

SURAH AS A STORY



Surah Al-Buruj

The Great Constellations

The complete journey — the people of the ditch and the victory of faith —
told the way a loving elder shares it with a child



Surah No. 85 • 22 Ayahs • Meccan

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The Surah at a Glance

Was-samaaa'i zaatil-burooj

1. By the sky containing great constellations,

Qutila as-haabul-ukhdood

4. Destroyed were the companions of the ditch —

*Wa maa naqamoo minhum illaaa any-yu'minoo
billaahil-'Azeezil-Hameed*

8. And they resented them for nothing except that they
believed in Allah, the Almighty, the Praiseworthy —

Inna batsha Rabbika lashadeed

12. Indeed, the grip of your Lord is severe.

Wa Huwal-Ghafoorul-Wadood

14. And He is the Forgiving, the Most Loving.

*Bal huwa Qur'aanum-majeed. Fee
Lawhim-Mahfooz*

21-22. Rather, it is a glorious Quran, in a Preserved
Tablet.

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An Oath by the Watching Sky

Beta, this surah was revealed in Makkah at a time when the early Muslims were being tortured — Bilal on the burning sand, Sumayyah and Yasir (radiyallahu anhum) killed, families crushed. And Allah sent them a surah about a nation of believers who were burnt alive centuries earlier.

Think about why. When you are suffering and you feel that no one has ever suffered like this, Allah shows you those who came before — so that you know you are in a long, honourable line.

'WAS-SAMA'I ZATIL-BUROOJ — by the SKY containing the great CONSTELLATIONS —
WAL-YAWMIL-MAW'OOD — and by the PROMISED Day — WA SHAHIDIN WA MASH-HOOD — and by the WITNESS and the WITNESSED.'

Beta, notice the three oaths together: the sky with its towering constellations — vast, ordered, watching; the Day that has been promised and is certainly coming;



and 'a witness and that which is witnessed'. The scholars gave many explanations of the last one, and among them: everything that observes and everything that is observed. As if to say: nothing in this universe happens unwitnessed.

That is the setting, beta, for the story of a crime that its perpetrators thought nobody would ever record.

The Companions of the Ditch

'QUTILA AS-HABUL-UKHDOOD — DESTROYED were the COMPANIONS OF THE DITCH — AN-NARI ZATIL-WAQOOD — the fire full of FUEL — IZ HUM 'ALAYHA QU'OOD — when they were SITTING BY IT — WA HUM 'ALA MA YAF'ALOONA BIL-MU'MINEENA SHUHOOD — and they, to what they were doing to the BELIEVERS, were WITNESSES.'

Beta, a trench was dug, filled with fuel, and set ablaze. Believers were brought and given one choice: renounce your faith, or burn. And those who did the burning did not merely order it from a distance — they SAT beside



the ditch and WATCHED. They made a spectacle of it, an entertainment.

And Allah states their entire motive in a single ayah that has echoed through every age of persecution: 'WA MA NAQAMOO MINHUM ILLA AN YU'MINOO BILLAHIL-'AZEEZIL-HAMEED — and they RESENTED them for NOTHING EXCEPT that they BELIEVED IN ALLAH, the Almighty, the Praiseworthy.'

Beta, feel the weight of that. No crime. No theft, no rebellion, no harm done. Their only offence was iman. And notice which two Names of Allah are chosen here: Al-'Azeez, the Almighty — the One who cannot be overpowered — and Al-Hameed, the Praiseworthy — the One deserving of all praise. As if to say: they were killed for believing in the One who is both able to defend them and worthy of everything they endured.

And who owns the situation? 'ALLAZI LAHU MULKUS-SAMAWATI WAL-ARD — the One to whom belongs the DOMINION of the heavens and the earth —



WALLAHU 'ALA KULLI SHAY'IN SHAHEED — and Allah is WITNESS over ALL things.'

Beta, the surah is now answering the question that must have burned in every persecuted heart: where was Allah? The answer: He was the Owner of the sky above that ditch, and He was Witness over every flame. Nothing was hidden from Him; nothing was outside His dominion. His delay was never absence.

The Boy and the King

Beta, the Prophet ﷺ narrated a long story about a people like these, preserved in Sahih Muslim, and it is one of the most extraordinary narratives you will ever hear. Let me tell it as he told it.

There was a tyrant king with a sorcerer who had grown old. The sorcerer asked for a boy to be sent to him to be taught his craft. On the road between the sorcerer and the king, the boy passed a MONK, sat with him, and found his words beautiful — and began stopping there each day, arriving late to the sorcerer, and being beaten



by both sides for the delay. He complained to the monk, who taught him: if the sorcerer beats you, say the family delayed me; if your family beats you, say the sorcerer delayed me.

One day the boy came upon a huge beast blocking the people's road. He said to himself: today I will know who is better — the sorcerer or the monk. He picked up a stone and said: O Allah, if the monk's way is more beloved to You than the sorcerer's, kill this beast so the people may pass. He threw it, and the beast died.

The monk, hearing of it, told him: my son, today you are better than me. You will be TESTED — and if you are tested, do not point to me.

The boy began healing the blind and the lepers by Allah's permission. A blind courtier of the king came, offering gifts. The boy said: I do not cure anyone; ALLAH cures. If you believe in Allah, I will pray and He will cure you. The man believed, and his sight returned.



The king asked him: who returned your sight? He said: MY LORD. The king said: do you have a lord other than me? He said: my Lord and your Lord is Allah. He was tortured until he pointed to the boy.

The boy was brought. The king tortured him until he pointed to the monk. The monk was ordered to recant; he refused. A saw was placed on the parting of his head and he was split in two. Then the courtier — split in two as well.

Then the boy: the king sent him with men to the top of a mountain, ordering that if he did not recant, he be thrown off. On the mountain the boy prayed: 'O Allah, suffice me against them however You wish.' The mountain shook, and the men fell; the boy walked back to the king. He was sent again, in a boat to the middle of the sea, with the same order. He prayed the same dua; the boat overturned, the men drowned, and the boy walked back again.



And then, beta, comes the most remarkable moment in the story. The boy said to the king: you will not be able to kill me until you do what I command you. Gather the people in one place, tie me to a tree trunk, take an arrow from my quiver, place it in the bow, and say: BISMILLAH, RABBIL-GHULAM — in the name of Allah, the Lord of the BOY — then shoot. If you do that, you will kill me.

The king did exactly that. The arrow struck the boy's temple; he put his hand on the place and died.

And the crowd — the whole gathered nation, watching — cried out: WE BELIEVE IN THE LORD OF THE BOY! WE BELIEVE IN THE LORD OF THE BOY! WE BELIEVE IN THE LORD OF THE BOY!

Beta, understand what that boy did. He gave his own life as the price for a nation's guidance. He arranged his own death so that it would happen publicly, with Allah's name announced over it, in front of everyone.



The king's advisers came to him: the very thing you feared has happened — the people have believed! So he ordered ditches dug at the roads, filled with fire, and every believer who refused to recant was thrown in. And among them came a woman with her infant. She hesitated at the edge — for herself she was ready, but for her child she faltered. And Allah gave the baby speech: 'YA UMMAH, ISBIREE — O my mother, BE PATIENT — for you are upon the TRUTH.'

Beta, an infant speaking words of courage to his mother at the edge of a fire. That is where the surah's story ends — and where Allah's verdict begins.

Two Fires, One Verdict

'INNAL-LAZINA FATANUL-MU'MINEENA
WAL-MU'MINATI THUMMA LAM YATOOBOW —
indeed, those who PERSECUTED the believing men and
believing women and then did NOT REPENT —
FA-LAHUM 'AZABU JAHANNAMA WA LAHUM
'AZABUL-HAREEQ — for them is the punishment of



Hell and for them is the punishment of BURNING.'

Beta, notice the astonishing mercy hidden in the middle of this ayah: 'THUMMA LAM YATOOBOO' — and then did not repent. Meaning: even THESE people — who dug the ditches and burnt families alive and sat watching — even they, had they turned back to Allah, would have been forgiven. Beta, if that door was open for them, do you still believe your sins are too great to bring to Him?

And immediately, the other side: 'INNAL-LAZINA AMANOO WA 'AMILUS-SALIHATI LAHUM JANNATUN TAJREE MIN TAHTIHAL-ANHAR — indeed, those who believed and did righteous deeds will have Gardens beneath which rivers flow. ZALIKAL-FAWZUL-KABEER — THAT is the GREAT ATTAINMENT.'

Beta, look at the vocabulary. To the world, the believers in that ditch were the defeated — burnt, erased, their names unrecorded in history. Allah calls their outcome 'al-fawzul-kabeer' — the GREAT VICTORY. The Quran redefines winning and losing entirely: the men sitting



comfortably by the fire were the destroyed ones ('qutila as-habul-ukhdood'), and the ones inside the fire were the victorious.

'INNA BATSHA RABBIKA LA-SHADEED — indeed, the GRIP of your Lord is SEVERE. INNAHU HUWA YUBDI'U WA YU'EED — indeed, it is He who ORIGINATES and REPEATS.'

And then, beta — right after 'severe grip' — comes one of the most beautiful pairs of Names in the Quran: 'WA HUWAL-GHAFOORUL-WADOOD — and He is the FORGIVING, the MOST LOVING — ZUL-'ARSHIL-MAJEED — Owner of the Throne, the Glorious — FA"ALUN LIMA YUREED — Doer of whatever He INTENDS.'

Beta, 'Al-Wadood' means the Loving — and its root, 'wudd', is the tenderest word for love in Arabic; it is love that shows itself in action. Allah placed His severity and His love side by side in consecutive ayahs, because a believer must hold both: the grip that will avenge every



wronged soul, and the love that receives every returning one.

In a Preserved Tablet

The surah then reminds the arrogant of two nations who thought they were untouchable: 'HAL ATAKA HADEETHUL-JUNOOD — has there reached you the story of the SOLDIERS — FIR'AWNA WA THAMOOD — of Firaun and Thamud?' Beta, the greatest army of the ancient world, and the greatest builders in stone — both gone.

'BALIL-LAZINA KAFAROO FEE TAKZEEB — rather, those who disbelieve are in DENIAL — WALLAHU MIN WARA'IHIM MUHEET — and Allah, from behind them, ENCOMPASSES them.'

Beta, what an image: they think they are moving forward freely, and Allah has them completely surrounded — from behind, from every side. There is no direction in which a person can run out of His encompassing.



And then the surah closes with two ayahs about the Book itself: 'BAL HUWA QUR'ANUN MAJEED — rather, it is a GLORIOUS QURAN — FEE LAWHIN MAHFOOZ — in a PRESERVED TABLET.'

Beta, feel how perfectly this ends the surah. A tyrant tried to erase the believers from the earth — burnt their bodies so nothing would remain, so their story would die with them. And Allah tells us that the record of everything is in the Lawhun Mahfooz — the Preserved Tablet, above all reach, beyond every fire.

Their names were burnt out of history books, and written permanently into the Quran. Fourteen centuries later, beta, you and I are sitting here speaking about them — while the kings who burnt them are remembered only as 'as-habul-ukhdood', the destroyed ones.

That is Allah's answer to every persecuted believer: your enemies can reach your body; they cannot reach the record. And what is preserved in the Tablet is what



finally counts.

What This Surah Teaches Us

1. When you suffer for your deen, remember you stand in a long, honourable line — Allah told the tortured Makkans about those burnt before them.
2. Persecution often has no reason but iman itself — 'they resented them for nothing except that they believed.'
3. Allah's delay is never absence: He owned the sky above that ditch and witnessed every flame.
4. The boy's dua is yours in any helplessness: 'Allahumma-kfineehim bima shi'ta' — O Allah, suffice me against them however You wish.
5. A single sincere life can guide a nation — and a baby's words can steady a mother at the edge of fire.
6. Even the people of the ditch would have been forgiven had they repented — so never believe your own sins are beyond His door.



7. Hold both Names together: Shadeedul-Batsh and Al-Ghafoorul-Wadood — the severe grip and the tender love.

Ya Ghafoor, ya Wadood — grant us the patience of those who were burnt and the courage of the boy, and preserve our names where no fire reaches. 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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