD touches him, he is WITHHOLDING.'

Beta, read your own life in those two lines. One bad result, one loss in business, one harsh word — and we announce that our life is ruined; we lose sleep, we panic, we say 'mere saath hi kyun'. That is jazoo'. Then a good month comes, the account fills, the promotion arrives — and immediately the fist closes: my money, my success, my time, my energy. That is manoo'. Panic in hardship, stinginess in ease — beta, this is the factory setting of the human nafs. Allah is not insulting us here; He is diagnosing us, the way a doctor names a condition



before prescribing.

And then comes the most hopeful word in the surah — one small word that changes everything: 'ILLA' — EXCEPT.

'ILLAL-MUSALLEEN — EXCEPT THOSE WHO PRAY.'

Beta, salah is announced as the treatment for the oldest disease of the human heart. Why? Because five times a day, the panicking man is pulled out of his panic and made to stand before the One who owns the outcome; and five times a day, the grasping man is reminded that he owns nothing and will leave with nothing. Salah re-calibrates both diseases at once.

But look carefully, beta — Allah does not say 'except those who prayed once'. He immediately describes what kind of prayer heals: 'ALLAZEENA HUM 'ALA SALATI HIM DA'IMOON — those who are CONSTANT in their prayer.' Da'im — continuous, never abandoned, whatever the season of life.



The Character Course of the People of Prayer

And now the surah does something wonderful. Having named salah as the cure, it lists what actually GROWS in a life built around it — a complete character course, beta. Learn these eight marks, and check yourself against them:

ONE: 'those who are CONSTANT in their prayer.' TWO: 'WA-LLAZEENA FEE AMWALIHIM HAQQUN MA'LOOM — and those in whose WEALTH is a KNOWN RIGHT — LIS-SA'ILI WAL-MAHROOM — for the one who ASKS and the one who is DEPRIVED.' Beta, two beautiful details: it is a 'known' right — a fixed, budgeted portion, not random leftovers; and it is for the one who asks AND for the mahroom — the one too dignified to ask, whose need you must notice yourself.

THREE: 'those who BELIEVE in the Day of Recompense.' FOUR: 'those who are FEARFUL of the punishment of their Lord — indeed, the punishment of their Lord is not



something to feel SECURE from.' Beta, note this: even the righteous never feel 'safe enough'. Fear and hope are the two wings; a bird with one wing spins in circles.

FIVE: 'those who GUARD their chastity' — with the sole exception of their lawful spouses. SIX: 'those who are ATTENTIVE TO THEIR TRUSTS AND THEIR PROMISES' — amanah and 'ahd, beta: returned deposits, kept secrets, honoured deadlines, promises to children remembered. SEVEN: 'those who stand FIRM IN THEIR TESTIMONIES' — who do not bend the truth when they speak about others, even against themselves or their own people.

And EIGHT — see how the list closes exactly where it opened: 'WA-LLAZEENA HUM 'ALA SALATI HIM YUHAFIZOON — and those who GUARD their prayer.'

Beta, this design is deliberate and beautiful: salah is the front cover and the back cover of the book of good character; everything else is bound between them. First 'da'imoon' — constant in it; last 'yuhafizoon' —



protecting it: its times, its wudu, its khushu', its place in a busy day. If those two covers are strong, the pages inside stay in order.

And their result: 'ULA'IKA FEE JANNATIN MUKRAMOON — those will be in Gardens, HONOURED.'

Rushing Toward You, Necks Outstretched

The surah then returns to the deniers with a scene that has a strange, modern flavour: 'FA-MALI-LLAZEENA KAFAROO QIBALAKA MUHTI'EEN — so what is the matter with those who disbelieve, HASTENING toward you, necks outstretched — 'ANIL-YAMEENI WA 'ANISH-SHIMALI 'IZEEN — from the right and from the left, in SEPARATE GROUPS?'

The mockers used to gather around the Prophet ﷺ in circles, leaning in, eager — not to learn, beta, but to jeer and to entertain themselves. And then the Quran exposes their inner claim: 'A YATMA'U KULLU-MRI'IN



MINHUM AN YUDKHALA JANNATA NA'EEM — does every one of them ASPIRE to enter a Garden of Pleasure?' They denied the Day, mocked the message, took nothing seriously — and yet somewhere inside assumed that if there IS a Jannah, they will be in it.

Beta, that assumption did not die in Makkah. It lives today in every heart that says 'Allah is Forgiving' while never lifting a finger toward Him. And Allah answers it with a devastating reminder of how small we are: 'KALLA — NO! INNA KHALAQNAHUM MIMMA YA'LAMOON — indeed, We created them from that which they KNOW' — from a humble drop. And then an oath: 'FALA UQSIMU BI-RABBIL-MASHARIQI WAL-MAGHARIB — so I swear by the Lord of the EASTS and the WESTS — INNA LA-QADIROON — indeed, We are ABLE — 'ALA AN NUBADDILA KHAYRAN MINHUM — to REPLACE them with better than them — WA MA NAHNU BI-MASBOOQEEN — and We are not to be outrun.'



So the surah closes: 'FA-ZARHUM YAKHOODOO WA YAL'ABOO — so leave them to converse vainly and amuse themselves — HATTA YULAQOO YAWMAHUMUL-LAZI YOO'ADOON — until they meet their Day which they are promised.' And that Day: 'YAWMA YAKHRUJOONA MINAL-AJDATHI SIRA'AN — the Day they will emerge from the GRAVES rapidly — KA-ANNAHUM ILA NUSUBIN YOOFIDOON — as if they were HASTENING TOWARD AN IDOL' — running the way they used to run to their false gods, but now with 'KHASHI'ATAN ABSARUHUM' — eyes humbled — 'TARHAQUHUM ZILLAH' — humiliation covering them. 'ZALIKAL-YAWMUL-LAZI KANOO YOO'ADOON — THAT is the Day they were promised.'

Beta, notice the poetic justice: the same energy with which they hurried toward falsehood in this world is the energy with which they will be made to hurry toward judgement in the next. Wherever you run in life, you are practising for the direction you will run in then.

What This Surah Teaches Us



- 1.** Never dare Allah or demand His punishment — and never read delay as absence: near Him, one Day is measured in fifty thousand years.
- 2.** Practise sabr jameel: patience without complaint to people, without bitterness, taking your grief upward only.
- 3.** On that Day no friend will even ask after a friend — so stop sinning 'for the family'; they cannot be your ransom.
- 4.** Know your factory settings — panic in loss, tightness in gain — and know the cure Allah named: constant salah.
- 5.** Budget a 'known right' from your income for the one who asks and, especially, for the one too dignified to ask.
- 6.** Keep both wings: never feel secure from your Lord's punishment, never despair of His mercy.
- 7.** Guard trusts, promises and testimony as strictly as you guard prayer — the same people are described



doing both.

Ya Allah, cure our hearts of panic and greed, make us constant in prayer and generous in wealth, and grant us a beautiful patience until Your promise arrives.

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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