

SURAH AS A STORY



Surah Al-'Alaq

The Clinging Clot

The complete journey — the first words ever revealed —
told the way a loving elder shares it with a child



Surah No. 96 • 19 Ayahs • Meccan

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The Surah at a Glance

Iqra' bismi Rabbikal-lazee khalaq

1. Read, in the name of your Lord who created —

Khalaqal-insaana min 'alaq

2. created man from a clinging clot.

*Iqra' wa Rabbukal-akram. Allazee 'allama
bil-qalam*

3-4. Read, and your Lord is the Most Generous — who
taught by the pen,

'Allamal-insaana maa lam ya'lam

5. taught man that which he knew not.

*Kallaaa innal-insaana layatghaaa.
Ar-ra-aahus-taghnaa*

6-7. No! Indeed, man transgresses — because he sees
himself self-sufficient.

Kallaa laa tuti'hu wasjud waqtarib

19. No! Do not obey him — but prostrate and draw near.

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The Night in the Cave

Beta, today we read the first words that Allah ever revealed to Muhammad ﷺ — the sentence with which the final revelation to mankind began.

For years before this, he ﷺ had been withdrawing to the cave of Hira on the mountain outside Makkah. He would take provisions and stay for nights at a time, alone — worshipping, thinking, troubled by a city drowning in idols, injustice and buried daughters, and searching for something he could not yet name. Our mother Aisha (radiyallahu anha) narrated that true dreams were the beginning of it: he would see something in sleep, and it would come like the break of dawn.

And then, in Ramadan, in that cave, the angel came to him.

Jibreel said: IQRA' — READ. He ﷺ said: 'Ma ana bi-qari' — I am not one who reads. The angel took him and pressed him so tightly that he could not bear it, then released him and said again: IQRA'. Again he said: I am



not one who reads. A second time he was pressed and released. And a third time: IQRA' — and then came the words:

'IQRA' BISMI RABBIKAL-LAZI KHALAQ — READ, IN THE NAME OF YOUR LORD WHO CREATED — KHALAQAL-INSANA MIN 'ALAQ — created man from a CLINGING CLOT — IQRA' WA RABBUKAL-AKRAM — READ, and your Lord is the MOST GENEROUS — ALLAZI 'ALLAMA BIL-QALAM — who TAUGHT BY THE PEN — 'ALLAMAL-INSANA MA LAM YA'LAM — taught man what he DID NOT KNOW.'

And he ﷻ returned home with his heart trembling, and said to Khadijah (radiyallahu anha): 'Zammilooni — cover me!' She wrapped him, and when the fear settled he told her everything and said: I fear for myself.

Beta, listen to her reply, because it is one of the greatest sentences ever spoken by a human being: 'Never! By Allah, Allah will never disgrace you. You keep good relations with your kin, you carry the burden of the



weak, you help the poor and the needy, you honour the guest, and you assist those afflicted by calamity.'

SubhanAllah, beta. In his moment of terror, she did not offer a theory — she offered his own character back to him. A person who lives like that, she said, is not abandoned by Allah. Remember this when you comfort someone: remind them of the good they do.

Read — In Whose Name?

Now look at the words themselves, beta, because every syllable of this first revelation is deliberate.

The very first command of the Quran is 'IQRA' — READ. Not 'fight', not 'pray', not 'fast'. READ. To an unlettered man, in an unlettered nation. Allah began the final religion of mankind with a command to read.

But notice, beta — it is not 'read' alone. It is 'IQRA' BISMILAH — read IN THE NAME OF YOUR LORD. Knowledge attached to Allah. Because knowledge without Him produces exactly what our world produces:



brilliance without conscience, technology that can split an atom but not decide whether it should, people who know everything and revere nothing.

'ALLAZI KHALAQ — who CREATED.' And then, immediately, the most humbling detail:
'KHALAQAL-INSANA MIN 'ALAQ — created man from a CLINGING CLOT.'

Beta, 'alaq' means something that clings and hangs — and it describes the earliest stage of the embryo, attached to the wall of the womb. So the very first thing Allah tells the man He is about to make the greatest teacher in history is: remember what you were. A clinging speck. Read — but never forget your origin.

'IQRA' WA RABBUKAL-AKRAM — READ, and your Lord is AL-AKRAM — the MOST GENEROUS.' Beta, why this Name here? Because He is about to describe how He gives knowledge — and the giving of knowledge is His greatest generosity. He could have left us in ignorance; instead He teaches.



'ALLAZI 'ALLAMA BIL-QALAM — who TAUGHT BY THE PEN.' Beta, in a city where almost nobody could write, Allah honoured the pen in His first revelation. The pen is how knowledge crosses centuries — how a scholar who died a thousand years ago can still teach you tonight. Every book you have ever benefited from is a gift of this ayah.

"ALLAMAL-INSANA MA LAM YA'LAM — taught man what he did NOT KNOW.' Beta, everything you know — the language you think in, the skills you earn with, your knowledge of Allah Himself — all of it entered a mind that once knew nothing at all. You were born knowing not one word. Every single thing in your head was a gift.

The Moment Man Rebels

And then, beta, the surah moves — from the beauty of knowledge to the disease that ruins the knowledgeable: 'KALLA INNAL-INSANA LA-YATGHA — NO! Indeed, MAN TRANSGRESSES — AR-RA'AHUS-TAGHNA — BECAUSE HE SEES HIMSELF AS SELF-SUFFICIENT.'



Beta, memorise this diagnosis, because it explains almost every arrogance you will ever meet. 'Istighna' — the feeling of not needing anyone: I have my degree, my income, my strength, my connections; I am fine.

And that feeling, the Quran says, is the trigger for tughyan — transgression, rebellion, crossing every limit. Beta, a person who feels needy prays. A person who feels self-sufficient argues. It is not knowledge or wealth themselves that corrupt — it is the illusion of independence that comes with them.

And the correction is immediate and short: 'INNA ILA RABBIKAR-RUJ'A — indeed, TO YOUR LORD IS THE RETURN.' You feel independent? You are on your way back to Him.

Then the surah gives a live example — one that was unfolding in Makkah as these ayahs were revealed: 'A RA'AYTAL-LAZI YANHA — have you seen the one who FORBIDS — 'ABDAN IZA SALLA — a SERVANT when he PRAYS?'



Beta, the reports name Abu Jahl, who had sworn that if he saw Muhammad ﷺ praying at the Ka'bah, he would step on his neck. Think of the ugliness of it: a man whose life's mission became stopping another man from praying. That is what 'istighna' grows into.

'A RA'AYTA IN KANA 'ALAL-HUDA — have you considered if he (the one praying) is upon GUIDANCE — AW AMARA BIT-TAQWA — or ENJOINS righteousness?' — then what are you doing? 'A RA'AYTA IN KAZZABA WA TAWALLA — have you considered if he (the forbiddler) has DENIED and TURNED AWAY? A LAM YA'LAM BI-ANNALLAHA YARA — DOES HE NOT KNOW THAT ALLAH SEES?'

Beta, that last line — 'a lam ya'lam bi-annallaha yara' — is the quiet thunderclap of this surah. Every sin, at its root, involves forgetting that one fact.

The Forelock, and the Sajdah

'KALLA LA'IN LAM YANTAH — NO! If he does not DESIST — LA-NASFA'AN BIN-NASIYAH — WE WILL



SURELY DRAG HIM BY THE FORELOCK — NASIYATIN KAZIBATIN KHATI'AH — a LYING, SINNING forelock.'

Beta, the 'nasiyah' is the front of the head, the forelock — and in Arabic to seize someone by the forelock is the ultimate humiliation, the way a captive is dragged. And notice: Allah calls the forelock itself 'lying and sinning'. The scholars point out that the front part of the brain, behind the forehead, is the seat of decision-making and planning — the place where lies are formulated before the tongue speaks them.

'FAL-YAD'U NADIYAH — then let him CALL HIS ASSOCIATES, his council — SANAD'UZ-ZABANIYAH — WE WILL CALL THE ANGELS OF HELL.' Beta, Abu Jahl had his gathering, his supporters, his club of chiefs. Allah says: call them. Let us see whose group is stronger.

And history records the answer. Abu Jahl went to Badr with his council and was killed there — dragged from the battlefield by a young companion, his body thrown into a well. His nadi did not save him.



And now, beta, the final ayah of the surah — and see how magnificently it ends: 'KALLA LA TUTI'HU — NO! DO NOT OBEY HIM — WASJUD WAQTARIB — but PROSTRATE, and DRAW NEAR.'

Beta, feel the completeness of that response. A tyrant threatens to step on your neck if you pray. And Allah's instruction is not 'fight him' or 'argue with him' — it is: PROSTRATE, and DRAW NEAR to Me.

The very act he was trying to prevent is the act you are commanded to increase. And note the reward embedded in the command: 'waqtarib' — draw NEAR. The Prophet ﷺ said: the closest a servant is to his Lord is when he is in sujood.

So the first surah revealed to mankind, beta, opens with 'READ' and closes with 'PROSTRATE'. Knowledge at the beginning, humility at the end. That is the whole map of a believer's life: learn, and then put your forehead on the ground. Any learning that does not end in sujood has gone somewhere wrong.



And this ayah is a sajdah ayah — so when you recite it, go down. Beta, imagine the sweetness in that: the tyrant said 'I will stop him from prostrating' — and now, for fourteen hundred years, every reader of these ayahs falls into sajdah at exactly that point.

What This Surah Teaches Us

1. The first command of the Quran was 'Read' — but always 'in the name of your Lord'; knowledge cut from Him becomes brilliance without conscience.
2. Remember your origin: a clinging clot. Read, learn, rise — and stay small in your own eyes.
3. Everything in your head was a gift to a mind that once knew nothing.
4. 'Istighna' — feeling self-sufficient — is the trigger of every transgression; needy hearts pray, 'independent' ones argue.
5. Comfort people as Khadijah (radiyallahu anha) did: remind them of the good they do.



6. Every sin contains a moment of forgetting 'does he not know that Allah SEES?'

7. When someone tries to stop your worship, the answer is: prostrate and draw near — the closest you ever are to Allah is in sujood.

Ya Allah, teach us what benefits us, keep us needy of You, and let all our learning end in sujood. 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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