

SURAH AS A STORY



Surah Al-Fajr

The Dawn

The complete journey — the test of ease, the test of hardship —
told the way a loving elder shares it with a child



Surah No. 89 • 30 Ayahs • Meccan

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The Surah at a Glance

Wal-Fajri wa layaalin 'ashr

1-2. By the dawn, and by the ten nights,

Hal fee zaalika qasamul-lizee hijr

5. Is there in that an oath for one of understanding?

Alam tara kayfa fa'ala Rabbuka bi-'Aad

6. Have you not seen how your Lord dealt with 'Aad —

*Fa-ammal-insaanu iza mab-talaahu Rabbuhoo
fa-akramahoo wa na'amahoo fayaqoolu Rabbeee
akraman*

15. As for man, when his Lord tries him and honours him and favours him, he says: my Lord has honoured me.

Kallaa bal laa tukrimoonal-yateem

17. No! Rather, you do not honour the orphan,

*Yaaa ayyatuhan-nafsul-mutma'innah. Irji'eee ilaa
Rabbiki raadiyatam-mardiyyah*

27-28. O reassured soul! Return to your Lord,
well-pleased and pleasing.

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Five Oaths at Daybreak

Beta, this surah opens with a series of oaths that feel like standing outside in the last darkness before sunrise:

'WAL-FAJR — by the DAWN — WA LAYALIN 'ASHR — and by the TEN NIGHTS — WASH-SHAF'I WAL-WATR — and by the EVEN and the ODD — WAL-LAYLI IZA YASR — and by the NIGHT when it PASSES.'

The 'ten nights', beta, are most commonly explained by the scholars as the first ten days of Dhul-Hijjah — the best days of the year, about which the Prophet ﷺ said that no days are more beloved to Allah for righteous deeds. Some included the last ten of Ramadan. And 'the even and the odd' has many explanations — among them the prayers, the days of Hajj, and all of creation which comes in pairs while the Creator alone is Witr, One.

And 'the night when it passes' — beta, notice Allah did not swear by the night when it arrives, but when it MOVES ON, when it is leaving. Because that is the



night's real lesson: it goes. Everything dark passes.

And then a question that is itself a compliment and a challenge: 'HAL FEE ZALIKA QASAMUN LI-ZEE HIJR — is there in that an oath for one of HIJR?' 'Hijr', beta, means restraint — and the mind is called 'hijr' because true intelligence RESTRAINS a person from foolishness. So the ayah is asking: is this enough for someone who has the sense to hold himself back? Real intelligence, in the Quran's definition, is not cleverness — it is self-restraint.

Three Civilisations, One Ending

Then Allah asks His Messenger ﷺ — and us — to look at history: 'A LAM TARA KAYFA FA'ALA RABBUKA BI-'AAD — have you not seen how your Lord dealt with 'AAD — IRAMA ZATIL-'IMAD — IRAM, who had LOFTY PILLARS — ALLATI LAM YUKHLAQ MITHLUHA FIL-BILAD — the like of which had NEVER BEEN CREATED in the lands?'



Beta, read that description: a civilisation so architecturally magnificent that nothing comparable had ever been built. Their engineering was unmatched; their columns were legendary. And where are they now?

'WA THAMOODAL-LAZINA JABUS-SAKHRA BIL-WAD — and THAMUD, who CARVED OUT THE ROCKS in the valley.' Beta, they did not build with stone — they carved INTO mountains, cutting homes directly out of cliff faces. Their skill is still visible in the ruins that stand in northern Arabia to this day, empty.

'WA FIR'AWNA ZIL-AWTAD — and FIRAUN, owner of the STAKES' — the pyramids like tent-pegs, or the stakes upon which he tortured people; both meanings are mentioned.

'ALLAZINA TAGHAW FIL-BILAD — those who TRANSGRESSED in the lands — FA-AKTHAROO FEEHAL-FASAD — and INCREASED therein the CORRUPTION — FA-SABBA 'ALAYHIM RABBUKA SAWTA 'AZAB — so your Lord POURED UPON THEM a



scourge of punishment.'

Beta, three of the most advanced civilisations of the ancient world — in architecture, in engineering, in power — and each one is named here with its greatest achievement, and then its ending. Allah is teaching a law of history: technological greatness does not protect a nation whose morals collapse. Pillars, carved mountains and pyramids are still standing; the people who built them are gone.

'INNA RABBAKA LA-BIL-MIRSAD — indeed, your Lord is in OBSERVATION' — 'mirsad' is a watchtower on a road, from which everything that passes is seen. Beta, no one drives past Allah unnoticed.

The Two Tests Everyone Misreads

And now, beta, comes the psychological heart of this surah — two ayahs that describe how almost every human being misunderstands his own life:



'FA-AMMAL-INSANU IZA MABTALAHU RABBUHU
FA-AKRAMAHU WA NA''AMAHU — as for man, when
his Lord TESTS him by HONOURING him and giving him
COMFORT — FA-YAQOOLU RABBI AKRAMAN — he
says: MY LORD HAS HONOURED ME.'

'WA AMMA IZA MABTALAHU FA-QADARA 'ALAYHI
RIZQAH — but when He TESTS him by RESTRICTING
his provision — FA-YAQOOLU RABBI AHANAN — he
says: MY LORD HAS HUMILIATED ME.'

Beta, catch the word Allah uses for BOTH situations:
'ibtala' — He TESTED him. The wealth is a test. The
poverty is a test. The promotion is a test, and so is the
rejection. Health, illness; children, childlessness; fame,
obscurity — all of it is exam paper, and the questions
merely differ.

But look at what man says. When he receives, he
concludes: Allah loves me, I am honoured, I must be
doing something right. And when it is withheld, he
concludes: Allah has humiliated me, He does not care



about me, why me.

And Allah answers with 'KALLA' — NO! Both readings are wrong. Beta, wealth is not automatically a sign of Allah's pleasure — He gives dunya to those He loves and those He does not. And poverty is not a mark of His anger — the prophets, the most beloved of creation, often had the least.

So how does a believer read his own life? Not by the size of his bank balance, beta, but by his behaviour in whichever paper he has been handed. And that is exactly what Allah says next — He does not answer with theology; He answers by pointing at their treatment of the weak.

The Real Measure: How You Treat the Weak

'KALLA BAL LA TUKRIMOONAL-YATEEM — NO!
Rather, you do not HONOUR THE ORPHAN.'



Beta, look at the word: not 'you do not feed the orphan' — 'you do not HONOUR him'. Because an orphan can be fed and still be crushed: given leftovers with a sigh, reminded constantly that he is a burden, spoken to differently from the other children in the house. Allah asks for KARAMAH — dignity — not just food.

'WA LA TAHADDOONA 'ALA TA'AMIL-MISKEEN — and you do not ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER to feed the poor.' Again, beta — as in Surah Al-Haqqah — not merely 'you do not feed', but you do not URGE each other to feed. A whole society is being held responsible for its silence about hunger.

'WA TA'KULONAT-TURATHA AKLAN LAMMA — and you CONSUME INHERITANCE with GREEDY DEVOURING' — 'lamma' means gathering it all up indiscriminately, including what is not your right: the widow's share, the daughters' share, the weak heir's portion. Beta, inheritance disputes destroy more families than almost any other sin, and Allah named it here specifically.



'WA TUHIBBOONAL-MALA HUBBAN JAMMA — and you LOVE WEALTH with an OVERWHELMING LOVE.' 'Jamma' — piled up, excessive, beyond measure.

Beta, now see what Allah has done in these four ayahs. A man was asking 'does Allah honour me or humiliate me?' — and Allah replies by examining how HE treats the orphan, the poor, the heirs, and his own money. That is the real test result, not the bank statement. You want to know your standing with Allah? Look at how you treat those who cannot benefit you.

The Day Man Remembers

'KALLA IZA DUKKATIL-ARDU DAKKAN DAKKA — NO! When the earth is POUNDED, crushed, level upon level — WA JA'A RABBUKA WAL-MALAKU SAFFAN SAFFA — and your LORD comes, and the angels, ROW UPON ROW — WA JEE'A YAWMA'IZIN BI-JAHANNAM — and Hell is BROUGHT that Day.'

Beta, the hadith describes Jahannam being dragged forward by seventy thousand ropes, each rope held by



seventy thousand angels. And on that Day:

'YAWMA'IZIN YATAZAKKARUL-INSANU WA ANNA LAHUZ-ZIKRA — that Day, man will REMEMBER — but how will remembrance help him NOW?'

'YAQOOLU YA LAYTANI QADDAMTU LI-HAYATI — he will say: YA LAYTANI QADDAMTU LI-HAYATI — OH, I WISH I HAD SENT SOMETHING AHEAD FOR MY LIFE!'

Beta, sit with that sentence, because it is the most human sentence in the surah. Notice he says 'for MY LIFE' — as though he is only now discovering which one was the real life. Everything he called 'my life' before — the career, the house, the years — turns out to have been the preparation, and the thing he ignored was the actual life.

'FA-YAWMA'IZIN LA YU'AZZIBU 'AZABAHU AHAD — so that Day, none will punish as He punishes — WA LA YOOTHQU WATHAQAHU AHAD — and none will bind as He binds.'

O Reassured Soul



And then, beta — after crushed earth, rows of angels, and Hell being dragged forward — the surah ends with four of the gentlest ayahs in the entire Quran. The voice softens completely, and Allah addresses one soul directly:

'YA AYYATUHAN-NAFSUL-MUTMA'INNAH — O REASSURED SOUL, at peace — IRJI'EE ILA RABBIKI RADIYATAN MARDIYYAH — RETURN to your Lord, WELL-PLEASED and PLEASING — FADKHULEE FEE 'IBADI — so ENTER AMONG MY SERVANTS — WADKHULEE JANNATI — and ENTER MY PARADISE.'

Beta, take these apart slowly, because there is more here than a first reading shows.

'AN-NAFSUL-MUTMA'INNAH' — the soul that found tranquillity. Remember the other souls the Quran named: the nafs ammarah, which commands evil; the nafs lawwamah, which blames itself. And here is the third, the one that has settled — that stopped negotiating with Allah, stopped bargaining, and found



rest in Him.

'IRJI'EE ILA RABBIKI' — RETURN to your Lord. Beta, 'return' means you came from Him. This world was a visit; the soul is being called home.

'RADIYATAN MARDIYYAH' — pleased and pleasing. Beta, look at this exchange: SHE is pleased with Him — with everything He decreed for her, the giving and the withholding, the health and the illness, the losses she never understood. And HE is pleased with her. Whoever is pleased with Allah in this world, beta, is met with His pleasure in the next. That is the whole formula of a good ending.

'FADKHULEE FEE 'IBADI' — enter among MY SERVANTS. Notice: the invitation to enter the COMPANY comes before the invitation to enter the PLACE. First: join the ranks of the righteous — the prophets, the truthful, the martyrs. Then: 'WADKHULEE JANNATI' — and enter MY Paradise. Not 'a paradise' — MY Paradise, attributed to Him, the highest possible



description.

Beta, our scholars say these ayahs are said to the believer at death, and again at the resurrection. And this is why many of us recite this surah for those who have passed away, and why every believer should make it a life's ambition to be addressed with these four words.

So look at the journey of this surah: it began at DAWN — 'wal-Fajr' — and it ends with a soul entering Paradise. From the first light of a morning to the eternal morning. Beta, that is exactly what a life is meant to be: it starts at fajr, it is spent honouring the orphan and restraining the self, and it ends with 'irji'ee ila Rabbik' — come home.

What This Surah Teaches Us

1. Real intelligence is 'hijr' — restraint; the clever man who cannot restrain himself is not who the Quran calls wise.



2. Civilisations of pillars, carved mountains and pyramids all fell — technical greatness never saved a people whose morals collapsed.

3. Both wealth and want are tests — never read comfort as Allah's approval or hardship as His humiliation.

4. Your true standing shows in how you treat those who cannot benefit you: the orphan, the poor, the weaker heirs.

5. Honour the orphan, do not merely feed him — dignity is what Allah asked for.

6. Send something ahead before the Day you say 'I wish I had sent something for MY life.'

7. Aim for the four words: 'radiyatan mardiyah' — be pleased with Him now, and He will be pleased with you then.

Ya Allah, make our souls mutma'innah, make us pleased with Your decree, and call us home among Your servants and into Your Paradise. 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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