

SURAH AS A STORY



Surah At-Takathur

Competition in Increase

The complete journey — the race that ends at the graves —
told the way a loving elder shares it with a child



Surah No. 102 • 8 Ayahs • Meccan

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The Surah at a Glance

Al-haakumut-takaasur

1. Competition in increase diverted you,

Hattaa zurtumul-maqaabir

2. until you visited the graves.

Kallaa sawfa ta'lamoona

3. No! You are going to know.

Kallaa law ta'lamoona 'ilmal-yaqeen

5. No! If you only knew with the knowledge of
certainty...

Latarawunnal-Jaheem

6. You will surely see the Hellfire.

Summa latus'alunna yawma'izin 'anin-na'eem

8. Then you will surely be asked, that Day, about the
pleasures.

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The Race That Distracts



Beta, this surah opens with one word that diagnoses an entire civilisation: 'ALHAKUMUT-TAKATHUR.'

'Takathur', beta, comes from 'kathrah' — abundance, muchness. And the form of the word means MUTUAL competition in increase: not just wanting more, but wanting more THAN OTHERS. The rivalry of accumulation. Piling up, and then comparing your pile.

And 'alhakum' means: it has DIVERTED you, distracted you, kept you busy and amused. The root 'lahw' is the same word used for entertainment — something that occupies you so pleasantly that you never notice the time passing.

Beta, that is the whole ayah: 'the mutual competition to have more has DISTRACTED you.' Not 'has destroyed you' — has DISTRACTED you. Because that is exactly how it works. It does not feel like ruin; it feels like ambition, like progress, like a busy and productive life.

The scholars mention that some tribes in Makkah literally competed in numbers — this clan boasting it



had more men than that one — and when they ran out of the living, they would go to the graveyards and count their DEAD to win the argument.

Beta, we laugh at that — and then we do the same thing with different units. Square feet. Salary. Followers. School fees. Cars in the driveway. Photographs of holidays. The units change; the disease is identical: my pile against your pile.

And the destination of that whole race is given in the next ayah, in four devastating words.

Until You Visit the Graves

'HATTA ZURTUMUL-MAQABIR — UNTIL YOU VISITED THE GRAVES.'

Beta, that is the finish line of the competition. Not retirement, not the top of the ladder — the graveyard. The race ends when the racer is carried out of it.

And look at the word Allah chose: 'zurtum' — you VISITED. A visitor, beta, is someone who does not stay.



Which means the grave itself is not the final address; it is a stop on the way. You visit it, and then you move on to what comes after.

SubhanAllah, beta — in one word Allah has told us two things: that this world's race ends at the graveyard, and that the graveyard is only a waiting room.

'KALLA SAWFA TA'LAMOON — NO! You are GOING TO KNOW. THUMMA KALLA SAWFA TA'LAMOON — then NO! You are going to know.'

Beta, notice the repetition, and notice the calm. Allah does not argue with the accumulator or list statistics about the futility of wealth. He simply says twice: you will find out. The scholars say the repetition indicates two moments of finding out — at death, and then at the resurrection.

There is something almost frightening about that calmness. It is the tone of someone who knows the ending and is content to let you discover it.



Three Levels of Certainty

'KALLA LAW TA'LAMOONA 'ILMAL-YAQEEN — NO! If you only knew with 'ILMUL-YAQEEN — the KNOWLEDGE of certainty.'

Beta, here the Quran introduces something precious: the three levels of certainty, which the scholars derived from this surah and from Surah Al-Waqi'ah.

'ILMUL-YAQEEN — knowledge of certainty: you are told about something by a reliable source and you believe it. You have never seen fire, but a truthful person describes it and you are certain it burns.

'AYNUL-YAQEEN — the EYE of certainty: you SEE it with your own eyes. The surah says next:

'LA-TARAWUNNAL-JAHEEM — you will SURELY SEE the Hellfire — THUMMA LA-TARAWUNNAHA

'AYNAL-YAQEEN — then you will surely see it with the EYE of certainty.'



And HAQQUL-YAQEEN — the TRUTH of certainty: you experience it directly, you touch it, you are in it. That phrase appears in Surah Al-Waqi'ah about the reality of the Day itself.

Beta, understand what the ayah is offering: right now, you have the FIRST level — you have been told, truthfully, by Allah. The second and third are coming whether you prepare or not.

And here is the point: the whole purpose of revelation is to let you act on level one, so that levels two and three do not destroy you. A wise person changes his behaviour based on a truthful report; a foolish one waits until he sees it with his own eyes — and by then it is too late to change anything.

Beta, that is exactly how we treat health warnings, or a doctor's advice, or a wise elder's counsel. We know — and we wait to see. This ayah says: don't wait.

You Will Be Asked About the Pleasures



And then the surah closes with one of the most sobering ayahs in the Quran: 'THUMMA LA-TUS'ALUNNA YAWMA'IZIN 'ANIN-NA'EEM — THEN YOU WILL SURELY BE ASKED, THAT DAY, ABOUT THE NA'EEM — the PLEASURES, the comforts, the blessings.'

Beta, notice: the questioning is not only about our sins. It is about our BLESSINGS. Not 'what wrong did you do?' but 'what did you do with what I gave you?'

And there is a hadith that shows exactly how wide this is. One night, the Prophet ﷺ went out and found Abu Bakr and Umar (radiyallahu anhum) — and they had come out because of HUNGER. He took them to the home of a companion from the Ansar, who welcomed them and brought fresh dates, and slaughtered a sheep for them, and they ate and drank cool water. And when they had finished, the Prophet ﷺ said: 'By the One in whose Hand is my soul, you will certainly be asked about this pleasure on the Day of Resurrection — hunger brought you out of your homes, and you did not return until you had received this blessing.'



Beta, absorb that. Not a palace. Not a treasure. Dates, meat and cool water, given to hungry men — and even that will be asked about.

So what does this mean for us, with our full fridges, our taps that run clean water, our phones, our medicines, our safety? Every one of these is 'na'eem', and every one will be asked about.

And beta, do not read this only as terror. Read it as a redefinition of what a blessing IS. Most people do not even notice these things as blessings — they notice only what is missing. This ayah tells you the truth: the ordinary things you overlook are so significant that Allah will ask you about them personally.

So how does one prepare for that questioning? By USING the blessings the way the Giver intended: eat, and thank Him; be healthy, and use the health in obedience; have wealth, and let others' rights flow through it; have free time, and put some of it in worship. The Prophet ﷺ said that two blessings are cheated by many people: health



and free time. 'Cheated', beta — as in a bad deal, given something valuable and getting nothing for it.

And so the surah completes its circle: it began with a man counting his possessions to beat his neighbour, and it ends with him standing before Allah being asked what he did with them. The pile he built to impress people becomes the list he is questioned about.

Beta, one last note. It is reported that when the Prophet ﷺ recited 'al-hakumut-takathur', he said: 'The son of Adam says: my wealth, my wealth. But do you own of your wealth anything except what you ate and finished, or what you wore and wore out, or what you gave in charity and thereby sent forward?' Everything else, he said, is going and being left for others.

Read that whenever the race pulls at you: what you ate is gone, what you wore is worn out — and only what you GAVE is actually still yours.

What This Surah Teaches Us



1. The disease is not having; it is competing — 'takathur' is measuring your pile against someone else's.
2. It does not feel like ruin, it feels like ambition — that is why it is called a distraction, not a disaster.
3. The race ends at the graveyard — and even that is described as a VISIT, not the final address.
4. Act on 'ilmul-yaqeen' now, so that 'aynul-yaqeen' does not arrive as a shock.
5. You will be questioned about blessings, not only sins — even dates, meat and cool water.
6. Health and free time are the two blessings most people are cheated out of — spend them deliberately.
7. Of all your wealth, only what you gave away is truly still yours.

Ya Allah, save us from the race that distracts, and let us meet You having used Your blessings well. 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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