

THE DAILY WIRD

Juz Amma

The thirtieth juz, surah by surah

Thirty-seven surahs, An-Naba to An-Nas, retold faithfully from Sheikh Abu Bakr Zoud. The Qur'an is verified via quran.ai (Sahih International). The reflection is the Sheikh's, the phrasing is The Daily Wird's.

An-Naba

The surah that opens on a question the deniers were whispering, and an answer that will not let you sit still

Before An-Naba tells you a single thing about the Day, it lets you overhear a rumor. A crowd in Makkah is leaning in to one another, half-laughing, asking about something the Prophet ﷺ keeps warning them of. Allah does not open by answering them. He opens by repeating their own question back, and the way He repeats it tells you He is no longer even speaking in their direction.

A surah is a walled city

Sheikh Abu Bakr begins by handing you a key for the whole juz: a surah is not a scatter of unrelated topics, it is one connected argument. The very word *surah* is close to *sur*, the old wall that ran the whole way around a city. Inside that wall sit houses, markets, people, rulers, all of them different, all of them one living place. Read a surah the same way. An-Naba will move through creation, the Day of Decision, the Fire, and the Garden, and it can feel like separate rooms, until you notice the single wall holding them as one city.

Even the seam between two surahs is deliberate. The surah just before this one kept sounding the same warning against the deniers, over and over. An-Naba opens on exactly those deniers, caught mid-conversation. Watch, the Sheikh says, how the beginning of a surah speaks to its end, and how its end reaches into the surah that follows.

What are they asking about?

عَمَّ يَتَسَاءَلُونَ

About what are they asking one another?

AN-NABA 78:1

A question, the Sheikh reminds you, is asked for one of two reasons. Either you want to know something ("brother, what is the time?"), or you want to undermine someone, to fold mockery

inside the words. The Prophet ﷺ had been describing a Day that splits the sky, scatters the mountains, and pulls the dead back out of the ground, and the deniers would turn to one another with raised eyebrows: did you hear what he said yesterday? The oceans, set on fire? Us, alive again, out of the dust? The worst kind of sarcasm is a question asked only to belittle, and that is the conversation Allah has just walked you into.

Notice who is really speaking. The scholars give three readings: the people questioning the Prophet ﷺ, the deniers questioning each other, or both, and the strongest is that it is the deniers, asking one another in mockery. And there is a third listener in the room. The Prophet ﷺ hears their sarcasm, the deniers trade it between themselves, and Allah hears all of it. Then notice the grammar. Allah does not turn to face them and say "what are *you* asking about." He turns away, toward His Messenger: *what are they asking about?* After years of patient calling that never softened them, the turning away itself carries His anger.

Why He calls it the great news

عَنِ النَّبِيِّ الْعَظِيمِ

About the great news

AN-NABA 78:2

Arabic has a quieter word for news, *khobar*. Allah does not reach for it. He uses *naba*, and the Sheikh draws out three things packed inside it: news that is great, news that demands a reaction, and news you will physically see and feel. When Musa ﷺ once spotted a far-off fire and hoped to bring his family back "some news," the word was *khobar*, small and ordinary. When Allah asks whether "the great news" of the ruined nations before them had reached them, whole peoples drowned and buried and swept away, the word is *naba*. Then, on top of all that weight, He adds *al-azeem*, the great.

Greatness, the Sheikh says, is measured by who calls a thing great. A child saying "I have a lot of money" and your Lord calling a Day "great" do not sit on the same scale. And think how senseless the deniers' mockery is. No one walks up to a university that poured years and fortunes into its halls and labs and teachers and asks whether there will be a final exam. Of course there will, so the one who worked is not left equal to the one who slept through. A whole universe was built with that much care. Did you really think it ends with the sick and the healthy, the faithful and the cruel, all walking off the same?

The thing they can never agree on

الَّذِي هُمْ فِيهِ مُخْتَلِفُونَ

That over which they are in disagreement.

AN-NABA 78:3

The Sheikh slows down on a grammar point that will repeat across the juz: a noun carries permanence, a verb carries something passing. Allah describes their disagreement as a standing state, not a one-off act. Every single time these people meet, the only talk is, did you hear what he said now, did you hear what he claims will happen. The disagreement is their permanent condition. And placing it early in the sentence lands it with a shock: are they *really* still arguing about this?

Each of them has cooked up his own theory, and underneath every theory sits a quiet uncertainty. One scoffs that no one could be raised from dust, yet he is not sure. Even the heart that denies the Hereafter has something in it whispering that the Hereafter is real. That, the Sheikh notes, is good news for anyone calling others to Allah: keep going gently, because the denial is thinner than it looks. People leave a faith they were never certain of, and walk into Islam, precisely because the doubt was already there.

No. And again, no.

كَلَّا سَيَعْلَمُونَ

No! They are going to know.

AN-NABA 78:4

ثُمَّ كَلَّا سَيَعْلَمُونَ

Then, no! They are going to know.

AN-NABA 78:5

Then the answer comes down twice, like a hand raised to stop traffic. Stop. You will know. Stop, again, you will know. We repeat ourselves, the Sheikh points out, when we are emphatic and when we are angry: you say "watch, just watch what I do" to the one who has pushed you

too far. Ten years of warning, and still it has not gone through. So the doubling carries both the certainty and the displeasure: enough, every one of you is about to find out.

And it points to two separate moments. Your first "you will know" is your own death, for a person's Day of Judgement begins the moment he dies. You do not have to wait for the stars to fall; you close your eyes here and the reality is already upon you. The second "you will know" is the moment you stand at the very lip of the Fire. The short form of the word (the *seen* of *sayalamun*) signals nearness, soon, and the surah will close on that same nearness when Allah warns of a punishment that is *qareeb*, near. The beginning and the end of the surah shake hands.

Is this the bed you made?

أَلَمْ نَجْعَلِ الْأَرْضَ مِهَادًا

Have We not made the earth a resting place?

AN-NABA 78:6

وَالْجِبَالَ أَوْتَادًا

And the mountains as stakes?

78:7

وَخَلَقْنَاكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا

And We created you in pairs

78:8

Now the rhyme of the surah changes, and Allah turns your face away from the argument and toward the world you live inside. He does not prove the next life by debate, He invites you to compare what He made to what you made. *Mihad*, the word for the earth here, is the root of the cradle and the word for a bed: it carries comfort. So the desert Arab, proud of the bed he built, is asked: is this the bed you made? Look at the bed I spread, this whole earth you walk on freely.

Then the mountains as *awtad*, tent-pegs. A tent without pegs blows away; the mountains hold the land steady, and what shows above the ground continues, peg-like, below it. Is this the tent you pitched? And then closer still: He made you in pairs. You could not so much as choose your own gender, and still the arrogance rises in you to say there is no Day. Everything He made comes in pairs, night and day, sun and moon, sky and earth, so why would this life have no afterlife paired to it? The pattern itself is an argument.

A small death every single night

وَجَعَلْنَا نَوْمَكُمْ سُبَاتًا

And made your sleep a means for rest

AN-NABA 78:9

وَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ الْمُعْصِرَاتِ مَاءً ثَجَّاجًا

And sent down from the rain clouds pouring water

78:14

لِنُخْرِجَ بِهِ حَبًّا وَنَبَاتًا

That We may bring forth thereby grain and vegetation

78:15

Then sleep, *subat*, a word that means to be cut off. Every night you are cut from the world and, in a sense, from your own soul: a small rehearsal of death you act out without noticing. The world outside your window right now is, in its way, dead, its people switched off. And yet, the Sheikh asks, do you not wake? Sleep, wake, sleep, wake, the pattern never breaks. So where did you get the idea that the one sleep called death is the sleep you never rise from? You will close your eyes in this world and open them before Allah.

And He keeps stacking the favors you could never make: the night laid over the earth like clothing that no lamp of yours can switch off, the day set for your living, seven strong heavens built as a ceiling far above the palm-branch roof you manage, a blazing lamp (the sun) beside which your brightest torch is nothing. Then the rain, wrung from the clouds the way wind

squeezes a soaked cloth, sent down in an exact measure, enough to give life and not to drown it.

And hidden in the rain is the whole point. Allah says He sends it so that He may *bring out* grain and plants, and the verb He chooses, *nukhrij*, is the verb used for a person coming out, walking out a door. The seed goes down into the dark earth, the water comes, and it is brought back out. The same, He is telling you, will happen to you. You will be sown, and the rain will fall, and you will be brought out, just like the plant. The gardens that close the passage, *jannat alfaf*, are growth so lush it winds and wraps around itself.

Then the topic turns: the Day of Separation

إِنَّ يَوْمَ الْفَصْلِ كَانَ مِيقَاتًا

Indeed, the Day of Judgement is an appointed time

AN-NABA 78:17

Having reminded them of mercy after mercy, the surah turns back to the Day, and names it the Day of Separation, *yawm al-fasl*, the day everything comes apart. Truth separates from falsehood, and people separate from one another. The Sheikh reaches for the most piercing image of it: the pregnant mother who, in her terror, drops her load and runs without a glance back. The father flees his son, the brother his brother, the husband his wife. Everyone scatters.

And it is not vague. It has a *miqat*, a fixed appointment, as exact as the times the Arab already trusts: the sun that rises and sets on its hour, the night and the moon that keep their schedule. The Day keeps its schedule too. When its time comes, it comes, and there is nothing left to argue. You do not wait for it; you are carried to it, the way a traveler stands on the moving walkway in an airport and arrives whether he walks or stands still. The Day does not come to you. You are moved to it.

The trumpet, and the day the sky becomes doors

يَوْمَ يَنْفَخُ فِي الصُّورِ فَتَأْتُونَ أَفْوَاجًا

The Day the Horn is blown and you will come forth in multitudes

AN-NABA 78:18

وَفُتِحَتِ السَّمَاءُ فَكَانَتْ أَبْوَابًا

And the heaven is opened and will become gateways

78:19

وَسُيِّرَتِ الْجِبَالُ فَكَانَتْ سَرَابًا

And the mountains are removed and will be a mirage.

78:20

Now the surah shows you the Day it just promised. A breath is blown into the Horn, *as-sur*, the trumpet the angel sounds. This is the second blow, the Sheikh notes, the one that wakes the dead: the souls gathered in the trumpet scatter at the breath, each rushing back to its own body, the tailbone in the earth growing the body back as the rain comes down, and you are brought out. And then, watch the grammar move. At the start of the surah Allah would not face the deniers; He spoke past them, *what are they asking about*. Here He wheels around and points straight at them: *you* will come forth. It is the way anger lands hardest, the teacher who tells five hundred students "some of you failed," then turns and names the one. The turning is the blow.

And the verb hides a mercy turned to a warning. *Fata'tuna*, you will come, is the same coming the heavens and the earth used when they said "we come willingly" to their Lord. So the one who struts through this world in pride will arrive on that Day humbled, submitting at last, when the submission no longer buys anything. Submit now, the Sheikh says, while it counts.

Then the sky, which He built at the start of the surah as seven strong heavens you could find no crack in, is torn open until it is nothing but doorways, *abwab*. In any building, the Sheikh notes, the door is the weakest point, the part that opens and shuts, the way the thief comes in. The strongest thing He made becomes the most broken, gates flung open for the angels to descend. And the mountains, the last thing on earth you would expect to stir, are set moving as easily as a marble rolls, then thinned to a *sarab*, a desert mirage: you look and see them shimmering like water, and when you reach the place there is nothing there at all.

The Fire that was always lying in wait

إِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ كَانَتْ مِرْصَادًا

Indeed, Hell has been lying in wait

AN-NABA 78:21

لِلطَّٰغِيْنَ مَا بَأْسًا

For the transgressors, a place of return,

78:22

لَّا يَبْثِرْنَ فِيهَا أَحْقَابًا

In which they will remain for ages unending.

78:23

لَّا يَذُوقُونَ فِيهَا بَرْدًا وَلَا شَرَابًا

They will not taste therein any coolness or drink.

78:24

إِلَّا حَمِيمًا وَغَسَّاقًا

Except scalding water and foul purulence

78:25

This is the second "you will know" coming due, the Sheikh reminds you, the one that lands at the lip of the Fire. And the word for it is *mirsad*, from the root for ambush. Not a place that happens to catch people, but a place built for nothing else, the way a hunter's blind exists only to lie in wait. Hell has been crouched there the whole time you were laughing.

It waits for the *taghin*, and the Sheikh lingers on the name. Allah could have said the disbelievers, the wrongdoers, the corrupt, all names used elsewhere. He says *taghin*, those who burst every limit. Tughyan is the sin that knows no ceiling, one transgression opening the

door to the next until there is no edge left, the heart in full denial and not caring. It is Firawn's sin, the man who climbed from "I am your lord" to "I know of no god for you but me." And it is an inner thing, not the outward label, the rebellion of a heart that has stopped caring what Allah said.

For them the Fire is a *ma'ab*, and the Sheikh weighs that word against another, *marji*. A *marji* is a place you return to and leave again, the way you go from home to the shop and back. A *ma'ab* is the final abode, the place you go and never come back from. Worse, every time they try to claw their way out, the Fire drags them back in: it is the only home they have now. They stay *ahqaba*, ages on ages, and the Sheikh will not let the number stay soft. A *huqub*, the scholars say, is some eighty thousand years, each of its days a thousand of ours; when one *huqub* ends, the next begins, then the next, with no last one. That, he says, is psychological torture stacked on the physical, the child told "ten more minutes" the instant the ten he counted are up, every coming minute heavier than the last.

And in that heat they taste no *bard* and no *sharab*, no coolness and no drink, the exact two pleasures a man of the desert lived for: a cool breeze in the shade and a cold cup in the hand. Both gone. The only thing brought to their lips is *hamim*, water boiled to its limit that strips the face before it is swallowed, and *ghassaq*, the pus and infected blood running off the bodies of the punished, pooled into a drink. This, the surah says next, is *jaza'an wifaqa*, a recompense that fits, measured to the microgram against what they did. Not one atom more.

Taste it: the recompense that fits

جَزَاءٌ وِفَاقًا

An appropriate recompense.

AN-NABA 78:26

إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا لَا يَرْجُونَ حِسَابًا

Indeed, they were not expecting an account

78:27

وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا كَذَّابًا

And denied Our verses with emphatic denial.

78:28

وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ أَحْصَيْنَاهُ كِتَابًا

But all things We have enumerated in writing.

78:29

فَذُوقُوا فَلَنْ نَزِيدَكُمْ إِلَّا عَذَابًا

So taste, and never will We increase you except in torment.

78:30

If you flinch and wonder whether all this is too much, the surah answers the question for you. It earned this. And then it names the two roots of it. First, *they were not expecting an account*, and the Sheikh sharpens the verb: not *la yatawaqqa'un*, they never imagined a Day, but *la yarjuna*, they never *hoped* for one. They had been told. They simply did not want it, and wished it away. That, he notes, is a sickness that creeps into Muslims too: remind a brother of the reckoning, of a right he owes you, and watch how fast he changes the subject. The mark of the denier is that he does not want to hear it.

Second, *they denied Our signs with kidhhab*, a doubled, emphatic form for a denial poured out without limit, the same overflow as their tughyan. And against all of it stands one quiet line: *every single thing, We have counted it in a book*. The Sheikh draws out *ahsaynahu*: to count, and also to guard, to back up, to archive. Allah, who knows all, does not need a written record; He writes it so the denier will have nothing left to argue. Remember their theory at the start, that no one could possibly track every deed. Here is the answer, set early in the sentence for the shock of it: it is all written, all saved. Then the verdict the scholars call the harshest line of punishment in the Qur'an: *taste, for We will only ever increase you in torment*. Every plea for one day's relief, met with more.

But for the mindful, a place of triumph

إِنَّ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ مَفَازًا

Indeed, for the righteous is attainment

AN-NABA 78:31

حَدَائِقَ وَأَعْنَابًا

Gardens and grapevines

78:32

وَكَوَاعِبَ أُنثَرَاءَ

And young women of equal age.

78:33

وَكَأْسًا دِهَاقًا

And a full cup.

78:34

لَا يَسْمَعُونَ فِيهَا لَغْوًا وَلَا كِذَابًا

No ill speech will they hear therein or any falsehood

78:35

Now the surah turns, the way Surat al-Mursalat before it turned, from the deniers to the saved, and the Sheikh catches the word it chooses for them. Not "the Muslims," not "the believers," but *al-muttaqin*, the people of taqwa. And taqwa, he reminds you, carries two things at once: fear, and the action that fear drives you to take to protect yourself. You hear a noise downstairs at night, and the fear sends you to lock the door; the locking is the taqwa. A real muttaqi is one who hears the verses of the Fire, fears, and gets up and does something about it. This is the

answer to *naba* at the very start: news this great was never a fact to nod at, it was an alarm that demands you move. The ones who moved are the ones who arrive here.

And what they arrive at is *mafaz*, a word that means the triumph itself, and the place of it, and the time of it, all three. The surah unrolls it: *hada'iq*, walled private gardens no eye intrudes on, and grapevines, *a'nab*, the grape chosen because it is at once food and drink. Companions of equal age, *atrab*, all in the bloom of one age, every dweller of the Garden brought to the prime the Prophet ﷺ described; and a cup, *dihag*, filled to the brim, poured for pleasure and not for thirst. Then the detail that crowns a home: *no laghw and no kidhdhab*, no idle talk and no lie will ever reach their ears there. The deniers filled this world with both, the empty talk and the lying against the truth; in the Garden that noise is finally switched off, and there is only peace.

A gift from your Lord, and none may speak

جَزَاءٌ مِّن رَّبِّكَ عَطَاءٌ حِسَابًا

As reward from your Lord, a generous gift made due by account,

AN-NABA 78:36

رَبِّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا الرَّحْمَنُ لَا يَمْلِكُونَ مِنْهُ خِطَابًا

From the Lord of the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them, the Most Merciful. They possess not from Him authority for speech.

78:37

يَوْمَ يَقُومُ الرُّوحُ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ صَفًّا لَا يَتَكَلَّمُونَ إِلَّا مَنْ أذِنَ لَهُ الرَّحْمَنُ وَقَالَ صَوَابًا

The Day that the Spirit and the angels will stand in rows, they will not speak except for one whom the Most Merciful permits, and he will say what is correct.

78:38

Notice the shift in the bookkeeping. For the deniers the recompense was *wifaqa*, justice that exactly fit. For the saved it is *jaza'an min rabbika*, a reward from your Lord, and the Sheikh dwells on the name *Rabb*: the One who nurtures and provides and takes care of you, so what comes from Him comes as care, not as a ledger balanced. And it is '*ata*', a gift, the kind of giving that keeps coming until you say enough. This is the Lord, the surah adds, of the

heavens and the earth and all that lies between, *Ar-Rahman*: if you ever doubted that anyone could own enough to give like this, here is the owner of everything, and the One whose mercy is so near it is acting right now.

And then the surah seals the whole Day with a single image of His authority. On that Day the Spirit and the angels stand in ranks, *saffa*, and *no one speaks except the one Ar-Rahman permits, and he says only what is right*. The deniers had a theory once, that the angels would step in and intercede for them. Here it collapses: the angels themselves stand silent, in rows, not daring a word unless He allows it. Not one being in all creation possesses so much as the right to address Him uninvited. The mockery that opened the surah, traded so freely between them, has nowhere left to stand.

The near warning, and "I wish I were dust"

ذَلِكَ الْيَوْمِ الْحَقِّ فَمَنْ شَاءَ اتَّخَذَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِ مَآبًا

That is the True Day; so he who wills may take to his Lord a way of return.

AN-NABA 78:39

إِنَّا أَنْذَرْنَاكُمْ عَذَابًا قَرِيبًا يَوْمَ يَنْظُرُ الْمَرْءُ مَا قَدَّمَتْ يَدَاهُ وَيَقُولُ الْكَافِرُ يَا لَيْتَنِي كُنْتُ تُرَابًا

Indeed, We have warned you of an impending punishment on the Day when a man will observe what his hands have put forth and the disbeliever will say, "Oh, I wish that I were dust!"

78:40

After everything, the surah lays the door open. *That is the True Day*, the certain one, no theory left to argue. *So whoever wills, let him take a way back to his Lord*. The ma'ab that was the Fire's locked dead end for the transgressor is offered here, the same word, as a road home: you choose. The warning is real, and so is the door.

And the warning is *qareeb*, near. The Sheikh has you hear it ring against the start of the surah: there Allah said *sayalamun*, they will *soon* know, the short form that means it is close; here the punishment is *near*. The beginning and the end of the surah shake hands. It is near because your own death is the door to it, the Day when a man looks and sees laid out before him exactly *what his own hands sent ahead*, every atom of it, written and saved.

And on that Day the denier, who once asked his mocking question precisely so he would not have to move, says the last words of the surah: *ya laytani kuntu turaba*, oh, I wish I were dust. He who would not be raised now wishes he had stayed in the ground, never made, never accountable. That is where the joke ends. The surah that opened on a rumor closes on a wish no one will be granted, and leaves the choice, while there is still time to choose, with you.

What this surah asks of you

- **News this great is meant to move you.** The Day is called naba, not ordinary news. An alarm is not a fact to nod at, it is a reason to stand. So when the Day reaches your ears, the response it asks for is a changed step, not a raised eyebrow.
- **Their doubt is a door.** Even the one who denies the Hereafter is not certain of his denial. Calling others to Allah, keep it gentle and keep going, because the wall is thinner than it looks.
- **You rehearse the resurrection nightly.** Sleep is a small death; waking is a small rising. The argument against your own denial is acted out in your bed every single night.
- **The proof is the world around you.** The bed of the earth, the pegs of the mountains, the rain that brings a dead seed back out: each ordinary mercy is quietly arguing that the One who did this can do the next thing too.

Why this surah stays with us

The deniers asked their question precisely so they would not have to move. An-Naba spends its forty ayat refusing to let them, and refusing to let you, by turning the most ordinary things, a bed, a night, a shower of rain, into witnesses for the Day they laughed at.

O Allah, make us people of the Qur'an, who hear its reminders and are moved by them. When the news of that Day reaches us, do not let us meet it with a shrug. Let it land in our chests the way You meant it to land, great, near, and real, and move our feet toward You while the moving still counts.

An-Nazi'at

The surah that opens on angels ripping souls loose, and closes on a Day so near it shrinks your whole life to an afternoon

An-Nazi'at does not ease you in. It opens mid-motion, with a string of oaths by creatures caught in the act of pulling something out by force, and the Sheikh says the whole surah is built from that one idea: things wrenched loose. Souls torn from bodies, the dead torn from their graves, Pharaoh torn from his palace, the Fire dragged out into view. By the end, the same Day the deniers laughed at will have shrunk their entire life down to a single afternoon.

An oath by the ones who pull out

وَالنَّازِعَاتِ غَرْقًا

By those [angels] who extract with violence

AN-NAZI'AT 79:1

وَالنَّاشِطَاتِ نَشْطًا

And [by] those who remove with ease

79:2

Sheikh Abu Bakr opens on the word the surah is named for, *nazi'at*, from a verb that means to pull something out violently, with full force. He shows you how heavy the word is by tracking it across the Qur'an. It is the verb for the moment Musa pulled his hand from his collar and it came out shining white, not a casual gesture but a hand wrenched out so that everyone stared. It is the verb for the wind that ripped the people of 'Ad out of where they were hiding, leaving them like uprooted palm trunks. So when Allah swears by *an-nazi'at*, He is swearing by creatures that dive deep and tear something out by the roots.

Then comes the contrast: *nashitat*, from a verb that means to undo something effortlessly. Picture a shoelace that slips loose with one pull, or a rope sliding off an animal's leg with a

single wiggle. Same hand, two completely different motions. The Sheikh follows the majority reading that these are the angels, and on that reading the picture is stark: the angels who plunge into the body of the disbeliever and rip his soul out because, faced with the reality he denied, he does not want to go, set beside the angels who slip the believer's soul free, smoothly, painlessly, like a knot that unties itself.

Swimming, racing, running the command

وَالسَّابِحَاتِ سَبْحًا

And [by] those who glide [as if] swimming

79:3

فَالسَّابِقَاتِ سَبْقًا

And those who race each other in a race

79:4

فَالْمُدَبِّرَاتِ أَمْرًا

And those who arrange [each] matter,

79:5

The oaths keep moving, and the Sheikh keeps drawing out the verbs. *Sabihat* is to swim smoothly, no splashing, the way a bird glides through open air with nothing in its path. The angels move through the body that easily, finding the soul and bringing it out. Then *sabiqat*, to race, to get out ahead of one another: having taken the soul, they race back to their Lord, each one rushing to be first.

And the last of them, *mudabbirat*, from a root the Sheikh ties to *dubur*, the back of a thing. To plan in this sense is to take a step back, examine the matter thoroughly, and only then move forward to carry it out. These are the angels who execute Allah's command exactly as decreed, in a planned, organised way, each group with its assigned task. He notes the scholars also offer a strong second reading of these five oaths, that they describe the winds (Ibn al-Qayyim leans this way), and that the Qur'an's text is deliberately open enough to hold more

than one meaning. But whether soul-pullers or storm-winds, the point lands the same: Allah is swearing by His own forces, and an oath this large is the run-up to something larger.

The two blasts, and the hearts that pound

يَوْمَ تَرْجَفُ الرَّاجِفَةُ

On the Day the blast [of the Horn] will convulse [creation],

79:6

تَتَّبِعُهَا الرَّادِفَةُ

There will follow it the subsequent [one].

79:7

قُلُوبٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ وَاجِفَةٌ

Hearts, that Day, will tremble,

79:8

Now the answer to the oaths arrives: the Day. *Ar-rajifah* is the first blowing of the Trumpet, the convulsion that shakes the earth apart. The Sheikh pauses on something startling in the grammar: elsewhere Allah calls the earth itself *ar-rajifah*, the shaker, as if trembling is written into its nature. The ground under your feet is, by description, a thing built to quake. It is only a matter of time. Then *ar-radifah*, the second blast, the one that comes right behind, from that same idea of *dubur*, what follows at your back, the passenger who is always behind you whichever way you turn.

And the human reaction. Hearts that Day are *wajifah*, pounding, racing with fear. The Sheikh points out that fear in the body usually spikes and then settles, but Allah uses a noun here, not a verb, and a noun signals a state that holds. These hearts do not race and calm down. They keep pounding, and as more of the horror unfolds in front of them, the pounding only grows. This is a surah, he says, that often brings the Day home not by describing the events but by describing the faces of the people watching them.

Eyes that finally see

أَبْصَارُهَا خَاشِعَةٌ

Their eyes humbled.

AN-NAZI'AT 79:9

Their eyes are *khashi'ah*, lowered, humbled, overwhelmed. Here the Sheikh draws a thread worth keeping: the eye is wired to the heart. What you see is shaped by what is inside you. A heart with iman looks at the sun and the moon and is reminded of Allah; an empty heart looks at the same sky and is moved by nothing.

So why, on that Day, are the eyes of the deniers suddenly full of awe and submission, when in this life nothing reached them? Because now there is belief in the heart. They have seen the realities they spent their lives denying, and the belief has finally arrived, too late to count, and it floods straight up into the eyes. The faith they refused while it was free pours out of them once it is worthless.

The sentence they keep repeating

يَقُولُونَ إِنَّا لَمَرْدُودُونَ فِي الْحَافِرَةِ

They are [presently] saying, "Will we indeed be returned to [our] former state [of life]?"

79:10

أَإِذَا كُنَّا عِظَامًا نَّخِرَةً

Even if we should be decayed bones?"

79:11

قَالُوا تِلْكَ إِذًا كَرَّةٌ خَاسِرَةٌ

They say, "That, then, would be a losing return."

79:12

The surah reminds to what these people are saying right now, in this life, and the Sheikh is careful here: their crime is their speech. They sneer, will we really be sent back to our *former state, al-hafirah*, after we have become *decayed bones*? And then the punchline of their mockery: if that ever happened, *that* would be a losing deal, a return that lands us straight back in trouble.

Allah's reply is almost dismissive in its ease. It takes no cosmic struggle to undo death. It is but one *zajrah*, a single shout, one harsh rebuke, and at once they are standing on *as-sahirah*, the open plain of the gathering. The Sheikh relays the Prophet's ﷺ description of that ground: a flat, white land with no landmark, as smooth and pale as a fresh loaf of bread. You will not crawl back to life over centuries. One shout, and you are up, awake, on your feet.

A door He folded shut: Musa and Pharaoh

هَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ مُوسَىٰ

Has there reached you the story of Moses? -

79:15

اذهبِ إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ طَغَىٰ

"Go to Pharaoh. Indeed, he has transgressed.

79:17

فَقُلْ هَلْ لَّكَ إِلَىٰ أَنْ تَزَكَّىٰ

And say to him, 'Would you [be willing to] purify yourself

79:18

Then Allah turns to the Prophet ﷺ: has the story of Musa reached you? The Sheikh first opens up the place it happened, the sacred valley of *Tuwa*. The root carries the sense of folding something up, the way a scroll is rolled closed. On that mountain a chapter of history was folded shut and a new one opened. Before Musa, the Sheikh explains, the way of Allah with rejecting nations was direct destruction: the flood for the people of Nuh, the screaming wind for 'Ad, the hurricane for Thamud, no command to fight, just the punishment falling from the

sky. Pharaoh and his army were the last nation wiped out whole. With Musa and the Tawrah, a new order began.

Notice how Musa is told to approach the worst tyrant alive. Pharaoh has *transgressed*, overstepped every limit, and still the opening line is gentle: would you be willing to purify yourself? The Sheikh hears in the phrasing an invitation, not an accusation, almost, is there any good still left in you that wants to come out? Then, would you let me guide you to your Lord, so that you would have awe of Him? The greatest tyrant on earth is met with the softest possible door.

I am your lord most high

فَأَرَاهُ الْآيَةَ الْكُبْرَىٰ

And he showed him the greatest sign,

79:20

فَقَالَ أَنَا رَبُّكُمُ الْأَعْلَىٰ

And said, "I am your most exalted lord."

79:24

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَعِبْرَةً لِّمَن يَخْشَىٰ

Indeed in that is a lesson [i.e., warning] for whoever would fear [Allāh].

79:26

Musa shows him the greatest sign, and Pharaoh's response is to deny, disobey, then turn his back and start plotting. The Sheikh notes the real thing that terrified Pharaoh was not the miracle itself but losing face and losing power; even his own magicians fell into prostration and believed. So he scrambles, gathers the people, calls out, and crowns himself: *I am your lord most high*. A man with rivers running beneath his palace, declaring himself a god.

And Allah seized him, the surah says, with an exemplary punishment in this life and the next. He was pulled out of his palace and sent straight into the sea, his body afterward put on display as a sign for everyone who came later. The strongest tyrant history had seen was lifted

like nothing. Then the verdict the Sheikh keeps in view: in all of that is a lesson, but only *for whoever would fear*. The same events pass before every eye; only the heart that already carries awe takes the warning.

Is this the sky you built?

أَأَنْتُمْ أَشَدُّ خَلْقًا أَمْ السَّمَاءُ جَبَّاهَا

Are you a more difficult creation or is the heaven? He [i.e., Allāh] constructed it.

79:27

وَأَغْطَشَ لَيْلَهَا وَأَخْرَجَ ضُحَاهَا

And He darkened its night and extracted its brightness.

79:29

وَالْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ دَحَاهَا

And after that He spread the earth.

79:30

The news of the Day did nothing for the deniers, so the Sheikh shows Allah switching methods, from telling them what will happen to handing them proof they can see and reason from. The challenge is blunt: are *you* the harder thing to create, or the heaven? *Banaha*, He built it, brick meshing seamlessly into brick into one vast structure. He raised its ceiling so high you cannot find its top, no pillars holding it, and *sawwaha*, levelled and proportioned it perfectly, not one part higher or lower than another.

Then a verb worth sitting with. *Aghtasha* layali-ha, He darkened its night, the deepest kind of dark where you cannot tell a truck from a car by its lights, and out of that He brought *duha-ha*, its bright morning. The Sheikh reads something between the lines: this is also revelation. The night of ignorance was so black the people could not tell which idol to worship or whether the Hereafter was real, until Allah brought out a light that made everything clear. And after the sky, the earth: *dahaha*, He spread it out, a verb whose root touches rolling and the rounded egg of the ostrich, spreading it wide and smooth beneath you.

Everything in your hand is a tool

أَخْرَجَ مِنْهَا مَاءَهَا وَمَرْعَاهَا

He extracted from it its water and its pasture,

79:31

وَالْجِبَالَ أَرْسَاهَا

And the mountains He set firmly

79:32

مَتَاعًا لَكُمْ وَلِأَنْعَامِكُمْ

As enjoyment [i.e., provision] for you and your grazing livestock.

79:33

From the spread earth He drew out its water and its pasture, the rivers and the grazing land, and He set the mountains firm: *arsaha*, from the word for dropping a ship's anchor, the mountains pegged so deep the land cannot drift. And the Sheikh notes the verb for the produce, *akhraja*, to bring out, is the same verb used for a person walking out of a door. The crop comes out of the dark earth exactly as you will come out of the grave.

Then the word he lingers on: all of this is *mata'an* for you and your cattle. Most translations say enjoyment, but the Sheikh follows the scholar who walked from town to town to hear how the word was actually used and watched a goat snatch a girl's scrubbing brush while she cried, he took my *mata'*. A *mata'* is a tool, something used, not something savoured. So the lesson lands hard: everything Allah placed in your hands, your car, your phone, your wealth, your spouse, is first a tool meant to carry you closer to Him, not an end to sink into. The enjoyment is kept for Paradise; here, it is all an instrument.

The deafening calamity, and the fire that stares

فَإِذَا جَاءَتِ الطَّامَّةُ الْكُبْرَىٰ

But when there comes the greatest Overwhelming Calamity -

79:34

يَوْمَ يَتَذَكَّرُ الْإِنْسَانُ مَا سَعَىٰ

The Day when man will remember that for which he strove,

79:35

وَبُرِّزَتِ الْجَحِيمُ لِمَنْ يَرَىٰ

And Hellfire will be exposed for [all] those who see -

79:36

Then a new movement, signalled by the change in rhyme. *At-tammah al-kubra*, the greatest overwhelming calamity. The Sheikh unpacks *tammah* as something that fills a thing completely until it floods over the edge, a disaster so full there is no gap left to escape through, the cup overflowing on every side. The very word feels like a deafening shout that blocks the ears, and that, he says, is fitting: these were people who let the call go in one ear and out the other, so now a noise comes that they cannot hear past.

On that Day man will remember *what he strove for, ma sa'a*. The Sheikh keeps the surah's running theme alive: people pace and run all their lives, some chasing money, some chasing the next car, the next phone. On that Day every one of them will remember not just his words but the *motive* underneath them, what he was really racing after. And the Fire is *burrizat*, dragged out fully into the open for all eyes to see. Here Allah names it *al-jahim*, and the Sheikh draws on the root: a hungry lion fixing you with its stare. The Fire glares at the deniers with hungry eyes, roaring and raging, wanting them, while they stare back.

Two refuges, decided by what you preferred

فَأَمَّا مَنْ طَغَىٰ

So as for he who transgressed

79:37

وَأَثَرَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا

And preferred the life of the world,

79:38

وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ وَنَهَى النَّفْسَ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ

But as for he who feared the position of his Lord and prevented the soul from [unlawful] inclination,

79:40

Now two people, two endings. The first transgressed and *preferred* the life of this world. The Sheikh stresses that this, not disbelief in the abstract, is named as the root problem; the verse does not even say he rejected the Hereafter, it says he chose the lower life over the higher one. For him, the Fire is his refuge, *al-ma'wa*, the place of safety, and that word is Allah's own sharp answer to their sarcasm: you mocked being raised again, so the staring, ravenous Fire is now your safe haven.

The second feared the standing before his Lord and held the *nafs* back from *hawa*. Two precise touches the Sheikh will not let pass. Allah says he restrained *the* soul, not *his* soul, teaching you to treat that inner voice calling you to wrong as a separate enemy to fight, not a part of you to indulge. And *hawa* is desire that flares up strong in the moment and then collapses into nothing, the regret of why did I even do that. Master that, and Paradise is your refuge, the same word, the opposite home.

When is it? An afternoon's worth of life

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ أَيَّانَ مُرْسَاهَا

They ask you, [O Muḥammad], about the Hour: when is its arrival?

79:42

إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُنذِرٌ مَّنْ يَخْشَاهَا

You are only a warner for those who fear it.

79:45

كَانَهُمْ يَوْمَ يَرُونَهَا لَمْ يَلْبَثُوا إِلَّا عَشِيَّةً أَوْ ضُحَاهَا

It will be, on the Day they see it, as though they had not remained [in the world] except for an afternoon or a morning thereof.

79:46

The deniers fire one last mocking question: when is the Hour going to be *anchored, mursaha*? The Sheikh notes the verb keeps the surah's thread, the same root used for the anchored mountains: fine, we can see the mountains pegged down, so when does this Day of yours get pegged down? Allah's reply puts the Prophet ﷺ in his place, the honoured place of a messenger: in what position are you to name its time? A prophet's task is to warn of the Day's events, not to publish its date. To your Lord alone is its finality. You are only a warner, and only for those who fear it.

Then the surah's last image, and the Sheikh lets it close the circle. On the Day they finally see it, it will feel as though their entire stay in this world was no longer than an *evening* or the *morning* before noon, a matter of minutes against the endless Day. He started the surah on the Hour and ends it on the Hour; the two reach back and shake hands. And the ache it leaves is simple: what a ruinous trade, to have preferred a life that short over the one that never ends.

What this surah asks of you

- **Your soul will be pulled out one way or the other.** The angels rip the denier's soul loose and slip the believer's free. The difference is not in the angels; it is in how you lived. The exit is decided long before the exit.
- **The fear that comes too late is the cruelest kind.** On that Day even the deniers' eyes fill with awe, because they finally see what was true all along. Belief that arrives once it is worthless saves no one. Believe while believing still costs you something.
- **Everything in your hand is a tool, not a destination.** Mata' means a thing used, not a thing savoured. Your wealth, your car, your spouse: each is an instrument meant to carry you toward Allah. The savouring is kept for Paradise.
- **The root problem is preference, not just denial.** The one bound for the Fire is the one who preferred this world to the next. You can believe in the Hereafter and still lose, if the lower life is the one you keep choosing.
- **Treat the nafs as an enemy, not a part of you.** Allah says he restrained the soul, not his soul. The inner pull toward wrong is a force to fight, and the desire behind it flares up strong, then collapses into regret. Outlast it.

Why this surah stays with us

An-Nazi'at is a surah of things wrenched loose. It begins with souls torn from bodies and the dead torn from graves, moves through a tyrant torn from his palace and a Fire dragged out into the open, and ends by tearing the comfortable illusion of time out from under you: a whole life, on that Day, no longer than an afternoon. Between the soul-pullers at the start and the Hour at the close, the Sheikh shows Allah arguing the same case from every angle, the sky He built, the night He darkened, the seed He brings out of the dark earth, so that the one who would fear has every reason to.

O Allah, make us of those who fear the standing before You while the fearing still counts. Let our souls be among the ones drawn out gently, not the ones torn loose. Do not let us prefer this short life to the one that never ends, and on the Day we see the Hour, let us be among the warned who listened, not the mockers who remembered too late.

Abasa

The surah where Allah corrects His own beloved Messenger over a single frown, and teaches you who is really worth your time

Most surahs open by putting the deniers in their place. This one opens by gently putting the best of creation in his. The Prophet ﷺ was mid-sentence with the leaders of Makkah, the first time they had ever truly sat and listened, when a blind man came rushing in to learn. A small frown crossed the Prophet's face, a thing the blind man could not even see, and Allah made it the opening of a surah. Watch, Sheikh Abu Bakr says, how tenderly He corrects the one He loves most, and what He wants you to learn about whose attention is worth chasing.

Two people, and the thread to the surah before

عَبَسَ وَتَوَلَّى

He frowned and turned away

ABASA 80:1

أَنْ جَاءَهُ الْأَعْمَى

Because there came to him the blind man, interrupting.

80:2

Sheikh Abu Bakr opens the way he always does, by tying this surah to the one before it. An-Nazi'at ended on two kinds of people: the one who rebelled and chose this world, whose home is the Fire, and the one who feared standing before his Lord and held his soul back from low desire, whose home is the Garden. Abasa now sets the very same two people side by side. There is the one who feels he needs nothing, who turns out to be Quraysh, pacing in arrogance the way Pharaoh paced before them. And there is the one who comes running, trembling, the blind companion Ibn Umm Maktum, who fears Allah and rushes toward the light.

There is a deeper thread too, the Sheikh notes, a word that keeps surfacing across this part of the juz: khashyah, the fear of Allah. An-Nazi'at insisted that none of its mighty warnings, the soul torn out, the mountains shaking, the Trumpet, will benefit you unless you carry khashyah inside. Abasa arrives to show you what that khashyah looks like wearing a face: a blind man who cannot see the danger he is interrupting, sprinting toward his Lord out of nothing but reverence.

The smallest frown, and the highest standard

عَبَسَ وَتَوَلَّى

He frowned and turned away

ABASA 80:1

Before he explains a word, the Sheikh stops you on something delicate: how carefully we must speak about the Messenger ﷺ. There is a golden line we do not cross. The Prophet ﷺ does not sin; Allah purified him and protected him. So when Allah Himself raises a matter about him, it is never to expose a fault, it is to polish an already perfect character to a higher shine. Keep that in your hand as you read.

Here is the scene. The Prophet ﷺ was giving dawah to the elite of Quraysh, and for once it seemed to be landing. As he spoke, Ibn Umm Maktum came toward him calling out, teach me from what Allah has taught you, and he repeated it, louder each time, because being blind he could not see the Prophet was busy and assumed he had not been heard. There was no disrespect in it; the believers had not yet been taught how to lower their voices before him. And the Prophet ﷺ did not say wait, did not snap, did not so much as make a sound of displeasure. He simply frowned, the slightest gathering of the brow, and turned his face back to Quraysh.

Now feel the weight of the word. Abasa, the Sheikh explains, is the very lightest form of a frown, a small tightening above the eyes, nothing like the harsher words the Qur'an uses elsewhere for a face twisted ugly with rage. And the blind man could not even see it. The Prophet was not insulted, no believer was wounded, and still Allah revealed an ayah about it. Why? Because standards rise with rank. A Muslim is held to a high standard, a firm believer to a higher one, and the Messenger ﷺ to the very highest there is. The closer you are to Allah, the more even the smallest gesture matters. This is the same Prophet whose glance toward the

sky in longing for Makkah moved Allah to turn the qiblah for him. That is not a man being scolded. That is a man so beloved that heaven takes note of his eyebrows.

Going easy, in the third person

وَمَا يَدْرِيكَ لَعَلَّه يَزْكَىٰ

But what would make you perceive that perhaps he might be purified

ABASA 80:3

أَوْ يَذَّكَّرُ فَتَنْفَعَهُ الذِّكْرَىٰ

Or be reminded and the remembrance would benefit him?

80:4

Look at how the correction is delivered, the Sheikh says, because the Arabic is doing something merciful. The opening two ayat speak of the Prophet ﷺ in the third person: he frowned, he turned away. In Arabic, to reprimand someone in the third person is to go gentle on them, the way a teacher who must correct a student announces to the room that a student misbehaved, rather than pointing and saying you. Allah does not say to His beloved you frowned and you turned away. He softens it, then only afterward turns to face him directly.

And what He says when He turns to him is itself a defense, not an attack: what would make you perceive? The word for it, the Sheikh draws out, asks what tool you could possibly have to know this man's heart. Maybe he came to be purified. Maybe the reminder would have benefited him. Allah is telling His Messenger ﷺ that no one, not even the closest human being to Him, has been handed the license to judge what is inside a person. The Sheikh sets it beside Musa walking in to Pharaoh: Musa did not announce that this tyrant was corrupt, he offered, do you have any desire to purify yourself? Give the dawah, and let the dawah do the work. The judging belongs to Allah alone.

The one who feels he needs nothing

أَمَّا مَنْ اسْتغْنَىٰ

As for he who thinks himself without need,

ABASA 80:5

فَأَنْتَ لَهُ تَصَدَّىٰ

To him you give attention.

80:6

وَأَمَّا مَنْ جَاءَكَ يَسْعَىٰ

But as for he who came to you striving,

80:8

Now Allah lays the two men out plainly. There is the one who istaghna, who feels self-sufficient, free of need, as if he requires neither this Qur'an nor its guidance nor anything at all. The word comes from being rich, the Sheikh explains, and that is the disease of every proud leader of Quraysh: they listened to the recitation, but only to find an angle to argue, never to be changed. And to that posture, Allah says to His Prophet ﷺ, you give your attention, you bend toward him, hoping.

Against him stands the one who came to you yas'a, striving, a pace quicker than a walk, hurrying out of eagerness. That is Ibn Umm Maktum, who could wait, who already believed, who needed no rescuing from anyone walking away. And here Allah corrects something subtle about how dawah was being carried, the Sheikh says. When you keep turning toward the one who has rejected you and away from the one who is racing toward the truth, you make yourself look like the desperate salesman trailing a customer who does not want to buy. The Messenger ﷺ chasing them flips who holds the upper hand. Allah, His Messenger ﷺ, and His Qur'an need none of these people. So He teaches him: do not run after them. Turn to the ones who came running to you.

It is honored, whether they want it or not

كَلَّا إِنَّهَا تَذِكْرَةٌ

No! Indeed, they are a reminder;

ABASA 80:11

فِي صُحُفٍ مُّكَرَّمَةٍ

In honored sheets,

80:13

بِأَيْدِي سَفَرَةٍ

Carried by the hands of messenger-angels,

80:15

Then comes a sharp kalla, no, the Sheikh says, and the tone shifts entirely. Stop chasing them. These ayat are a reminder, and whoever wills may take it. Notice the dignity in that: the door is open, but no one is dragged through it. If they want this message, they are lucky to have even heard it, and next time they may come to you. The reminder does not run after anyone.

And then Allah lifts the Qur'an up so high that the deniers below start to look small. It rests in honored sheets, in al-Lawh al-Mahfuz, exalted and purified, carried by the hands of angels who are noble and dutiful, beings who never once disobey Him. The Sheikh pulls a quiet lesson out of this: if even the page the Qur'an is written on becomes honored by holding His words, then how casually do we toss away exam papers and notes with ayat printed on them, onto the floor, into the bin? And the larger point lands on Quraysh: this is the rank of what is being recited to you. You are not doing it a favor by listening. Allah, by letting it reach your ears at all, is doing one for you.

Destroyed is man, how ungrateful

قَتَلَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا أَكْفَرَهُ

Destroyed is man; how disbelieving is he.

ABASA 80:17

مِنْ نُّطْفَةٍ خَلَقَهُ فَقَدَرَهُ

From a sperm-drop He created him and destined for him;

80:19

ثُمَّ أَمَاتَهُ فَأَقْبَرَهُ

Then He causes his death and provides a grave for him.

80:21

Now the surah rounds on the human being with one of the harshest scoldings in the language: qutila al-insan, may man be cursed, how disbelieving he is. The Sheikh asks what could possibly make a person reject Allah after the proof is clear, and the answer is always the same: arrogance, nothing else. It was the first sin of Iblis, who refused to bow out of pride, and Pharaoh's sin, and now the sin of Quraysh, who knew in their chests the Qur'an was not the words of a man and rejected it anyway. How amazing, the Sheikh says, that you saw the greatest sign and still turned away.

So Allah deflates the arrogance by asking where this proud creature even came from. From a nutfah, a single drop, a fluid the Qur'an elsewhere calls maheen, weak and worthless, the very thing you are embarrassed to find on your clothes and rush to wash away. Millions of them, and one survives. That was you. And from that nothing, Allah qaddara, measured out in precise detail everything you would become: your gender, the color of your eyes, what you would eat and when, whom you would marry, how many children, how long you would live, the illnesses you would carry. All of it decreed while you were a drop. Then He eased your path into the world, a passage you did not open for yourself. Then He caused you to die, and gave you a grave. The Sheikh lingers here: you controlled neither your birth nor your death. Whatever becomes of your body, you end up in the earth. So where, exactly, did the arrogance come from?

And the Sheikh draws out something tender hidden in the speed of it. Allah moves from amatahu, He gave him death, to aqbarah, He put him in a grave, with no life mentioned in between, as if to say: that is how short the whole thing is. Birth and death are near neighbors. The adhan is whispered in the ear of the newborn, and at his funeral there is no new adhan, only the prayer that still leans on that first one. You are washed when you come, and washed when you go. You are wrapped to be received into the world, and wrapped again to be sent out of it. The womb was dark and tight; so is the grave. Your birth was always a reminder of your death, if you had only looked.

Look at your food

فَلْيَنْظُرِ الْإِنْسَانُ إِلَىٰ طَعَامِهِ

Then let mankind look at his food,

ABASA 80:24

ثُمَّ شَقَقْنَا الْأَرْضَ شَقًّا

Then We broke open the earth, splitting it with sprouts,

80:26

مَتَاعًا لَّكُمْ وَلِأَنْعَامِكُمْ

As enjoyment for you and your grazing livestock.

80:32

Having reminded man that he still has not done what he was commanded, Allah offers him one more way back, and it is breakfast. Let man look at his food. Not glance, the Sheikh stresses, but nazar, stare, ponder, trace the whole journey of the thing on his plate before he swallows it. Eat, gain strength, and use that strength to do what your Lord asked of you. He even points to the very first food you ever received: the umbilical cord, the one source of nourishment you were given, then cut and recoiled from in disgust.

Then Allah walks you back up the chain. He poured water down in torrents, the word sababna doubling its sound like buckets emptying over buckets. Then He split the earth open, and the Sheikh marvels at the verb shaqaqna, the one Allah reserves for things not normally torn, the

sky, solid rock. What rips this earth apart? A fragile green plant, so weak that a hard spray of water would uproot it, yet it cracks the ground and pushes through cement on your own driveway. Who eased that path for it but Allah?

And out of that one split earth, watered by that one rain, Allah lists eight different things rising: grain, then grapes and green herbage, then olives and date-palms, then dense walled gardens, then fruit, then pasture, moving from the most essential food up to the most delightful. Eight foods, one soil, one water. The tomato seed and the cucumber seed sit side by side, look identical, and grow into entirely different things. That alone, the Sheikh says, is a sign pointing to nothing but the oneness of the One who measured it all. Your gratitude for the food on your table, on its own, should be enough to bring you to Him.

The Deafening Blast, and the day you flee your family

فَإِذَا جَاءَتِ الصَّاخَّةُ

But when there comes the Deafening Blast

ABASA 80:33

يَوْمَ يَفِرُّ الْمَرْءُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ

On the Day a man will flee from his brother

80:34

لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مِنْهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ شَأْنٌ يُغْنِيهِ

For every man, that Day, will be a matter adequate for him.

80:37

If gratitude does not move him, the Sheikh says, then what is left is warning, and the surah delivers its final one. When the Sakhkha comes, the second blow of the Trumpet, a scream so loud it deafens. The choice of word is exact: this surah opened on people who could hear the message and chose not to listen, and it closes by telling them you may dodge the warnings of the Qur'an now, but you will not dodge this sound on that Day.

And then the most piercing image. On that Day a man flees, the verb yafirr, the running you do from something that terrifies you, the way you bolt from a charging dog. But flees from whom? From his brother. Then his mother and his father. Then his wife. Then his children. The very people you run toward for protection in this life, you will sprint away from in terror. The Sheikh follows the order closely, and it is not random. You flee your brother first, because he is the one whose rights you trampled most: once everyone marries and scatters, the brother is the one you stop calling, stop visiting, stop asking after, so his claim against you is the heaviest. Then the parents, whose rights you guarded a little better. Then the wife. Then the children, last, because them you wronged least of all. Every one of them is coming to collect what you owe, and you run.

Why such total abandonment? Because, the Sheikh explains, on that Day every single person has a sha'n that consumes him, a matter so overwhelming it blots out everyone else. You cannot turn to look at your own mother. When the Prophet ﷺ was asked whether people, standing there unclothed, would look at one another, this was his answer: every person will be too occupied with himself. The thought does not even cross your mind. You are drowning in what you did and what you chased in this world, and nothing else can reach you.

Two faces, and where it all began

وَوَجْوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ مُّسْفِرَةٌ

Some faces, that Day, will be bright,

ABASA 80:38

ضَاحِكَةً مُّسْتَبْشِرَةً

Laughing, rejoicing at good news.

80:39

أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْكٰفِرَةُ الْفٰجِرَةُ

Those are the disbelievers, the wicked ones.

80:42

The surah ends on faces, and the Sheikh shows you the symmetry. It began with a frown on a face, abasa, and it closes by showing you what every face will truly become. Some, that Day, are musfira, lit up, the sadness peeled away to reveal them. The word for their laughter is daahika, not a polite smile but open, sounding, teeth-showing joy, the laughter of someone who has just been told he is going to the Garden. These are the ones who had a hard time in this world, the believers the deniers mocked and laughed at; now the mockery is lifted off them and the good news shines through.

And the other faces carry ghabara, a dust of grief and gloom, with qatara, a black smoke, climbing over them. These, Allah says, are al-kafaratul fajarah, the worst of the disbelievers, the ones who exploded in sin without limit. The Sheikh closes the circle: these are the very people from the start of the surah, the ones who istaghna, who felt they needed nothing, who heard reminder after reminder, their own creation, their own food, the great Day, and cared for none of it. The one who came running in fear ends with a shining, laughing face. The one who turned away in pride ends in dust and smoke. The frown the surah opened with was never really about the Prophet ﷺ at all; it was a question to you, about which of those two faces you are walking toward.

What this surah asks of you

- **Give your time to the one who is reaching for it.** Allah corrected His own Messenger ﷺ for leaning toward the proud and away from the eager. The one racing toward the truth, however small he looks, is worth more of you than the one you are trying to impress.
- **You were not handed the keys to anyone's heart.** What would make you perceive? Not even the closest human to Allah could read what was inside Ibn Umm Maktum. So give the reminder and leave the judging where it belongs, with Allah.
- **Arrogance is the whole disease.** After the proof is clear, only pride makes a person turn away. And pride collapses the moment you remember you began as a worthless drop and will end in the earth, with neither your birth nor your death ever in your hands.
- **The argument is on your plate and in your chest.** A split seed pushing through hard ground, eight foods from one soil, your own body measured out while you were nothing: each is a sign that the One who did this can raise you and is owed your gratitude.

Why this surah stays with us

Abasa is the surah where Allah's love for His Prophet ﷺ is so complete that He polishes even a frown no one could see, and in the same breath teaches the rest of us a lesson we badly need: stop chasing the ones who feel above the truth, and turn toward the ones running to it. Then it strips our arrogance bare with a drop of fluid and a grave, argues back with a shower of rain and a plate of food, and leaves us standing on a Day so terrible we flee our own mothers, with our faces about to declare which life we chose.

O Allah, make us people of the Qur'an, who hear its reminders and are moved by them. Save us from the arrogance that feels no need of You, and make us instead like the one who came running, trembling, reaching for Your light. When that Day comes and faces are sorted, let ours be among the faces that are bright, laughing, rejoicing at Your good news.

Retold faithfully from Sheikh Abu Bakr Zoud's tafsir of Juz Amma. Qur'an: Sahih International, verified via quran.ai. The reflection is the Sheikh's, the phrasing is The Daily Wird's.

At-Takwir

The surah that switches off the sun, drops the stars, and undoes the world, then turns and asks you what could possibly be worth chasing instead of the truth in your hands

At-Takwir does not ease you in. It opens on the sun being folded up and snuffed out, the stars falling out of the sky, the mountains torn loose and set drifting, the seas turned to fire. The Sheikh shows you that this is the Day of Judgement filmed from the inside, the camera lifting off the panicked earth of the surah before and turning up to a sky coming apart. The Prophet ﷺ said that whoever wants to see that Day with his own eyes should read this surah. Then, once the whole cosmos has been undone, Allah turns the surah toward the one thing the deniers were mocking: the truth of the revelation in front of them, and the question of where on earth they think they are going instead.

A surah is a walled city, and this one starts where the last one ended

Sheikh Abu Bakr opens the way he opens every surah in this juz, by tying it to the one before it. The surah just before this, Abasa, closed on the chaos down on the ground: the Day when a man flees his own brother, his mother, his father, his wife and his children, running not just away but away in terror. It also told you that on that Day there are two kinds of faces, one lit up and laughing with joy, one covered in dust and climbing smoke. At-Takwir, the Sheikh says, is the explanation. It lifts the camera off the panicking earth and points it at the sky, and it tells you exactly when that bright face will finally shine and that dark face will finally fall.

And there is a reason it matters that the Prophet ﷺ said, whoever wants to look at the Day of Judgement as though he were seeing it with his own eyes, let him read this surah. Every word here is built to be seen. This is a Makki surah, the Sheikh reminds you, so its first audience is the pagan Arabs, and its quarrel is with their three sicknesses: denying that Allah is one, denying the Day of Resurrection, and denying the revelation sent down on the Prophet ﷺ. The surah falls into two halves. The first paints the Day collapsing in front of you. The second turns to defend the revelation they laughed at. Watch, the Sheikh says, how the two halves answer each other.

When in fact the sun is folded up

إِذَا الشَّمْسُ كُوِّرَتْ

When the sun is wrapped up [in darkness]

AT-TAKWIR 81:1

وَإِذَا النُّجُومُ انكَدَرَتْ

And when the stars fall, dispersing,

81:2

وَإِذَا الْجِبَالُ سُيِّرَتْ

And when the mountains are removed

81:3

The Sheikh slows right down on the very first word, idha, when. Arabic has two words for when: one for things that might happen and one for things that certainly will. The word here is the certain one, so before a single image arrives you already know none of this is in doubt. Then comes a shock: the verb that follows is in the past tense, kuwwirat, was folded up, even though the Day is still to come. That, the Sheikh explains, is the most powerful way in the whole language to nail something down. A future event spoken of as already finished is a future event Allah is telling you is as certain as the past. And notice He puts the noun, the sun, before the verb, which is not the ordinary order. The Arab would do that only when he is raising his voice at someone who refuses to believe him. So the very grammar is angry, loud, forcing the reality on a denier who will not take it seriously: when in fact the sun does get folded up.

Why the word kuwwirat? It is the verb used for winding a turban around the head, the Sheikh says, that long cloth wrapped round and round until the head is hidden bit by bit. The sun's light is stretched out like that cloth, and on that Day it is wound up and folded away until, little by little, the light is gone. Some scholars say more: the sun is not only darkened but wrapped in something, then, as a hadith adds, thrown into the ocean. From that, the Sheikh notes, some took a proof that the sun is smaller than the earth, since it is the earth's lamp, and a lamp is always smaller than the house it lights.

Then the stars. Inkadarat carries two things at once, the Sheikh says: first they lose their color and brilliance, going dull and stale, and then they fall. He explains how they fall: the stars hang between heaven and earth on chains of light held by angels, and when the first blow of the Trumpet kills everything in the heavens and the earth, the angels die, the chains let go, and the stars drop. City people, he adds, cannot feel the weight of this, because pollution and street light have already stolen the stars from us. The desert Arab slept under millions of them. For him, the stars going out and falling was as enormous as the sun being snuffed out. And then your eye, following the falling stars down, lands on the mountains, suyyirat, set moving. The mountains He had pegged into the earth so firmly they could not be plucked out are now uprooted and drifting like a mirage, floating along with no effort at all, until in the end they are ground to dust and the land is left perfectly smooth, no peak and no valley left to see.

When the most precious thing you own is left to wander

وَإِذَا الْعِشَارُ عُطِّلَتْ

And when full-term she-camels are neglected

AT-TAKWIR 81:4

وَإِذَا الْوُحُوشُ حُشِرَتْ

And when the wild beasts are gathered

81:5

وَإِذَا الْبِحَارُ سُجِّرَتْ

And when the seas are filled with flame

81:6

Now the surah turns to the animals. Al-ishar, the Sheikh explains, are she-camels ten months pregnant, and to the Arab this was the single most precious form of wealth a person could own, the equivalent today of a prized property in the most expensive part of the city. A pregnant she-camel meant double the benefit, double the milk, double the status. You would never see one wandering loose; it was fenced, roped, guarded, because it was someone's fortune. And Allah says that on that Day this priceless asset is simply left, neglected,

abandoned. The Sheikh draws the psychology out with the recent bushfires: when fire is at your house you do not think about your savings or your phone or your wallet, you think only about surviving. When a man sees the sun folded, the stars dropping, the mountains sailing, his fortune means nothing to him. He walks away from it without a glance.

Then the wild beasts, al-wuhush, gathered, hushirat. The Sheikh lingers on a beautiful contrast he wants you to feel. The wild animal is named for having no affection; by nature it walks alone, attacks on sight, and will not be herded. So when Allah says they are gathered, He uses a word that means driven together by force, the way a shepherd's stick pushes them into line, because they would never come together on their own. The closest thing you will ever see to it, he says, is a flood, when predator and prey end up crammed onto the last patch of safe land, the hunter standing beside what it would have eaten, because now they share one greater fear. And here is the contrast: in this world humans, who are named for affection, are together by nature, yet on that Day they flee one another; while the wild beasts, apart by nature, are driven together. The whole pattern of the world is turned inside out by terror.

And then the seas, al-bihar, sujirrat, set ablaze. The word, the Sheikh says, is the super-plural, all the oceans, and the verb is the image of a great pot of coals into which a flame is thrown: the water itself becomes the fuel. Some of the early Muslims held, strongly, that the Hellfire lies beneath the seas, so that on that Day the oceans become fire, and a companion would refuse to sail at all, asking, are you mad, sailing on top of Jahannam? The word carries flooding too: the salt and the fresh, kept apart by a barrier in this life, all pour together into one boiling, overflowing sea. The Sheikh pauses here to point out the order. Two of these events are in the sky and four are on the earth, exactly as the heavens were made in two days and the earth in four. And what was created last is destroyed first: the sun, made last in the sky, is folded first; the mountains, made last on the earth, are moved first.

Now the human: souls paired, and a buried girl given a voice

وَإِذَا النُّفُوسُ زُوِّجَتْ

And when the souls are paired

AT-TAKWIR 81:7

وَإِذَا الْمَوْءُودَةُ سُئِلَتْ

And when the girl [who was] buried alive is asked

81:8

بِأَيِّ ذَنْبٍ قُتِلَتْ

For what sin she was killed

81:9

Two ayat went to the sky and four to the earth, and now, the Sheikh says, the surah finally turns to us. And notice the word: not anfus, the smaller plural of nafs, but an-nufus, the greater plural, the same move He made with al-bihar for all the oceans. So this is not some souls but every single soul, each one of us, paired. The verb is the one a father uses when he marries off his daughter, I have paired you with this man, and the Sheikh lays out three readings of the early scholars that he insists are not rivals but stages. First your soul, which left your body at death, is paired back to your body when the Trumpet sounds the second time and it comes searching until it finds you. Then you are paired with your kind, the good with the good and the evil with the evil, the way Surat al-Waqi'ah sorts all of mankind into three groups. Then you are paired with your own deeds, set beside everything you sent ahead. One after another, not one against another.

He pauses on the word nafs itself. Its cousins in the language, the Sheikh notes, all turn on the idea of back and forth: nafas, the breath that goes out and in; munafasah, the competition that passes back and forth between rivals. That, he says, is exactly why the soul is called nafs, because it is never still, rising and falling, sinning and repenting and sinning again, the soul that commands evil and the soul that blames itself and the soul at peace. So the very name of the thing being paired tells you what kind of thing it is.

Then comes what the Sheikh calls the most frightening ayah in the passage. Al-maw'udah, the infant girl buried alive. The word, he explains, is built on heaviness, the same root as in Ayat al-Kursi where His guarding of the heavens and the earth does not burden Him; she was named for the dirt piled heavy on her until she could not breathe. In the days before Islam a pregnant woman would be walked to a pit already dug; a boy, and she carried him home in pride; a girl, and they closed the earth over her on the spot and walked away. They did it out of fear of shame, fear that a daughter married into another tribe would one day humiliate them. And the

Sheikh will not let it stay in the past: traces of that same sickness, he says, still surface when a man hears his wife has had a girl and mutters, maybe next time, when the Prophet ﷺ guaranteed Paradise to the one who raises daughters well, and Allah deliberately let the Prophet's own sons die young so the deniers could see a man does not need a son to keep his name alive.

And see the reversal once more. In any court the criminal is questioned first, but here the victim is asked first, bi-ayyi dhanbin qutilat, for what sin she was killed. The Sheikh hears in dhamb the very smallest offense, the parking ticket of crimes, so the question itself proves her innocence: name even the tiniest thing she did, and you cannot. He draws out why she is given the first word. In this world she had no voice, no power, no one to hear her cry, her own father her killer. So on that Day, Allah hands the voiceless the microphone. The first to be asked, the Sheikh says, are the ones who were crushed and could not speak, and he reaches straight for the living: Syria, Burma, Palestine, every oppressed soul nobody recorded, every sister whose screams went unheard, all of it heard by Allah and held. And there is a deeper sting in it that he takes from Ibn al-Qayyim: asking her, not her killer, is how Allah shows His contempt for the murderer, who is not even worth addressing, the way the Christians who claimed a son are not questioned on that Day but Isa is asked in their place. So fear oppressing anyone, the Sheikh warns, even by a single word, and if you have, repent now, while repentance still counts.

The books spread, the sky peeled, the Fire towering, the Garden brought near

وَإِذَا الصُّحُفُ نُشِرَتْ

And when the pages are spread [i.e., made public]

AT-TAKWIR 81:10

وَإِذَا السَّمَاءُ كُشِطَتْ

And when the sky is stripped away

81:11

وَإِذَا الْجَحِيمُ سُعِرَتْ

And when Hellfire is set ablaze

81:12

وَإِذَا الْجَنَّةُ أُنزِلَتْ

And when Paradise is brought near,

81:13

عَلِمَتْ نَفْسٌ مَّا أَحْضَرَتْ

A soul will [then] know what it has brought [with it].

81:14

You thought no one was keeping a record of that murder, the Sheikh says, so now Allah answers it: as-suhuf, the scrolls, nushirat, spread wide open. The word carries being brought back to life as much as being unrolled; the book that was sealed shut at your death is opened again at your resurrection, every good and every bad laid out for reading. And he draws a line back to Abasa, where the same root, suhuf, named the noble pages of the revelation. Those scrolls came down, he says, for one purpose: to fix these scrolls, the record of your deeds that will one day be unrolled in front of you. Take care of the one and you save the other.

Then the sky, kushitat, stripped. The Sheikh gives the word its plain sense, the verb for skinning an animal or scratching the foil off a card, and then the better, the image one. When you skin an animal what shows is the red flesh beneath, and another ayah tells you the heaven on that Day turns red like a rose, like oil. The sky we see is blue because it mirrors the calm blue ocean below it; but on that Day the ocean has become fire, and the sky peels back to a burning red reflecting the chaos beneath. He ties the two together: the sky peels because of what is rising toward it.

And what is rising is al-jahim, su'irat, set blazing. Jahim, the Sheikh explains, is named for the glare of a starving lion fixed on its prey, an eye full of menace and ready to lunge, because the Fire stares down the deniers the same way. The verb su'irat is the one for a flame built higher and higher into a towering blaze, and that, he says, is why the sky above it is peeling, scorched

by a fire that has climbed that high. Here too Abasa is answered: the thick black smoke that covered the wretched faces there is the smoke of this very Fire, now standing in front of them.

Then, mercy against terror, al-jannah uzlifat, Paradise brought near. The Sheikh notes the passive verb proves the Garden already exists, simply drawn close on that Day, and that its name jannah shares a root with everything hidden, the unborn child in the womb, the madman hidden from his own reason, because it lies hidden from us now and because its gardens are so lush you vanish among the trees. He lingers on why the word is uzlifat and not just qurribat, both meaning brought near. Zulfa, he says, carries nearness that is also honor and high rank; it is the same nearness Allah promised the righteous. So the Garden is not merely moved closer, it is brought near as a gift of honor to the believers, and this, he says, is the good news that made the other face in Abasa laugh out loud.

And then the answer to every when this surah has stacked up. All of it, the Sheikh reminds you, has been one long conditional, when the sun, when the stars, when the mountains, when the seas, when the souls, the sentence held open and waiting. Here at last is the result: alimat nafsun ma ahdarat, then a soul will know what it has brought. Like a student who walks into an exam never having studied and already knows the result before it is read, every person will know precisely what they sent ahead, the witness now no one but themselves. It answers Abasa once more, where each person had an affair to preoccupy them; here is the affair, your own deeds set before you. The whole cosmos was folded and burned and brought near for this single, quiet, total reckoning.

No: I swear by the stars that hide and run and vanish

فَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِالْخُنُوسِ

So I swear by the retreating stars -

AT-TAKWIR 81:15

الْجَوَارِ الْكُنُوسِ

Those that run [their courses] and disappear [i.e., set]

81:16

وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا عَسَسَ

And by the night as it closes in

81:17

وَالصُّبْحِ إِذَا تَنَفَّسَ

And by the dawn when it breathes [i.e., stirs]

81:18

Now the second half begins, and the Sheikh first sits you down inside the mind of the pagan Arab. They were a superstitious people, reading omens into a daughter being born, into the sun and moon and rain, and above all into the stars. They believed the twinkling stars were trying to tell them something and a shooting star was a sign, and a whole industry of fortune-tellers and palm-readers ran on it, claiming their devils climbed to the heavens and stole the news of the unseen, then sold it back to frightened people for a fee. This is no relic, the Sheikh says: astrology and fortune-telling are a living industry today, even among Muslims, and it is all shirk, because it claims that something other than Allah knows the unseen.

So Allah takes an oath by the very stars they trusted, and turns them against the lie. He swears by al-khunnas, al-jawar al-kunnas: the stars that hide and slip away, that run their courses and then duck into hiding like a deer bolting into its den. The Sheikh hears in it the off-and-on twinkle and the shooting star that flares for a moment and is gone. And there is an irony built in: you, denier, will not believe a day is coming when the lights go out and the stars drop, yet every shooting star you see is itself a sign, a small rehearsal of that very collapse, sent to remind you the Day is true. He swears too by the night as it closes in (a word that means both as it comes and as it goes) and by the dawn when it breathes, the day choking the night and then drawing its first breath of light. At dusk and at dawn, the Sheikh notes, the vision goes blurry and the stars cannot even be seen: so the source of guidance you cling to is something you cannot reliably so much as look at. The blurry life of the fortune-teller against the clean, clear life of one who follows the true revelation.

It is the word brought by a noble messenger

إِنَّهُ لَقَوْلُ رَسُولٍ كَرِيمٍ

[That] indeed, it [i.e., the Qur'an] is a word [conveyed by] a noble messenger [i.e., Gabriel]

AT-TAKWIR 81:19

ذِي قُوَّةٍ عِنْدَ ذِي الْعَرْشِ مَكِينٍ

[Who is] possessed of power and with the Owner of the Throne, secure [in position],

81:20

مُطَاعٍ ثُمَّ آمِينَ

Obeded there [in the heavens] and trustworthy.

81:21

Here is the subject of the whole oath: this Qur'an is the word brought by a noble messenger, meaning the angel Jibril. The Sheikh points out that Allah says qawl, a word that is quoted and carried, not a word that is invented, so the very grammar tells you Jibril does not make this up: he takes it from Allah and delivers it letter for letter, faithfully. And against the deniers who said the Prophet ﷺ gets his words from a devil just as the fortune-tellers do, Allah lists the qualities of the one who actually brings the revelation, and every quality is an answer.

He is karim, noble: honest, truthful, beautiful, the opposite of the wicked, ugly devil. He is dhi quwwah, possessed of power: the Sheikh recalls Jibril's six hundred wings, one of which lifted the towns of the people of Lut to the sky, so no devil could ever overpower him and steal what he carries. He is makin, secure in position with the Owner of the Throne, given a permanent, honored place right at the highest reach of creation. He is muta', obeyed there, a commander whose army of angels follows him out of love, not tyranny. And then, the Sheikh says, comes the most important quality of all, saved for last after thamma, after all the rest: amin, trustworthy. You can have nobility and power and rank and a vast following and still be a deceiver, so the crowning quality is that this messenger is utterly trustworthy, unlike the lying source the deniers run to. So the revelation is defended at every link in the chain: the message, the angel who carries it, and the way it comes down, all of it sound.

Your companion is not mad: he saw him on the clear horizon

وَمَا صَاحِبِكُمْ بِمَجْنُونٍ

And your companion [i.e., Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ)] is not [at all] mad.

AT-TAKWIR 81:22

وَلَقَدْ رَآهُ بِالأُفُقِ المُبِينِ

And he has already seen him [i.e., Gabriel] in the clear horizon.

81:23

وَمَا هُوَ عَلَى الغَيْبِ بِضَنِينٍ

And he [i.e., Muhammad (ﷺ)] is not a withholder of [knowledge of] the unseen.

81:24

وَمَا هُوَ بِقَوْلِ شَيْطَانٍ رَجِيمٍ

And it [i.e., the Qur'an] is not the word of a devil, expelled [from the heavens].

81:25

Now Allah defends the Prophet ﷺ himself, and the Sheikh wants you to feel the weight of one word: sahibukum, your companion. Not the Messenger, not the Prophet, but your companion, the man you have lived beside for years, in and out of his house, the one you yourselves named the trustworthy and the honest before all this. You, of all people, are accusing him of being mad? He is not mad, Allah says. The truly mad ones, the Sheikh notes, are the people you run to for guidance, the fortune-tellers.

And far from imagining things, the Prophet ﷺ actually saw the source: he saw Jibril in the clear horizon, where the sky meets the land, with his own eyes, in his true and enormous form, unlike the fortune-tellers who never even see the devils they claim to quote. He is not bakhil with the unseen either, not stingy: he does not lock the knowledge away or sell it. The Sheikh contrasts this with the fortune-teller who hoards his secrets and charges for his rubbish, while the Prophet ﷺ hands you the news of the Day of Judgement, of what comes after death, of

the end of time, freely and at no cost. And finally Allah seals it: this is not the word of an accursed devil. The fortune-teller's source is a cursed, pelted devil; the Prophet's source is the noble, trustworthy Jibril. Every accusation they threw is turned back on the very thing they trusted instead.

So where are you going: a reminder for whoever wants to stand straight

فَإِنَّ تَذٰهَبُوْنَ

So where are you going?

AT-TAKWIR 81:26

إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِّلْعٰلَمِيْنَ

It is not except a reminder to the worlds

81:27

لِمَن شَاءَ مِنْكُمْ أَنْ يَسْتَقِيْمَ

For whoever wills among you to take a right course.

81:28

وَمَا تَشَآءُوْنَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَآءَ اللّٰهُ رَبُّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ

And you do not will except that Allah wills - Lord of the worlds.

81:29

Once their false source is exposed and the true one is laid bare, Allah asks the question the whole surah has been building toward: so where are you going? The Sheikh frames it sharply. You have the way of corrupt, misleading knowledge, the palm-readers and their stolen lies, and you have the way of Allah, the most secure and preserved knowledge there is, brought by an angel whose every quality guards it. With one road this clearly true and the other this clearly false, where do you think you are headed? It echoes the surah before, where it was the deniers who kept asking the questions; now Allah turns and puts the ultimate question to them.

Then He names what this Qur'an actually is: nothing but a reminder, dhikr, for all the worlds, for jinn and humans alike, not for one tribe or one people. A reminder, the Sheikh explains, of the very first covenant, when Allah brought every soul out and asked, Am I not your Lord, and we all answered, Yes, we bear witness. You cannot recall that moment, so out of mercy He sent this Qur'an to remind you of it, and every single ayah is quietly calling you back to it. And it benefits a particular person: liman sha'a minkum an yastaqim, whoever among you wills to stand straight. The Sheikh hears salah in the very word, the standing upright of prayer, and istiqamah built on the root for connection, so the reminder is for the one who genuinely wills to stand and connect with his Lord.

But the surah will not let you walk away thinking it rests on your will alone. The final ayah pulls the rope taut: and you do not will except that Allah wills, the Lord of the worlds. The Sheikh draws out the balance the whole Qur'an keeps, between Allah's decree and your effort. Notice, he says, that your willing is mentioned first: you make the firm, concrete intention and take the first real step, and then Allah makes the road easy and wills it through. Lean only on your own effort and you fall; sit back and do nothing, claiming you are waiting for guidance, and you fall too. And he leaves you with a careful warning he draws from the story of Adam and Iblis: the decree of Allah may be used to bear a calamity that strikes you, never as an excuse for a sin you choose. Adam erred, owned it, and repented, and was forgiven; Iblis disobeyed, argued, and blamed his Maker, and was cursed.

What this surah asks of you

- **Read it to see the Day with your own eyes.** The Prophet ﷺ said that whoever wants to look at the Day of Judgement should read this surah. Every image, the sun folded, the stars dropping, the mountains drifting, is built to be seen, not just heard. Let it play in front of you until it changes how you live before it.
- **When the terror comes, your fortune means nothing.** The most precious thing the Arab owned, the pregnant she-camel, is simply abandoned on that Day. Like a man fleeing a fire, no one counts his savings while the sky is folding. So measure now what you are really storing up, because only one kind of wealth will matter then.
- **The shooting star is a reminder, not a horoscope.** The deniers read the stars for secret news. Allah swears by those same stars to tell them the opposite: every star that flares and falls is a small rehearsal of the Day the lights go out. The signs they misread were arguing for the very Day they denied.

- **Trust the source the revelation came through.** Jibril is noble, powerful, secure, obeyed, and above all trustworthy, and the Prophet ﷺ is your own companion, not a madman, who saw him and hid nothing and charged nothing. So weigh who you take your guidance from: a trustworthy angel and an honest messenger, or a lying source that sells you rubbish.
- **Will it first, then lean on Allah.** The reminder is for whoever wills to stand straight, and yet you will nothing unless Allah wills. The Sheikh hears the order in it: make the firm intention and take the real step, then ask Allah to carry it through. Use the decree to bear what strikes you, never to excuse what you choose.

Why this surah stays with us

At-Takwir spends its first half taking the world apart in front of you, the sun, the stars, the mountains, the seas, the books, the sky, until every soul knows what it brought. Then it turns and spends its second half defending the one thing the deniers laughed at, the revelation in their hands, swearing by the very stars they trusted that this is the word of a noble messenger, not the whisper of a devil. And after switching off the sun and dropping the stars, it asks one quiet, devastating question: so where are you going?

O Allah, make us people of the Qur'an, who hear its reminder and are moved by it. When You fold up the sun and drop the stars, let our faces be among the ones lit with joy, not the ones covered in dust. Remind us of the covenant we made with You, give us the will to stand straight, and then, by Your will alone, carry us through to You while the standing still counts.

Retold faithfully from Sheikh Abu Bakr Zoud's tafsir of Juz Amma. Qur'an: Sahih International, verified via quran.ai. The reflection is the Sheikh's, the phrasing is The Daily Wird's.

Al-Infitar

The surah that splits the sky open above your head, then turns and asks you, to your face, what could possibly have fooled you about your generous Lord

Surat At-Takweer ended by turning to you and asking where you think you are going. Al-Infitar answers it without softening a thing: you are headed for a Day when the sky over your head tears open. The Sheikh shows you that this is no repeat of the surah before it, it is the next stage of the same collapse, the universe coming apart one seam at a time. And then, once the cosmos is in pieces, Allah does something almost unbearable. He stops describing the heavens and turns to face you, one human being, and asks, gently and with pain in the words, what on earth deceived you about a Lord this generous?

Where are you headed: the seam from the surah before

إِذَا السَّمَاءُ انْفَطَرَتْ

When the sky breaks apart

AL-INFITAR 82:1

Sheikh Abu Bakr opens the way he always does, by tying this surah to the one before it. At-Takweer left off on a question Allah aimed straight at the deniers: after all that warning, where are you going? Al-Infitar begins by answering it. You are headed toward a Day when the sky splits open, which is to say you are headed toward the Day of Judgement, whether you believe it or not. So stand upright now, the Sheikh says, while standing still counts.

And notice the word for the splitting, infatarat, the root of the surah's own name. The Sheikh draws your eye up to the sky tonight: look at it, that flawless blue dome, and try to find a single crack or seam in it. You will not. Allah invites you to look again, and a third time, and a fourth, and you will only ever find it whole, a perfect ceiling with no flaw. Then He tells you the day is coming when that very dome, stretched the long way across the horizon like a sheet of cloth, will be torn straight through. The verb He uses carries suddenness too, the Sheikh notes, all of

it at once, the way a door you open reveals someone already standing right in front of you. When it comes, it comes without warning.

Here is the key the Sheikh hands you for the whole surah: this is not the same event as the surah before. At-Takweer was dominated by darkness and flame, the sun wrapped up and snuffed out, the stars losing their light. That was the first stage. Al-Infitar takes up a different theme entirely, the theme of motion, of tearing, scattering, erupting, things ripped loose from where they were fixed. So this is the second stage of the same unmaking, the next thing that happens after the lights go out.

Four things torn loose

وَإِذَا الْكَوَاكِبُ انْتَثَرَتْ

And when the stars fall, scattering,

AL-INFITAR 82:2

وَإِذَا الْبِحَارُ جُرَّتْ

And when the seas are erupted

82:3

وَإِذَا الْقُبُورُ بُعِثَتْ

And when the [contents of] graves are scattered [i.e., exposed],

82:4

Picture the sky as an enormous tent pitched over your head, the Sheikh says, with thousands of lamps fixed into its roof. Now the tent is ripped away. What happens to all those lights? They drop and scatter. That is the second ayah: the kawakib come loose and disperse. He pauses on the word. At-Takweer spoke of the nujum, a word for stars that shine and twinkle, fitting in a surah about light going dark. Here Allah uses kawakib, the great fixed stars and planets, the ones the desert traveller steered his whole journey by because they never moved. The last thing you would ever expect from a thing that fixed is that it falls from its place. So this is the word the surah of motion reaches for: even the unmovable comes unmoored.

Then the seas, fujjirat, made to erupt. At-Takweer had said the oceans would be set boiling, bubbling up from within. This is the next stage: the boiling water bursts out of its bed entirely and floods the land, the way a tsunami carries the sea kilometres inland where no sea belongs. The word is built from the same root as fajir, the Sheikh notes, the sinner who bursts past every limit. The oceans burst past theirs.

And then the graves, bu'thirat. The Sheikh explains the verb means to dig down into something, turn it upside down, and pull out what was buried inside, the way you would empty a bag onto the floor searching for a lost key. On that Day the graves are turned over and you are pulled out alive, brought to stand before Allah for the judgement. He even shows you the careful word-choice: of the several words Arabic has for a grave, the surah picks qubur, the kind dug by breaking open the earth, because the whole theme here is ripping and tearing. Every word in the passage is pulling in the same direction.

The soul reads its own record

عَلِمَتْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ وَأَخَّرَتْ

A soul will [then] know what it has put forth and kept back.

AL-INFITAR 82:5

After the four ruptures comes the result of them: on that Day every soul will know exactly what it sent forward and what it left behind. The Sheikh draws out the verb qaddamat, what you sent ahead, with a picture we all now recognise. It is like pressing forward on a message: once it is gone, it is gone, out of your hands, beyond recall. Every good word and bad word, every good deed and bad deed, you have already forwarded it ahead of you to that Day. There is no pulling it back.

And what you left behind, akhkharat, the Sheikh reads two ways, both of them piercing. There are the chances you let pass: the prayer in the masjid you could have prayed, the charity you could have given when the appeal went out, the fast you could have kept. On that Day you will remember every single one and wish you had taken it. And there are the traces you leave running after you are gone: the well you helped dig that still gives water, the masjid you helped build, the good that keeps counting for you years after your death, or, the other way, the harm you set in motion that keeps harming once you are in the ground. The Sheikh is blunt about it. Whatever you build, good or ruinous, keeps arriving on your account long after you have stopped adding to it. So weigh now what you are sending ahead.

What deceived you about your generous Lord?

يَا أَيُّهَا الْإِنْسَانُ مَا غَرَّبَكَ بِرَبِّكَ الْكَرِيمِ

O mankind, what has deceived you concerning your Lord, the Generous,

AL-INFITAR 82:6

الَّذِي خَلَقَكَ فَسَوَّاكَ فَعَدَلَكَ

Who created you, proportioned you, and balanced you?

82:7

فِي أَيِّ صُورَةٍ مَّا شَاءَ رَبُّكَ

In whatever form He willed has He assembled you.

82:8

Now the surface of the surah cracks open the way the sky did, and Allah turns from the cosmos to face one person. Ya ayyuhal insan. He does not say O mankind in a crowd, the Sheikh stresses, He addresses the human being one at a time, each of you singled out. And the address itself is heavy with feeling: it is the tone you use for someone you ache for, who has wandered badly off the road and does not even know he is lost. The word He chooses for you, insan, the Sheikh ties to forgetting, nisyan: every other creation keeps its duty to Allah without fail, the sun, the stars, the seas; only the human forgets. It is tied too to ulfah, affection, the love you grow for things other than Allah until it crowds out why you were made at all.

Then the question lands: ma gharraka, what deceived you, what fooled you, about your Lord? The Sheikh notes the deceiver is Shaytan, the one who whispered to the deniers in the surah before that the Qur'an was the speech of a devil. When you stop being watchful, he slips in and cheats you. But feel the precise wording. Allah does not ask what fooled you about Allah; He asks what fooled you about your Lord, bi rabbik. The word Lord instantly summons the other half of the relationship: say teacher and you think student, say master and you think servant. He names Himself your Lord so that the moment you hear it your own role lights up: you are the slave, you had a duty, what happened to it?

And then He twists the question deeper still by adding al-kareem, the Generous. The Sheikh reaches for the student of a kind teacher. A harsh teacher you might disobey and brush off, but the one who was gentle and generous with you, when you fail his class he comes and asks why, and that question wounds far worse than any punishment. So Allah lists the generosity you took for granted: He created you out of nothing, then sawwaka, fashioned you in the finest proportion, then 'adalaka, balanced you, body and soul alike. The Sheikh draws the balance out: the fluid in your ear set just so that you can stand without spinning, your limbs paired and even, your desires measured against your worship, the way the Prophet ﷺ taught a third for food, a third for drink, a third for breath. And in whatever form He willed, He assembled you, layer on layer, cell fitted to cell, bone to bone, and you had no say in any of it. A Lord this generous, the Sheikh asks, and still something fooled you into turning from Him?

Two angels who never look away

كَلَّا بَلْ تُكذِّبُونَ بِالذِّينِ

No! But you deny the Recompense.

AL-INFITAR 82:9

وَأَنَّ عَلَيْكُمْ لِحَافِظِينَ

And indeed, [appointed] over you are keepers,

82:10

كَرَامًا كَاتِبِينَ

Noble and recording;

82:11

يَعْلَمُونَ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ

They know whatever you do.

82:12

After all that generosity, the Sheikh says, your own conscience should bring you to your knees in gratitude and worship. Instead, kalla, no. Far from it. What you actually do, says Allah, is deny the deen. The Sheikh unpacks the word deen as the Recompense, the day every account is settled and everyone is given back exactly what they earned, down to the last grain. To deny it is to call Allah's own truthful claim a lie. And He frames it as a standing habit, not a one-off, the kind of denial woven into how these people live.

Then comes the answer to that denial: but indeed, over you there are keepers. The Sheikh points out the shock built into the Arabic, the way Allah front-loads over you before naming who is over you, so the weight of being watched lands before you even learn by whom. These are hafizin, guardians, the word used for one who guards a thing so nothing inside it escapes. Nothing you do slips out unrecorded.

And He describes them with two words the Sheikh lingers on. Kiraman, noble: their very nobility is part of the job. An ordinary guard cuts corners, dozes, lets a friend slip through the gate; these angels never do, never tampering, never erasing, never holding a grudge that adds a sin you did not commit. Katibin, recording, and He keeps it as a verb, not a noun, because the writing never stops, pen never lifting, all the way until the Day. The Sheikh notes how every surah in this stretch of the juz has named a different kind of angel, and here it is the pair who sit on your right and your left and miss nothing. They know whatever you do, He says, ma taf'alun, a word that covers even what you do without meaning to, the glance you did not intend, the slip of the tongue. All of it is written, because they record the act and leave your intention to Allah, the best of all keepers, who alone knows what was truly in your heart.

The righteous in bliss, the wicked in the Fire

إِنَّ الْأَبْرَارَ لَفِي نَعِيمٍ

Indeed, the righteous will be in pleasure,

AL-INFITAR 82:13

وَأِنَّ الْفُجَّارَ لَفِي جَحِيمٍ

And indeed, the wicked will be in Hellfire.

82:14

يَصَلُّونَهَا يَوْمَ الدِّينِ

They will [enter to] burn therein on the Day of Recompense,

82:15

وَمَا هُمْ عَنْهَا بِغَائِبِينَ

And never therefrom will they be absent.

82:16

Everything recorded leads to one of two ends, and Allah names them. The righteous, al-abrar, will be in bliss. The Sheikh teases the word out: barr, like the land that stays solid and steady, as against the restless ocean, so the abrar are the ones firm and upright in their faith, unmoved. And notice, he says, that Allah uses a phrase of permanence: they are already in bliss. The believer tastes it now, with the Qur'an and the remembrance of Allah settling his heart into rest; then again in the grave, with a window opened to the Garden; then on the Day; then finally in the Garden itself. One unbroken state of ease, begun here.

Against them, al-fujjar, the wicked, will be in Jaheem, a blazing Fire. The Sheikh draws the same line forward: the fajir is the one whose life burst past every limit, restless as a ship pitching left and right, and he too is already in his torment. Behind all the lights and the laughter, the empty heart is its own kind of fire, which is why a man the world envies can quietly fall apart and end his own life. When faith fills that gap it sets like concrete; without it the hole stays open. So the fujjar are already in Jaheem in this life, then in the grave a window is opened to their place in the Fire, then on the Day of Recompense they enter and burn in it fully.

And then the line that seals the door: never will they be absent from it. The Sheikh notes Allah uses the strongest form of negation Arabic has, ma paired with bi, to slam it shut: not for a moment, not ever, will they be away from that Fire. Remember the word used for it, he says, was tied to a hungry lion's stare. So the Fire stares at them and they cannot look away. The smallest mercy in this world is that you can shut your eyes against a horror; there, even that is taken. It stares, and they remain.

The Day no soul can save another

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا يَوْمَ الدِّينِ

And what can make you know what is the Day of Recompense?

AL-INFITAR 82:17

ثُمَّ مَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا يَوْمَ الدِّينِ

Then, what can make you know what is the Day of Recompense?

82:18

يَوْمَ لَا تَمْلِكُ نَفْسٌ لِنَفْسٍ شَيْئًا وَالْأَمْرُ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلَّهِ

It is the Day when a soul will not possess for another soul [power to do] a thing; and the command, that Day, is [entirely] with Allāh.

82:19

Now the surah closes by asking the same question twice over: what could ever make you grasp what the Day of Recompense is? The Sheikh explains the repetition the way we all feel it in our own speech. When you say a thing twice in warning, didn't I tell you, didn't I tell you, the second time lands harder and angrier than the first. So the doubling here carries Allah's displeasure, and a deeper meaning: do you really, truly have any clue what this Day is? And the Sheikh points to a pattern across the Qur'an: wherever Allah asks what could make you know, He then hands you a clue, and a clue is exactly what comes next. The two ayat before this said the records would be released and exposed; that alone should have shaken you awake.

Then the clue, and it is the whole surah gathered into one sentence: it is the Day when no soul possesses anything for another soul. The Sheikh makes you feel how total this is. You spend this life running from your own family in terror, but suppose you somehow gather yourself and want to turn back and help your mother, your wife, your child. You cannot. You do not own the authority to lift a finger for anyone. Even the Prophet ﷺ said to his own daughter, the one he loved most, that on that Day he held no power for her case before Allah and she must work for herself, until Allah grants him permission to intercede. Before that permission, in the thick of the chaos, no one can do a thing for anyone.

And the surah ends on its mightiest note: the command, that Day, belongs entirely to Allah. The Sheikh asks why Allah adds that Day, when He could simply have said the command belongs to Allah, and the answer is the gift hidden in the whole surah. On that Day the decision is His alone. But today, right now, you still hold a decision in your hands. You can still choose to stand in prayer, to be grateful with your limbs and not only your tongue, to send something good forward before the forwarding ends. That, the Sheikh says, is the mercy of putting that Day on it: it tells you the door is open while you read this, and warns you of the moment it will not be.

What this surah asks of you

- **You have already forwarded your record.** Every word and deed, good or bad, is sent ahead of you, beyond recall, the moment you do it. So the only question left in your hands is what you forward next, while you still can.
- **A generous Lord makes ingratitude harder to explain.** He created you, proportioned you, balanced you, and assembled you in a form you never chose. When the One who gave you everything asks what fooled you, the question is meant to leave you with no answer but to return.
- **Two noble pens never stop writing.** Guardians sit on your right and left who do not doze, do not tamper, and record even what you do without meaning to. Nothing slips out unwritten, so live as the watched person you actually are.
- **On that Day no one can help you, so move today.** No soul will own the power to do a thing for another, not even the Prophet ﷺ for his own daughter until he is given leave. The command that Day is Allah's alone, but the decision today is still yours.

Why this surah stays with us

Al-Infitar tears the sky open, scatters the stars, bursts the seas, and overturns the graves, and then, with the whole universe in pieces, it does the most intimate thing in the Qur'an: it turns and speaks to you alone, by name, and asks what could possibly have deceived you about a Lord so generous He fashioned and balanced you out of nothing. It sets two recording angels at your shoulders, sorts all of creation into bliss or Fire, and leaves you standing on a Day when no one, not even the one who loved you most, can lift a finger for you. And tucked inside that terror is its mercy: the command is Allah's that Day, but the decision is still yours today.

O Allah, make us people of the Qur'an, who hear its reminders and are moved by them. Do not let the cover of Your generosity fool us into forgetting You. Make our records ones we will be

glad to read, set us among the righteous who are already in Your bliss, and let us use the decision we still hold today to turn our feet toward You, before the Day comes when the command is Yours alone.

Retold faithfully from Sheikh Abu Bakr Zoud's tafsir of Juz Amma. Qur'an: Sahih International, verified via quran.ai. The reflection is the Sheikh's, the phrasing is The Daily Wird's.

Al-Mutaffifin

The surah that begins with woe over a few stolen grams, and ends with two records, one sunk in the lowest pit and one raised to the highest heaven

Most of us picture a thief as someone who breaks a window or robs a bank. Al-Mutaffifin opens its case against a quieter kind of criminal: the one who keeps a kilo just under a kilo, who clocks out two minutes early, who short-changes you by an amount so small you would be embarrassed to come back and complain. Allah opens this surah with woe, and Sheikh Abu Bakr shows you why a handful of stolen grams is enough to summon it, and how the whole argument hangs on one question the cheat never stopped to ask: do I really believe I will be raised?

Woe to the ones who shave the measure

وَيْلٌ لِّلْمُتَفَفِّينَ

Woe to those who give less [than due],

AL-MUTAFFIFIN 83:1

The Sheikh first slows you down on the very first word, because the whole surah turns on it. *Wayl* carries two weights at once. It is a curse, the kind of word an offended person once hurled and meant, may ruin and harm fall on you. And it is a description of a state: a person so finished, so utterly destroyed, that there is no hope left in him. Then notice, the Sheikh says, that Allah does not say *al-wayl* with the definite article, the way Arabic normally opens a sentence. He begins indefinite and doubles the consonant, and in Arabic that intensifies the word. So this is not ordinary woe. This is the ultimate, the most horrible destruction, and it is aimed at a very specific criminal.

And who is that criminal? A *mutaffif*, the Sheikh explains, is someone who deals in tiny, unnoticed imbalances. Not the robber, not the one who steals huge sums, but the one who tilts every transaction a fraction in his own favour. You owe a customer a kilo of rice and you hand him 995 grams. You owe an employer four hours and you give three hours fifty-eight. Five grams, two minutes, nothing anyone will chase you for, because who comes back to argue

over five grams? It would be too embarrassing. That, exactly that, is the person Allah opens this surah by cursing.

Full when they take, short when they give

الَّذِينَ إِذَا انكَلُوا عَلَى النَّاسِ يَسْتَوْفُونَ

Who, when they take a measure from people, take in full.

83:2

وَإِذَا كَالُوهُمْ أَوْ وَزَنُوهُمْ يُخْسِرُونَ

But if they give by measure or by weight to them, they cause loss.

83:3

These two ayat, the Sheikh notes, do not just name the crime, they film the attitude. Watch the cheat when he is the customer. The word for his taking is not the plain one you would expect; Allah phrases it so it reads, when they take measure *against* people. It carries the sense of a bully. He stands over the scale, eyes on the needle, and demands more: put more, you underweighed me, add to it. He does not wait to be given a little extra as a kindness, he leans in and takes it. When he receives, he wants every last grain that is his and then some.

Then watch the same man when he is the seller. Allah uses a verb here, not a noun, and the Sheikh draws the lesson out: a noun would say this is simply who he is, always; the verb says this is what he keeps trying to do. He is not always successful, but the appetite is constant, I want him to walk away losing, even by one percent. And there is a chilling detail in the grammar. Allah says they weigh *them*, the people, not they weigh *for* them. The cheat does not weigh the goods, he weighs the buyer: sizes up your skin, your clothes, where you live, and prices you accordingly. A kilo of tomatoes in the rich suburb is not the same price as in the poor one. He does not care about the product, the Sheikh says, he cares about who you are, and how much he can shave off you.

What cheating does to a whole country

Before he moves on, the Sheikh stops to share a hadith that should frighten anyone who treats a little cheating as harmless. The Prophet ﷺ warned that no people ever cheat in weights and

measures, even in the small, unnoticed things, except that Allah seizes them with two punishments: the crops stop yielding, you plant the seed and nothing comes, or the plant comes up bare, and drought spreads across the land. We call it a natural disaster. The Sheikh's point is that there is nothing merely natural about it; it is a consequence. A few stolen grams in one shop, and the rain is held back from a whole nation.

So this is not a private little habit with private little stakes. The Sheikh keeps the verdict the surah opened with: tampering with the scale, however small the amount, pulls down ruin, on the cheat and on the society that lets it spread.

The question underneath every shaved gram

أَلَا يَظُنُّ أُولَئِكَ أَنَّهُمْ مَبْعُوثُونَ

Do they not think that they will be resurrected

83:4

لِيَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ

For a tremendous Day -

83:5

يَوْمَ يَقُومُ النَّاسُ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

The Day when mankind will stand before the Lord of the worlds?

83:6

Now Allah asks the question that exposes the root of the whole disease, and the Sheikh lingers on one small word in it. Allah does not say, do *these* people not think; He says do *those* people, the far pointer, the word you use for someone at a distance from you. Allah is distancing Himself from them. He will not even point near them. This, He is saying, has nothing to do with My religion; these people are far from it.

And the question itself, do they not think they will be raised, answers where the cheating comes from. The first time a person shaves the measure, the Sheikh says, his conscience is uncomfortable. The second time, less so. The more he does it and gets away with it, the more

a quiet conviction settles in: I have beaten the law, no one caught me in all these years, no one is going to hold me to account. He does not feel guilty, because deep down he is not convinced anyone is keeping score. That is the link. A man certain that he will stand before the Lord of the worlds does not steal five grams. The cheating grows precisely in the soil of a doubted resurrection.

And see how Allah seals the warning. The Day is *azeem*, tremendous, and it is the Day mankind stands before *the Lord of the worlds*. The Sheikh underlines who is on trial there: both the seller and the buyer, both standing before Allah, both judged on the same scale. Whatever you shaved off another person here, unnoticed, you will repay there, the Sheikh says, in the only currency left, your own good deeds handed over, until they run out and his bad deeds are loaded onto you.

The record of the wicked, sunk in sijjin

كَلَّا إِنَّ كِتَابَ الْفُجَّارِ لَفِي سِجِّينٍ

No! Indeed, the record of the wicked is in sijjin.

AL-MUTAFFIFIN 83:7

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا سِجِّينٌ

And what can make you know what is sijjin?

83:8

كِتَابٌ مَرْقُومٌ

It is [their destination recorded in] a register inscribed.

83:9

Allah opens the passage with *kalla*, and the Sheikh pauses on it the way he paused on the first word of the surah, because how you recite it decides what it means. Stop on it, and *kalla* is a flat no, a negation; carry straight on into the next line, and it tips toward certainly, no doubt about it. Read as the no, the Sheikh says, it is aimed squarely at the attitude sitting inside the cheat: the quiet assumption that there is no Day, no judgement, no account to answer. No,

Allah is saying, that assumption is false. Feel as safe as you like, shave as much as you like, the Day is still coming.

Then, the Sheikh says, to feel the weight of *the record of the wicked is in sijjin*, you have to read it against the surah just before this one. From the start of the juz, lecture after lecture, the angels have kept appearing, and in Al-Infitar in particular Allah named the noble keepers standing over you, writing, and part of their nobility is that they never cheat in what they write, they record everything you do, intended or not. So that surah settled the documenting: every single thing, good and bad, action and word, written down by trustworthy hands. What Al-Infitar did not say, the Sheikh points out, is where all that writing is then kept. This surah answers it. It is the storage, the archive, the backup. Picture running a school, he says: you enrol the students, type up every name and address and fee, and you use reliable people so the records are clean, but if you never save the file, never back it up, the whole thing is one crash away from gone. He had read that morning that around sixty percent of companies fold when they lose their data. Reliable angels writing your deeds would be worth nothing if the record were then lost; the use of it is that it is saved, sealed, and produced as evidence against the criminal on the Day. That is what sijjin is.

And who is this record being kept on? The *fujjar*, and the Sheikh traces the word to *fajara*, to burst or explode. We say *fajr* for dawn because the light bursts through the dark; a *fajir* is someone who explodes in sin, who tears clean through the sacred limits of Allah without a flicker of fear of Him or of His punishment, doing every kind of harm because the mentality underneath is, what are you going to do about it, who is going to hold me to account. Tell such a man do whatever you want, the Sheikh says, but know that every last thing you commit has been recorded, and now it has become a *kitab*, a book. And where is that book? *La fi sijjin*. The word comes from *sijn*, a prison, and the extra letter stretched through the middle intensifies it: not a prison you have seen, but a terrible, horrible prison the likes of which you have never seen. The scholars place it, on a narration, in the lowest of the earth, the seventh earth, where in the hadith of the evil soul the gates of heaven will not open for it even a crack, and the command comes to write its book down in the lowest earth, in sijjin.

Then Allah lifts the question over it, *and what can make you know what is sijjin*, and the Sheikh hears it as a deliberate scare. Allah had already warned them of the Day of Recompense and it did not move them; so now He changes His method and frightens them with the prison itself, the way a criminal who shrugs at the existence of courts and laws might still go pale when you show him the cell and the torture waiting in it. Have you any clue what this place is, where your record is kept? Then the answer comes back, *a register inscribed, marqum*. The Sheikh draws out the word: writing pressed in thick and clean and permanent, the way a team's badge is

stitched into the jersey rather than ironed on, so that you can put it through the wash again and again and it will not lift. The record is written so exactly, by hands that never cheat, that it can never be forgotten and never be erased.

Legends of the old peoples, and the stain that blackens a heart

وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُكَذِّبِينَ

Woe, that Day, to the deniers,

AL-MUTAFFIFIN 83:10

الَّذِينَ يُكَذِّبُونَ يَوْمَ الدِّينِ

Who deny the Day of Recompense.

83:11

وَمَا يُكَذِّبُ بِهِ إِلَّا كُلُّ مُعْتَدٍ أَثِيمٍ

And none deny it except every sinful transgressor.

83:12

إِذَا تَتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِ آيَاتُنَا قَالَ أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ

When Our verses are recited to him, he says, "Legends of the former peoples."

83:13

كَلَّا بَلْ رَانَ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِم مَّا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ

No! Rather, the stain has covered their hearts of that which they were earning.

83:14

Now the woe returns, and the Sheikh notices how Allah holds it open. *Woe, that Day, to the deniers*, and the sentence stops there, unfinished. Deniers of what? You are left hanging, and the suspense is deliberate, the way Allah grabs the listener so he leans in to find out. This

whole stretch, the Sheikh observes, turns on one root, the root of denial and lying, and it lands three ayat in a row, because this is the very thing the surah has been digging toward: under the cheating in the marketplace sits a denial. Then the next line closes the sentence, *who deny the Day of Recompense, yawm ad-din*, the Day every soul is given exactly what it is owed. They do not like the idea of standing before Allah and being judged for every gram, so they push the whole Day away. And see how often it has been hammered since the start of the juz, the Sheikh says, Day of Recompense, Day of Judgement, again and again, because what is repeated most is what is denied most and lost most, the way the word for supplication recurs hundreds of times precisely because it is what people keep abandoning.

Then Allah names exactly who does this, and the Sheikh slows on the two words. *None deny it except every transgressor, mu'tad*, from a root meaning to violate other people's rights, to cross the line, to wrong someone, in business or in blood; the first time is hard, the Sheikh says, but the second and third and fourth come easy, until the man is proud of it and teaches others how. And *athim*, a sinner, from *ithm*, which is not just doing wrong but an attitude in the heart that holds you back from doing right, that feels uncomfortable around good. So you have the two halves of the worst kind of person, the Sheikh explains: one hand busy with evil, the other hand kept off all good. Some people at least do bad and still do some good; this one does the bad and none of the good. That, Allah says, is who cannot take in the reality of the Day.

And what does this man do when the proof reaches him? *When Our verses are recited to him, he says, legends of the former peoples*. The Sheikh draws *tutla* from a root that carries both reciting and following, so the verses do not just sound at him once, they trail him, come back, follow him down the road. And his answer is *asatir al-awwalin*, from *satr*, lines drawn on a page; the old myths and fairy tales were written out in lines for children, and everyone knew the moment you called something that word that it had nothing to do with truth. So when the revelation keeps following him, talking of angels on his shoulders and nations drowned and life after death, he waves it off as fabricated bedtime stories, made up, nothing real in it.

Then Allah answers him, and the Sheikh halts on the *kalla* that opens it, because the small pause matters: stop here, and you give yourself room, because what is coming is enormous and deserves the stop. *No, rather the stain has covered their hearts of that which they were earning*. This is the root the surah has been reaching for all along, the Sheikh says, and it is a matter of the heart. *Rana* is a rust, a film of filth that creeps over the heart and seals it shut. He brings Hasan al-Basri on the word, that it is a sin upon a sin upon a sin until the heart is blackened, and the hadith in which the Prophet ﷺ describes a black spot stamped on the heart with every sin: repent, and it is scrubbed off and the heart shines again; refuse, and sin

again, and another spot, and another, until the whole heart goes black. And what was it they earned that blackened it? Read it back into the opening of the surah, the Sheikh says, and the answer is exact: not stolen sacks, not millions made, just a few dollars, a stolen minute on the lunch break, the five grams left out of a kilo of rice. That small, repeated, with never a repentance in between, is what rusts a heart all the way through. It ties straight back to the question the surah before asked, the Sheikh notes, *what deluded you concerning your Lord, the Most Generous*; here is the answer, a heart gone black under sin after sin, and once it is that black even the thought let me repent struggles to get in, the way a clean table wipes with plain water but oil layered on oil now needs scrubbing and solvent before it will ever come clean again.

Veiled from their Lord, then the burning

كَلَّا إِنَّهُمْ عَنْ رَبِّهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ لَمَحْجُوبُونَ

No! Indeed, from their Lord, that Day, they will be partitioned.

AL-MUTAFFIFIN 83:15

ثُمَّ إِنَّهُمْ لَصَالُوا الْجَحِيمِ

Then indeed, they will [enter and] burn in Hellfire.

83:16

ثُمَّ يُقَالُ هَذَا الَّذِي كُنْتُمْ بِهِ تَكْذِبُونَ

Then it will be said [to them], "This is what you used to deny."

83:17

Now the punishment lands in three blows, the Sheikh says, and he counts them, because not all of them are physical; the heaviest is to the soul. The first: *No, indeed, from their Lord, that Day, they will be veiled.* *Mahjub* is from *hijab*, a barrier set between two things, the way a covering hides the hair from sight. These people are walled off from seeing their Lord. And notice the order, the Sheikh says: Allah puts *from their Lord* first, before the veiling, and that wording implies their eyes are turned somewhere else. If they are blocked from Him and yet looking at something, what are they looking at? The surah before answered it, the Sheikh says,

the Hellfire, set in front of them so they cannot pull their gaze from it, a barrier sealing off their Lord while the Fire stares back at them and they stare back at it.

And the scholars, the Sheikh notes, read the reverse of this verse as a proof for the believers: if the enemies of Allah are veiled from Him as a punishment, then the believers, in full view of their Lord, are honoured with the opposite, that Allah unveils His glory to them until they see Him. He brings the hadith of the full moon, that you will see your Lord as plainly as you see the moon on a clear night, crowding nobody, jostling nobody; the way everyone sees the one moon from his own backyard without gathering in a single spot, so will the people of the Garden each see their Lord from where they are. So this single ayah, the Sheikh says, holds two faces at once: a punishment that makes the denier grieve, and a gift that makes the believer who reads it glad.

Then the second blow: *then indeed, they will burn in Hellfire*. And see, the Sheikh says, that being veiled was named before the burning, which tells you the worse of the two is the veil; to be shut out from the sight of Allah is heavier than the Fire itself. The word for the burning is *salu*, to burn inside the fire, not beside it; not someone caught by the heat of a blaze in the next room, but a body set down within the flames and burning in them. And he draws a fine comparison to the surah before, where Allah used the verb for burning, a lighter, weaker form, because that surah still speaks of this life, where there is yet a chance to repair; here Allah uses the heavier form, because this surah speaks of the Day itself, where the matter is finished and there is no chance left.

Then the third blow, and the Sheikh hears it in the grammar. *Then it will be said, this is what you used to deny*. Allah does not say I will say to them; He puts it in the passive, *it will be said*, so they are not even told who is speaking. That, the Sheikh explains, is the third punishment: they do not get to hear the voice of Allah. To be spoken to by Allah is an honour, the honour by which Musa is forever named the one Allah spoke to; these are denied even that, veiled from His sight and now shut out from His voice. And *this is what you used to deny* uses the near pointer, *hadha*, this, the thing right here, because they are already inside it, engulfed in the very Fire they spent their lives calling a fairy tale. The denial that opened this passage, the Sheikh says, is thrown back in their faces at the end of it: this, this that you are burning in, is the thing you used to deny.

The record of the righteous, raised to illiyyun

كَلَّا إِنَّ سِتْرَ الْأَبْرَارِ لَفِي عَلِيَيْنَ

No! Indeed, the record of the righteous is in 'illiyyūn.

83:18

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا عَلِيُونَ

And what can make you know what is 'illiyyūn?

83:19

كِتَابٌ مَرْقُومٌ

It is [their destination recorded in] a register inscribed

83:20

يَشْهَدُهُ الْمُقْرَبُونَ

Which is witnessed by those brought near [to Allāh].

83:21

Now the scene lifts, and the Sheikh lifts with it. The righteous are called *al-abrar*, and he draws the word back to *barr*, dry land, the opposite of the open sea. Stand on land and you stand on something solid and steady; flounder in the ocean and you are tossed up and down, exhausted, drowning. The righteous are named for the land because their faith is firm under their feet, not the shaky, sinking faith of the one adrift. And their record, instead of being sunk away, is raised to *illiyyun*, from a root meaning height, the very highest places of the Garden, just beneath the Throne.

Then comes the same arresting pause Allah used for the wicked: and what can make you know what illiyyun is? The Sheikh hears the shock in it, the way you would repeat the words back at a man just sentenced to twenty years, twenty years? You cannot take the thing in. And this register is *witnessed by those brought near*, the highest angels. The Sheikh paints it warmly. Think of a father whose child comes home top of the class, full marks; he frames the

certificate, hangs it on the wall, shows it off to everyone who visits. Your record of good deeds is that certificate, and it is Allah Himself who takes pride in it. He shows it to the angels: look at My servant, look at this fast on a scorching day, look at this prayer in the depth of the night, look at the tears he shed for My sake, look at every single footprint he took to the masjid, the footprint that fades from the ground in minutes but never fades with Me. That, the Sheikh says, is how the nearest angels come to witness it.

Faces lit, and a wine sealed with musk

إِنَّ الْأَبْرَارَ لَفِي نَعِيمٍ

Indeed, the righteous will be in pleasure

83:22

عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ يَنْظُرُونَ

On adorned couches, observing.

83:23

تَعْرِفُ فِي وُجُوهِهِمْ نَضْرَةَ النَّعِيمِ

You will recognize in their faces the radiance of pleasure.

83:24

يَسْقُونَ مِنْ رَحِيقٍ مَخْتُومٍ

They will be given to drink [pure] wine [which was] sealed.

83:25

خَتَامَهُ مِسْكِ وَفِي ذَلِكَ فَلْيَتَنَافَسِ الْمُتَنَافِسُونَ

The last of it is musk. So for this let the competitors compete.

83:26

The reward unfolds, and the Sheikh keeps pointing out how exact the comfort is. They recline on *araiq*, couches heaped with cushions, and they are *looking around*. Notice, he says, that in this world to enjoy a view you have to move, shift in your car seat, get up from your office chair, crane toward the window. These couches are built so that the moment you settle back, the whole Bliss is already in view, in front, behind, left and right; you are sitting inside the beauty, not beside it. And on their faces is *nadrah*, a freshness and a glow. The Sheikh compares it to the face of someone who saved their whole life to reach a sacred place and has finally arrived; that smile is not manufactured, it is just the joy of being there. Their faces brighten more and more as they gaze at what surrounds them, and above all of it, at their Lord.

Then they are served, the Sheikh stresses, served, not made to get up and pour for themselves, a *rahiq*, the purest wine, crystal-clear, beautiful in colour and scent, and with none of the drunkenness of the wine of this world. It is *makhtum*, sealed, full and closed off with a seal that is yours alone, never opened by anyone before you. And the seal itself, Allah says, is musk: before you even break it, a perfume rises from the cap you are about to throw away. The Sheikh sets these verses where they were first revealed, onto a believer being mocked and tortured in Makkah, and hears Allah encouraging him: let Me tell you what drinks I have stored for you. So when Allah closes the image with *for this let the competitors compete*, the companions, the Sheikh imagines, are nudging each other under the abuse, who reaches that couch first, who breaks that seal before whom, and their tormentor cannot understand why the man only smiles wider.

Tasnim, and the cup of the ones brought near

وَمَزَاجُهُ مِنْ تَسْنِيمٍ

And its mixture is of Tasneem,

83:27

عَيْنًا يَشْرَبُ بِهَا الْمُقْرَبُونَ

A spring from which those near [to Allāh] drink.

83:28

Then Allah lifts the imagination one degree further, and the Sheikh follows. That sealed wine is mixed with something poured in from above, *tasnim*. He traces the word to its root, the

sammum, the hump of the camel, the highest point on the animal; tasnim is a spring set up high in the Garden. So the righteous drink their cup, and into it is folded a measure from this lofty fountain, the way a little cordial is stirred into water.

But here is the second tier, the Sheikh says. The verse calls tasnim a spring from which *the muqarrabun*, the ones brought nearest to Allah, drink, and watch the wording: not that they drink *from* it, but that they drink *with* it, beside it. The righteous receive tasnim as the mixture in their cup; the nearest drink it pure, straight from the source, seated right at the spring. And they drink, the Sheikh notes, not out of thirst but for the sheer pleasure of it. He pauses on who these nearest ones are: the *sabiqun*, the foremost, those who heard the call and ran, who did not weigh it up the way you weigh a worldly affair but rushed toward every good the instant they heard of it. That race, run quietly under torture in Makkah, is what earned them the cup at the very head of the spring.

Who laughs last

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ أَجْرَمُوا كَانُوا مِنَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يَضْحَكُونَ

Indeed, those who committed crimes used to laugh at those who believed.

83:29

وَإِذَا مَرُّوا بِهِمْ يَتَغَامِرُونَ

And when they passed by them, they would exchange derisive glances.

83:30

وَإِذَا انْقَلَبُوا إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِمْ انْقَلَبُوا فَكِهِينَ

And when they returned to their people, they would return jesting.

83:31

وَإِذَا رَأَوْهُمْ قَالُوا إِنَّ هَؤُلَاءِ لَضَالُّونَ

And when they saw them, they would say, "Indeed, those are truly lost."

83:32

The surah turns one last time, back to the criminals, and the Sheikh maps their mockery beat by beat, because, he says, every move of it is still alive today. They *laughed* at the believers. When they passed them they *winked at one another*, traded the sidelong glance, the rolled eye, which the Sheikh notes we still rightly count as an insult. Then they went home and *returned jesting*, retelling the day's sport to their families: you should have seen the one with the beard, the looks on their faces when we mocked them. The word for their jesting, the Sheikh observes, is from a root for relishing fruit; they savoured the insult like something sweet on the tongue.

And when they looked at the believers praying five times, fasting a whole month, walking again and again to the masjid, they said, *those people are truly lost*, pitying them for the hardship they had loaded onto themselves over a thing the deniers were sure did not even exist. The Sheikh pauses on that word *hardship*, because the Qur'an elsewhere says man is created into toil, believer and disbeliever alike; from the womb to the grave, everyone is in struggle. The difference is only this: the believer's hardship is paid for. Even the small adjustment of a headscarf slipping and being fixed through the day, he notes, is written as a reward, not a burden. So the believer carries the same load and is recompensed for every ounce of it; the denier carries it and arrives with empty hands.

Not your keepers, and the great reversal

وَمَا أُرْسِلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ حَافِظِينَ

But they had not been sent as guardians over them.

83:33

فَالْيَوْمَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنَ الْكُفَّارِ يَضْحَكُونَ

So Today those who believed are laughing at the disbelievers,

83:34

عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ يَنْظُرُونَ

On adorned couches, observing.

83:35

هَلْ تُؤْتَىٰ الْكُفَّارُ مَا كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ

Have the disbelievers [not] been rewarded [this Day] for what they used to do?

83:36

These mockers, Allah says, were *not sent as guardians* over the believers, and the Sheikh reads it as a quiet rebuke turned back on them: who appointed you to watch over how these people pray and fast and follow their Messenger? It connects, he points out, straight to the surah before this one, where Allah said that over *you* are honourable keepers who record. The believers never needed the deniers watching them; real keepers, the noble angels, were already writing down everything, on both sides.

Then the reversal lands. *So Today those who believed are laughing at the disbelievers, on the couches, looking on.* The very people who were laughed at now recline in Bliss and watch the mockers in the Fire, and they do not even have to lean forward, the Sheikh says; the couch already gives them the view. And in their hearts they answer the old taunt: did you not laugh at us, did you not laugh at the Paradise and its rivers? Who is laughing now? The surah shuts on a question with the verdict folded inside it, *have the disbelievers been repaid for what they used to do*, and the Sheikh ties it back to the very first ayah: the woe that opened over a few shaved grams is the same reckoning that closes the surah. This, he says, is what tampering with the scale was really worth.

What this surah asks of you

- **The small cheat is still a cheat.** Five grams, two minutes, one percent: the surah opens its woe not over the bank robber but over the one who shaves a fraction no one will chase him for. If you would be furious to be short-changed, do not short-change. The scale you tilt here is reweighed before the Lord of the worlds.
- **Cheating grows where the resurrection is doubted.** Do they not think they will be raised? The habit of shaving the measure feeds on a quiet conviction that no one is keeping score. The cure is certainty: a heart sure it will stand before Allah does not steal a gram.
- **Take your full rights, give others theirs in full.** The Sheikh widens taffif beyond the shop, to your dealings with a spouse, an employer, even with Allah. We demand every right owed to us and hand back something short. Forgive what others owe you, and pay what you owe in full, and you step out from under the woe.

- **Your record is something Allah is proud to show.** The deeds of the righteous are raised to illiyyun and displayed to the nearest angels like a child's certificate framed on the wall. Every fast, every night prayer, every footstep to the masjid that fades from the ground is kept forever with Him.
- **The hardship of faith is the only hardship that gets paid.** Everyone is born into toil; the difference is the receipt. The believer carries the same load as the denier, down to a slipping scarf refastened through the day, and is rewarded for all of it, while the one who mocked arrives empty-handed.

Why this surah stays with us

Al-Mutaffifin begins in a marketplace, over an amount too small to argue about, and ends at two opened records, one cast down into sijjin and one lifted to illiyyun, just beneath the Throne. Between them runs a single thread the Sheikh keeps pointing to: the man who tilts the scale and the man who mocks the believer are both betting that no one is keeping score, and the surah spends its thirty-six ayat proving the score is kept exactly, to the last gram and the last sidelong glance.

O Allah, make us of the abrar whose feet are firm on the land of faith, and write our record in illiyyun. Make our scales true when no one is watching, our rights to others paid in full, and our hearts certain of the Day we stand before You. And on the Day the records are opened, let us be among those who recline and look on, not among those who are looked upon, by Your mercy, O Lord of the worlds.

Retold faithfully from Sheikh Abu Bakr Zoud's tafsir of Juz Amma (parts 1 to 4). Qur'an: Sahih International, verified via quran.ai. The reflection is the Sheikh's, the phrasing is The Daily Wird's.

Al-Inshiqaq

The surah where the sky tears open and obeys, the earth flattens and empties, and you are told that all your toil has only ever been a walk toward your Lord

Al-Inshiqaq opens on a sky that does not merely break, it listens. The heaven splits, the earth is pulled flat and throws up everything inside it, and both of them turn to their Lord and obey, because that is what they were always obligated to do. Then, in the middle of that collapse, Allah turns to you: every step of your hard life has been a walk in one direction, toward Him, and you are about to arrive. What you carry in your hand when you arrive is the whole of the surah.

When the sky listens and the earth empties

إِذَا السَّمَاءُ انشَقَّتْ

When the sky has split [open]

AL-INSHIQAQ 84:1

وَأَذِنَتْ لِرَبِّهَا وَحُقَّتْ

And has listened to its Lord and was obligated [to do so]

84:2

وَإِذَا الْأَرْضُ مُدَّتْ

And when the earth has been extended

84:3

وَأَلْقَتْ مَا فِيهَا وَتَخَلَّتْ

And has cast out that within it and relinquished [it]

84:4

يَا أَيُّهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّكَ كَادِحٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ كَدْحًا فُؤَادِيهِ

O mankind, indeed you are laboring toward your Lord with [great] exertion and will meet it.

84:6

The surah takes its name, the Sheikh notes, from its first verb, inshaqqat, the splitting, and the whole surah turns on a single theme: inevitability, the conclusion of things. These are events that are bound to happen, that you cannot avoid or change or reverse, the way the late afternoon slides into night and you can do nothing to hold the sun in the sky. He places it in a family of three surahs, al-Takwir, al-Infitar, and now al-Inshiqaq, that all open by describing the events of the last Day, and he points out where this one sits in the sequence: al-Takwir and al-Infitar named the crimes and told you of the angels writing them down, al-Mutaffifin named the two registers where the records are kept, and now al-Inshiqaq shows you the moment those books are finally handed out. But first the sky has to break.

And look at the verb He chose, the Sheikh urges. Inshaqqat comes from a root the Arabs used for tearing something soft and thin, a sheet of paper, a piece of cloth. Allah takes that delicate little word and uses it for the heaviest creation there is, the sky, the same way He used it for the splitting of the moon, to tell you that ripping the heavens open is, for Him, easier than tearing a page. And this splitting is the final stage. Earlier surahs described the sky becoming weak as doors, then peeled, then torn along its length, and all of those, the Sheikh notes, you could imagine being undone, a door reopened, the way reversed. Inshiqaq is the point of no return. When the heaven splits it cracks open with the color of a red rose, and He will return to that red, the Sheikh promises, at the very end of the surah.

Then, in the same breath, the sky does the one thing it was made to do: it listens to its Lord and submits. The word is adhinat, the Sheikh explains, not merely to permit but to listen with full attention and obey the one you are listening to. He ties it back to Surah Fussilat, where Allah commanded the heavens and the earth to come forward willingly or unwillingly, and they answered, we come willingly, in obedience. And then he makes you feel the weight of it. The heavens and the earth are a creation far greater than you. They carry no obligation to worship,

they will face no reckoning, and still they rush to obey without being forced. You, a weak thing, took up the amanah, the trust of worship that the heavens and the mountains declined, you will be judged for every word and deed, and yet you are the one who drags his feet. The sky was quicker to its Lord than the human being. And it was only right, He says, that the sky should obey, what other choice did so vast a creation ever have before its Maker.

The earth does the same. It is stretched out, muddat, pulled flat like a hide of leather drawn tight, until the mountains and valleys and oceans are gone and the round earth we walk becomes a single level plain where, the Sheikh notes, every person can finally see and hear every other, with no curve and no mountain left to hide behind. The Prophet ﷺ said the earth will be stretched until there is no room left for a man but the place of his own two feet. And as it stretches it throws up what was buried in it: alqat ma feeha, it casts out all that is within, the dead pulled back out of the ground and the treasures, the kunuz, the earth had swallowed, flung onto its surface the way you tip out a bag to find your keys. The Sheikh even drew it on paper, an uneven sheet pinched into peaks and folds, then pulled flat, and watched everything resting in the creases pop loose and the whole thing lie level.

And then it empties: wa takhallat, it relinquishes everything until nothing at all remains inside. The Sheikh lingers on that verb, the same word used for a mother delivering her child, finally letting go of a burden she has carried, because the earth too has been pregnant with the graves of the dead, waiting for this command, and now at last it is released. The opening is built like a conditional sentence, when the sky splits and the earth empties, then... but Allah never states the then. He leaves the blank for you to fill, because the surahs before this already gave the answer again and again, that every soul will know what it sent ahead, and by now you should be supplying it yourself.

Instead He turns, in the middle of the collapse, to you. O mankind, He calls, and the word insan, the Sheikh notes, carries the sense of the one who forgets: you forgot where you came from, your journey, your destination, the purpose of your life, while the sky and the earth never forgot theirs for an instant. And He tells you the truth about your whole life in a single word. You are kaadiah, and the Sheikh unpacks three things folded inside it. It means hardship and labor, real exertion until the body is worn out. It means that hardship runs through everything you do, whether the work is good or bad, for there is no such thing as a life of doing nothing, everyone toils. And the grammar makes it continuous, an active, unbroken toil that never lets up across the whole of your days. Your entire life, he says, is one long road trip, and all you ever really think about is the next petrol station, the next milestone: when do I finish school, when do I marry, when does the baby come, when does the work end, one hardship handed straight to the next.

When, the Sheikh asks, does a person finally rest? He tells the story of the wise man who went around asking, the king busy with his kingdom, the scholar pressed by his obligations, the merchant who feared poverty if prices fell and ruin if they rose, until the man concluded he had never met a single soul truly at ease. And the answer, drawn from a father quieting his son at bedtime: the believer rests only when he places his right foot in Paradise. Memorize that, the Sheikh says, and if you take nothing else from the lesson, take this. Before that foot crosses, it is all trial and sickness and loss, and you can guarantee nothing, not your health, not your wealth, not that your family will still be here tomorrow.

So where is all that toil carrying you? That is the whole point of this surah of inevitability. Whatever road you choose, the Sheikh says, obedient or disobedient, counting money or building a life, every step of the labor is moving you in one and the same direction: ilaa rabbika, toward your Lord. And then, fa-mulaaqeeh, you will meet Him, you will stand before Allah and the judgement will begin. Believer or disbeliever, the labor is the same and the road runs the same way, and at the end of it there are only ever two outcomes to walk away with, which the surah is about to lay open. The Sheikh's point lands quietly: the sky obeyed, the earth obeyed, neither of them resisting for a moment. The only creature in the entire scene who argues is you.

Two hands, two books

فَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ بِيَمِينِهِ

Then as for he who is given his record in his right hand,

AL-INSHIQAQ 84:7

وَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ وَرَاءَ ظَهْرِهِ

But as for he who is given his record behind his back,

84:10

After the meeting comes the judgement, and the Sheikh says there are only ever two outcomes, no third. You stand before Allah, and you either receive your book in your right hand or you do not. Everything in this passage hangs on which hand reaches out. And he pauses on the grammar before anything else: Allah says oudiya, was given, a past tense verb, for an event that has not yet happened. In classical Arabic the past tense is one of the ways you

deliver certainty. He used it for the splitting of the earth at the start of the surah, and He uses it here for the handing out of the books. It will happen. Read it as: surely, certainly, his book was placed in his hand.

And which book is it? The Sheikh ties it back to the surah just before this one, al-Mutaffifin, where Allah named two records: the register of the righteous kept high up, and the register of the wicked sunk low. This is that same book, the ledger of a life, and he asks the simple question, what is a book even for. Allah knows everything already, so the book is not for Him. It is for you. When you know your every deed is being written down, stitched into a page you cannot erase and will one day read in public, you start to think twice before you sin. The book is mercy before it is a verdict.

The book in the right hand, and the easy reckoning

فَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ بِيَمِينِهِ

Then as for he who is given his record in his right hand,

AL-INSHIQAQ 84:7

فَسَوْفَ يُحَاسَبُ حِسَابًا يَسِيرًا

He will be judged with an easy account

84:8

The right hand, yameen, the Sheikh explains, carried two things to the Arab beyond just being a hand. It was a sign of joy, and it was how you sealed an agreement: you shook on it, and the deal was done, no papers, no lawyer, the handshake was the contract. So when the believer receives his book in his right hand, two things are settled at once. He is overjoyed, and the agreement is signed, he is bound for Paradise. He holds it the way you hold a graduation certificate, the Sheikh says, not something to file away in a drawer but something to frame and lift up, and he runs to anyone he can find calling, come, read my book. Nobody is really listening, everyone is busy with himself, but he cannot contain it.

Then comes the reckoning, and Allah promises this one will be yaseer, easy. The Sheikh reaches for the hadith most of us have never noticed: the Prophet ﷺ used to make a private dua, O Allah, take me to an easy account. When Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) asked

what the easy account was, he ﷺ said it is that Allah simply glances at your record and passes over your sins, He reads them and lets them go. He likens it to being pulled over for speeding and having the officer look at you and say, do not do it again, drive safely, go. That flood of relief is the easy reckoning. In another hadith, Allah draws the believer near, wraps him in His cover, reminds him of sin after sin until the man admits them all, then says, I concealed them for you in the world, and today I forgive them, and hands him his book in his right hand.

And the Sheikh slips in a sobering note on the side. This is not a license to relax. The Companions, who were promised Paradise, trembled at the thought of the account. Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) said that even with one foot inside Paradise he would not feel safe from Allah's plan. Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) said that if a single soul were barred from Paradise, he would fear it was him. Their certainty about the easy reckoning is exactly why they worked so hard for it. The Day's first mercies, the Sheikh notes, arrive before Paradise is even seen: the book in the right hand, the easy account, and the believer's face lit with a shine that tells you he is with the Messenger ﷺ.

And he turns back to his people, in joy

وَيَنْقَلِبُ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِ مَسْرُورًا

And return to his people in happiness.

AL-INSHIQAQ 84:9

When the news is good, the Sheikh says, the first people you call are your family. You pass an exam, you land the job, you get the keys to the house, and your mother, your father, your wife and children are the first to hear it. So when the believer finishes that easy account and walks away forgiven, book in his right hand, he turns and goes straight back to his people, full of joy. And the surah is doing something deliberate here, because in al-Mutaffifin just before, every person was fleeing from his family, no one caring for anyone. Here he runs toward them.

Who is his family on that Day? Not necessarily the ones tied to him by blood, the Sheikh explains, but the ones who believed alongside him. The bond of faith is thicker than the bond of blood. And then he draws out the mercy hidden in the word turns back: if this believer is in a high place in Paradise and a loved one of his is lower down, Allah will not bring him down to them, He will raise them up to him. The one at the top of the hotel, he says, is not sent to the cheaper rooms below; everyone below is upgraded up to him. So encourage the one in your

family who loves the masjid and the Qur'an and good works, the Sheikh urges, because that person may be your way up.

The book behind the back, and the Blaze

وَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ وَرَاءَ ظَهْرِهِ

But as for he who is given his record behind his back,

AL-INSHIQAQ 84:10

فَسَوْفَ يَدْعُو ثُبُورًا

He will cry out for destruction

84:11

وَيَصِلَىٰ سَعِيرًا

And [enter to] burn in a Blaze.

84:12

Then the other outcome. This person is handed his book behind his back, and the Sheikh reconciles it with the other surahs that say the wicked receive their book in the left hand. The two pictures are one picture: on that Day the criminal's right hand is chained up to his neck and his left hand is twisted around behind his back, so when his book is given, it lands in that left hand pinned behind him. He cannot even read it. But he does not need to. Its very position tells him everything, and he screams, not destruction has come, but calling out for his own destruction, thuboor, come and finish me, I wish I had never been given this book.

And the Sheikh notes the word sawfa, soon. The horror does not strike the instant the book lands; it comes a moment later, when he is made to walk and the Blaze, sa'eer, rises into view in front of him. The fire in this surah is named sa'eer, a towering, flaming blaze that flares up suddenly with its own intensity. The Qur'an elsewhere describes it raging from afar, breathing out its fury before they even reach it, and when they are flung into a narrow place within it, bound in chains, they cry out again for the death that will never come. The Sheikh reminds you this is not excess, it is justice, no more and no less than what was earned, only it does not end.

He thought he would never return

إِنَّهُ كَانَ فِي أَهْلِهِ مَسْرُورًا

Indeed, he had [once] been among his people in happiness;

AL-INSHIQAQ 84:13

إِنَّهُ ظَنَّ أَنْ لَنْ يَحُورَ

Indeed, he had thought he would never return [to Allāh].

84:14

بَلَىٰ إِنَّ رَبَّهُ كَانَ بِهِ بَصِيرًا

But yes! Indeed, his Lord was ever, of him, Seeing.

84:15

Allah names the reason this man ended where he did. Once, among his people, he too had been full of joy, the same word, masroor, used for the believer in verse 9, but the Sheikh points out the contrast: his was the careless joy of a person who never thought about consequences. He laughed and lived for the moment and gave no weight to what was coming. The short, cheap happiness of this world he traded, knowingly, for a long grief that has no end.

And underneath that carelessness sat one fatal assumption: he thought he would never return. The Sheikh draws out the word yahoor, which means to go out from a place and then come back to where you started. So Allah is saying this man imagined he would simply leave and never circle back to be gathered and judged. But yes, He answers, you will. Your Lord was always seeing you, baseer, watching every move from before you were even created. In al-Infitar, the Sheikh recalls, Allah warned you of the angels recording on your left and your right; if that did not move you, this verse closes off the last excuse, your Lord Himself had full view of you, inside and out. There is nowhere the assumption could have hidden.

An oath by the twilight, the night, and the full moon

فَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِالشَّفَقِ

So I swear by the twilight glow

AL-INSHIQAQ 84:16

وَاللَّيْلِ وَمَا وَسَقَ

And [by] the night and what it envelops

84:17

وَالْقَمَرِ إِذَا اتَّسَقَ

And [by] the moon when it becomes full

84:18

Now Allah swears an oath, and the Sheikh shows you that even the things He swears by are arguing the surah's case. First, ash-shafaq, the redness in the sky. Most scholars take it as the red glow after sunset, just after Maghrib, when you can look straight at what is left of the sun without it harming your eyes; some include the red before dawn. The word comes from a root meaning softness, the Sheikh explains, like the tenderness of mercy in the heart, and the glow is named for its soft color and the gentle way it lets you gaze at it. And notice when it appears: at the end of the day, and at the end of the night. It marks the close of one stage and the opening of another. This is why, he says, Allah set two great prayers at exactly those two seams, to teach you to glorify Him at the end of every stage.

But here is the heart of it, the Sheikh says, and it is why this oath belongs in this surah of all surahs. The surah opened with the sky splitting, and other verses tell us that when the sky splits it turns red like a rose. That rose-red is the very color you see at sunset and at dawn, every single day, twice. So this small twilight you witness daily is a rehearsal of the great splitting to come. To the person who reflects, the red sky is not just something to photograph; it is a sign pointing past itself, a daily reminder of the Day the heaven will tear open and glow that same red.

Then the night, and what it wasaqa, what it gathers and folds inside itself. When darkness falls, everything is gathered in: the creatures retreat to their dwellings, the mountains and the oceans and the trees all vanish into the black until, with no moon, you cannot see your own hand. And this, the Sheikh notes, is the next step in the progression: when you see the red sky, you know the night is coming and cannot be stopped, just as the splitting cannot be stopped. The night that gathers everything in is itself a picture of the gathering and resurrection of all people, which comes after the sky splits. Then the moon, al-qamar, when it ittasaqa, when it reaches its full, the 13th, 14th, 15th of the month, and the Sheikh has you watch how it got there: new moon, thin crescent, growing night by night to fullness, then shrinking back down. Nothing arrives all at once. Everything moves in stages.

You will climb, stage after stage

لَتَرْكَبَنَّ طَبَقًا عَنْ طَبَقٍ

[That] you will surely embark upon state after state.

AL-INSHIQAQ 84:19

After the suspense of three oaths comes the thing sworn to, and the Sheikh has you feel the weight of the grammar: the lam of emphasis on the front of the verb and the heavy noon on the end of it, two separate ways of saying without any doubt, and a present-tense verb that means it keeps on happening. Put it together: you will most certainly, continually, climb a stage, then mount onto another stage above it. Tabaqan an tabaq, layer rising from layer.

And what are the stages? The Sheikh chooses Ibn Abbas's reading, and it is your own life laid out: a drop of fluid, then a clinging clot, then a lump of flesh, then out of the womb, then crawling, then walking, then speaking, then grown and independent, then strong, then weak and unable to stand straight, then death, then resurrection, then standing before Allah, then the Fire or the Garden. Stage after stage, exactly as the twilight gives way to night, the new moon swells to full and wanes back, the day turns over into the next day. The oath and its answer fit together perfectly: the heavens you swore by move in stages, and so do you. You will not stay where you are. You are being carried, whether you notice or not, all the way to the standing before your Lord.

So why will they not believe, and bow

فَمَا لَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ

So what is [the matter] with them [that] they do not believe,

AL-INSHIQAQ 84:20

وَإِذَا قُرِئَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقُرْآنُ لَا يَسْجُدُونَ

And when the Qur'ān is recited to them, they do not prostrate [to Allāh]?

84:21

بَلِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يَكْذِبُونَ

But those who have disbelieved deny,

84:22

فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ

So give them tidings of a painful punishment,

84:24

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَهُمْ أَجْرٌ غَيْرُ مَمْنُونٍ

Except for those who believe and do righteous deeds. For them is a reward uninterrupted.

84:25

After all that, the twilight, the night, the moon, the stages, the recited Qur'an, Allah asks the question with something close to astonishment: so what is wrong with them that they will not believe? And when the Qur'an is recited to them, why do they not fall in prostration? Verse 21 is itself a verse of sajdah, the Sheikh notes; the Prophet ﷺ would prostrate at it, and so should you when you hear it, and he draws a lesson from the wording: Allah says when the Qur'an is recited, not naming who recites, because it does not matter whose mouth it comes from. It is the word of Allah; you honor it and bow regardless. The Sheikh even recalls that the old Arabs

would fall into prostration before a stunning line of poetry; these people know the Qur'an is greater than anything they have ever heard, and still they hold themselves back.

So Allah answers His own question. It is not that they cannot understand, the Sheikh says; they grasp the language better than we do. The problem is deeper: rather, those who disbelieve deny, they keep on denying, willfully, against a truth they know. He ties it to al-Mutaffifin again, the rust, the black stain that sin after sin leaves on the heart until light can no longer get in. And Allah is most knowing of what they keep within themselves, He knows what is sealed inside the heart better than the angels who record, better than the man knows his own buried intentions. The word kaafir, the Sheikh adds, comes from a root meaning to cover, the way a farmer covers a seed with soil; the disbeliever covers over the truth his own soul once testified to.

Then the sentence, with a sting in it: so give them glad tidings of a painful punishment. Glad tidings, the Sheikh says, the word for good news, deliberately bent into sarcasm and a kind of mental torture, like a teacher calling you up to say, congratulations, you failed, your hope lifts a second before it shatters. And the punishment is aleem, the form that means consistent, unrelenting; in this world a burn dulls as the nerve dies, but theirs is as sharp at a hundred years as in the first second. And yet, the Sheikh ends, even here the door is not shut: except those who believe and do righteous deeds, for them is a reward ghayru mamnoon, never cut off, never taken back, a Paradise they are never separated from. The surah closes the way it began, on the splitting of one Day into two peoples: those of the Blaze, and those of the Garden, and you are still walking, stage by stage, toward whichever one you are working for.

What this surah asks of you

- **Even the sky obeyed without arguing.** The heaven split and listened, the earth flattened and emptied and listened, each because it was obligated to. The one creature in the scene who resists the command is the human being. Make your surrender look more like theirs.
- **Your whole life is a walk in one direction.** You are kaadih, toiling, and all the toil moves you toward your Lord, believer or not. The only question the surah leaves open is what is in your hand when you arrive.
- **Beg for the easy reckoning, then work like the Companions did.** The Prophet ﷺ asked Allah for an easy account, a glance that passes over your sins. But the ones promised Paradise still trembled, and that fear is why they earned it. Easy reckoning is a mercy to hope for, not an excuse to coast.

- **The red sky is a daily rehearsal.** The twilight you see twice a day is the same rose-red the heaven turns when it splits. Reflect on it. Every sunset and dawn is quietly pointing you to the Day, and to the stages you are climbing toward it.
- **When the Qur'an is recited, bow.** Allah did not name who recites, because it is His word in any mouth. The deniers knew it was greater than anything they had heard and still refused to lower their heads. Do not be of them: fall into the sajdah.

Why this surah stays with us

Al-Inshiqaq takes the loudest event imaginable, the sky tearing open, and turns it into something almost intimate: the heaven and the earth quietly obeying, and you, in the middle of it, finally told the truth about your life, that every hard step was a walk toward your Lord. Then it hands you a choice you are already making, the book in the right hand or the book pinned behind the back, and it proves the Day is coming with nothing more dramatic than the red of a sunset and the swelling of the moon.

O Allah, You were ever Seeing of us, before we were formed and in every hidden thing we keep within ourselves. Make us of those who listen and submit the way Your sky and Your earth submit, take us to an easy reckoning, and place our book in our right hands. Let every twilight remind us that we are climbing toward You, stage after stage, and let us arrive carrying a reward that is never cut off. Ameen.

Retold faithfully from Sheikh Abu Bakr Zoud's tafsir of Juz Amma (parts 2 and 3). Qur'an: Sahih International, verified via quran.ai. The reflection is the Sheikh's, the phrasing is The Daily Wird's.

Al-Buruj

The surah that answers a tortured believer with the stars over his head, a buried story of fire, and the love of the One on the Throne

Surat Al-Buruj is revealed to a small, hunted community. The Muslims of Makkah are few: some children, some women, some elders, some slaves, and they are starting to be tortured for saying that Allah is their Lord. The surah does not open by promising them rescue. It opens with an oath sworn by the night sky over their heads, then walks them into a story of believers who were burned alive and were not rescued, and somehow that story is meant to make them stand firmer, not break. By the end you understand why.

A sky full of fortresses

وَالسَّمَاءِ ذَاتِ الْبُرُوجِ

By the sky containing great stars

AL-BURUJ 85:1

The surahs just before this one, the Sheikh reminds you, kept describing the sky in the moment of its destruction, torn beyond repair on the Day. This surah turns to the sky right now, the one the Arab actually sees when he steps into the desert at night: no city lights, no tall towers, nothing to pull his eye down, just a horizon and above it an ocean of stars. And Allah swears by it. When He swears by a thing He is telling you it is great, and He is calling that thing as a witness to something He is about to say.

The word He chooses is buruj, and a burj is a high tower, a fort, a castle, anything you have to lift your gaze to see. The hotels of Makkah are called buruj for the same reason. So the sky is being pictured as a sky full of fortresses, and a fortress is built to hold soldiers. The soldiers of the sky are the angels, stationed in ranks across it. Sheikh Abu Bakr lands the point on a frightened believer: when they are oppressing you down here, do not think you stand alone. There is an army above you, armed and ready, the same kind of army Allah sent down at Badr,

and it is only waiting for the command to descend. The sky He swore by is watching what is done to you.

And the day He keeps promising

وَالْيَوْمِ الْمَوْعُودِ

And [by] the promised Day

AL-BURUJ 85:2

The second oath is by the promised Day, the Day Allah has pledged over and over across the Qur'an: Paradise promised to the believers, the Fire promised to those who reject Him. To the tyrant who feels untouchable as he tortures the weak, the Sheikh says this is the second and the heavier threat. Keep doing what you are doing. Your death is coming, and the moment you die that promised Day has already begun for you, and there is a fire waiting in it that you were warned about and laughed at.

So the opening is built as two warnings stacked on the oppressor. The first is the army in the sky, near and ready. The second is the appointment none of them can miss. The surah has not yet told the believers to hold on, and it has not yet told the deniers to stop. It has simply set the sky and the Day on the table, and let both sides feel the weight of who is really in charge.

The witness and the witnessed

وَشَاهِدٍ وَمَشْهُودٍ

And [by] the witness and what is witnessed,

AL-BURUJ 85:3

Then a third oath in two words, and the Sheikh says these two words are almost a summary of the whole religion. A shahid is one who witnesses; a mashhud is the thing that is witnessed. Stand on the roadside and see a car crash: you are the witness, the crash is what is witnessed. Allah swears by both, and He leaves it open on purpose, because so many things fit. We will witness the events of the Day, and the Day is what is witnessed. The angels witness our deeds now; on the Day the roles flip and we will witness the angels descending. Allah Himself

witnesses everything, and our own tongues and hands and feet will rise as witnesses against us.

It connects straight back to the two oaths before it. The sky full of fortresses is a witness to what happens on earth. The angels in those forts are witnesses. And the promised Day is the great thing witnessed, the scene every creature will be made to see. Hold onto that pairing, witness and witnessed, the Sheikh says, because the surah is about to drop you into a scene where the oppressors sat and watched their own crime, and on the Day they will be called as the most reliable witnesses against themselves.

The people of the ditch

قَتِلَ أَصْحَابُ الْأُخْدُودِ

Destroyed [i.e., cursed] were the companions of the trench

AL-BURUJ 85:4

النَّارِ ذَاتِ الْوَقُودِ

[Containing] the fire full of fuel,

85:5

إِذْ هُمْ عَلَيْهَا قُعُودٌ

When they were sitting near it.

85:6

Now the surah tells the believers they are not the first to suffer this, and it does so through a story the Prophet ﷺ told his companions, preserved in a long hadith. Sheikh Abu Bakr walks it slowly. A tyrant king kept a sorcerer to fool the people into worshipping him. As the sorcerer aged he asked the king for a clever boy to inherit his craft. On the road to his lessons the boy began passing a hermit, an old worshipper of Allah hiding from the people, and the boy would sit with him and learn the truth bit by bit. One day a great beast blocked the road and terrified the whole town, and the boy picked up a stone and said: O Allah, if the way of the worshipper is more beloved to You than the way of the sorcerer, kill this beast. He threw it, the beast dropped dead, and the boy knew which path was real.

Allah gave the boy a gift: he would heal the blind and the leper, always saying it is not me, it is Allah who cures, only believe in Him. A blind courtier of the king was healed and believed, the king found out, and the torture began. The king sawed the courtier in half, sawed the old worshipper in half, then sent the boy to a mountaintop and to the depths of the sea to be killed, and each time the boy prayed, O Allah, deal with them however You wish, and Allah saved him. Notice his manners, the Sheikh says: never O Allah destroy them, only deal with them as You will, and never I escaped, only Allah saved me from them. The boy was not chasing his own survival; he was chasing the whole town for Allah.

So the boy handed the king the key himself: you cannot kill me until you gather the people, tie me to a tree, and shoot me saying, in the name of Allah, the Lord of the boy. The king did it, the arrow struck the boy's temple, and he died, and the entire crowd cried out at once, We believe in the Lord of the boy. The king's whole purpose had backfired. So he ordered ditches dug, the long deep rectangular trenches the word ukhdud names, filled them with fire, and threw in everyone who would not recant. Allah's word for them is qutila, the Sheikh notes: both that they were killed, and a heavy curse upon them, may they be cursed. And to grasp how cold they were, look at the next line. They did not flee the scene; they pulled up seats at the edge of the fire (qu'ud, to settle in for a long sit) and watched. All they were missing, he says, was popcorn.

They were only hated for one thing

وَهُمْ عَلَىٰ مَا يَفْعَلُونَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ شُهُودٌ

And they, to what they were doing against the believers, were witnesses.

AL-BURUJ 85:7

وَمَا نَقَمُوا مِنْهُمْ إِلَّا أَن يُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَمِيدِ

And they resented them not except because they believed in Allah, the Exalted in Might, the Praiseworthy,

85:8

الَّذِي لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۖ وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ

To whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. And Allah, over all things, is Witness.

85:9

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ فَتَنُوا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَتُوبُوا فَلَهُمْ عَذَابُ جَهَنَّمَ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابُ الْحَرِيقِ

Indeed, those who have tortured the believing men and believing women and then have not repented will have the punishment of Hell, and they will have the punishment of the Burning Fire.

85:10

Here the oath pays off. The criminals who sat at the ditch are themselves the witnesses, the shuhud, because no one saw the crime more completely than the ones who sat and savored it. Allah will make them testify against themselves on the Day, the Sheikh says: you watched it best, you come and tell what you did. The scene in front of them, the believers burning, is the mashhud. Witness and witnessed, exactly as the surah swore.

Then the verdict on why any of this happened. They had no grievance against these believers at all, except that they believed in Allah. And the Sheikh draws out the two names Allah chooses. Al-Aziz, the One who owns all authority: the believers submitted to a command above the king's command, and that is the thing a tyrant cannot tolerate. Al-Hamid, the One worthy of all praise and thanks: the believers were praising and thanking someone other than the king who claimed to feed and protect them. Then 85:9 widens it to the sky and the earth both, the dominion is His, and seals it: Allah, over all things, is Witness. Nothing was missed.

And the word for what was done to them is fatanu, from fitna, which the Sheikh says literally means putting impure gold into the fire to burn the impurities out until only pure gold remains. That is what oppression does to faith: it is the fire that separates the genuine from the false. So Allah names the tormentors and then names their end: if they tortured the believing men and the believing women and then did not repent, theirs is the punishment of Hell, and theirs is the punishment of the Burning Fire. He mentions the women on their own, the Sheikh notes, because the weak and the powerless are always the easiest to attack, and even they were not spared. And see the justice in it: they lit a fire and threw people in, so a fire is exactly what waits for them.

Two fires, and only one is a result

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْكَبِيرُ

Indeed, those who have believed and done righteous deeds will have gardens beneath which rivers flow. That is the great attainment.

AL-BURUJ 85:11

Against the ditch of fire, Allah sets gardens with rivers running beneath them, and the Sheikh stops on one missing word that teaches everything. When He described the tormentors He said theirs IS, then the punishment, with a fa, a because: as a result of their crime, this is what they get, one for one, perfect justice. But here, for the believers, there is no because. He does not say believe and do good and SO you will have gardens, as if Paradise were the earned wage of your deeds. He just says: those who believed and did righteous deeds, theirs are gardens. The fire is a result; the Garden never is. No one enters Paradise as the price of his own works, the Sheikh insists, not even the Prophet ﷺ. You enter only by the mercy of Allah.

He lingers on the rivers too. Everyone on earth, whatever their religion, works and saves toward the same dream: a house, and the most prized house of all has water beside it, a view, a flowing river, a waterfall the wealthy build in fakery just to taste the feeling. So Allah paints the reward as the very thing the human heart is already chasing: gardens so green you cannot see the soil, set on a height, rivers pouring from beneath them. And He calls it al-fawz al-kabir, the great attainment, which the Sheikh ranks as the middle of the Qur'an's three tiers of success, with even more said of the Garden whenever the words grow.

His grip is severe, and His love is intense

إِنَّ بَطْشَ رَبِّكَ لَشَدِيدٌ

Indeed, the assault [i.e., vengeance] of your Lord is severe.

AL-BURUJ 85:12

إِنَّهُ هُوَ يُبْدِئُ وَيُعِيدُ

Indeed, it is He who originates [creation] and repeats.

85:13

وَهُوَ الْغَفُورُ الْودُودُ

And He is the Forgiving, the Affectionate,

85:14

ذُو الْعَرْشِ الْمَجِيدُ

Honorable Owner of the Throne,

85:15

فَعَالٌ لِّمَا يُرِيدُ

Effector of what He intends.

85:16

Now the surah turns and speaks straight to the Prophet ﷺ, and through him to every believer who feels the tyrant's power. Batsh, the Sheikh explains, is to seize someone weaker, grip him, and crush him no matter how he struggles, and Allah says the batsh of your Lord is shadid, tied tight and intense. You see the deniers gripping the Muslims now; visualize the grip of your Lord, which is heavier beyond compare, and relax. And He says your Lord, Rabb, the soft word for the One who nurtures and looks after you, not a distant title. This is your Master's plan; when the time for the grip comes, it comes, and nothing turns it back.

He originates and repeats: He made these deniers the first time and will bring them back a second time, the Sheikh says, so do not imagine they slipped away by dying. Even their skin, burned in the Fire, is created new again so the punishment can repeat. And then, against all that severity, two of the gentlest names in the Qur'an. Al-Ghafur, the Forgiving, and not al-Wadud as merely loving but as loving intensely, a burning, passionate love. The Sheikh reads it into the heart of an oppressed believer: the first thing oppression whispers is Allah must not love me, or this would not be happening, the way a child whose siblings get money quietly

decides his father loves him less. So Allah does not just say He loves; He says He loves intensely, He forgives, and (85:15) He is the Owner of the glorious Throne, the highest of the high. When the One in the highest place loves you in the lowest place, the Sheikh says, you can carry any pain. And He is fa'al, the One who does whatever He wills, again and again: you may beg Him and make all the dua you want, but you cannot place a condition on Him, because whatever He gives is from perfect knowledge, and if He leaves you in a hardship it is because staying there is better for you.

Mightier armies came, and were flattened

هَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ الْجُنُودِ

Has there reached you the story of the soldiers -

AL-BURUJ 85:17

فِرْعَوْنَ وَثَمُودَ

[Those of] Pharaoh and Thamud?

85:18

بَلِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فِي تَكْذِيبٍ

But they who disbelieve are in [persistent] denial,

85:19

وَاللَّهُ مِنْ وَرَائِهِمْ مُحِيطٌ

While Allah encompasses them from behind.

85:20

Then a question fired at Quraysh: has the story of the armies reached you? The Sheikh catches the jolt of it. To an Arab tribe, has the news of the army reached you means an attack is coming, panic, who is it. It seizes their attention, and then Allah names which armies, junud, the precise word for a fully armed, organized, professional force. The army of Pharaoh, whose tents spread like an ocean outside his palace; the people of Thamud, who carved their homes

straight out of solid rock mountains by hand, whose ruins the Arabs walked past and could see for themselves how powerful they were. The mightiest forces the Qur'an names. And how were they finished? Pharaoh with water, Thamud with a single blast, no extra army needed, flattened (damdama, the Sheikh says, the way a butcher's hammer beats meat thin) and leveled to the ground. So who, He is telling Quraysh, do a handful of desert Bedouin think they are, that they can torment the Messenger and his people and not have their turn come?

And the real problem, He says, is not the believers and not the message: those who disbelieve are sunk in denial, ghutu, drowned in lying against the truth, in deeper here than in the surah before, because the oppression here is worse. Their cover is on them; there is no more hope in them. And Allah is, from behind them, encompassing, muhit, surrounding them on every side. They wrapped themselves in lies; He has wrapped Himself around them entirely, His power over them total, every deed of theirs already recorded and saved for the Day. They cannot escape, and they never could.

A glorious Qur'an, kept safe

بَلْ هُوَ قُرْآنٌ مَّجِيدٌ

But this is an honored Qur'an

AL-BURUJ 85:21

فِي لَوْحٍ مَّحْفُوظٍ

[Inscribed] in a Preserved Slate.

85:22

Quraysh had called this Qur'an the word of a devil. Allah answers the slander as He closes: rather, this is a glorious Qur'an, majid, the very word He used for His own glorious Throne. The Sheikh draws the lesson for anyone who carries the message: never think the Qur'an is not enough da'wah, that you must dress it up or apologize for it. It is noble in itself. It is the only book that still stands as the truth, and if the Qur'an does not bring a person to faith, nothing will. They can lie against it as long as they like; they cannot strip it of its honor.

And it is fi lawhin mahfuz, in a Preserved Slate, guarded from corruption, from addition, from alteration, even from being truly misunderstood. Notice, the Sheikh says, where the protection

lands. The believers were told their Lord is strong, but the promise of protection was given to the Qur'an, not to them. Because once a believer grasps that the source of his mission is the Book of Allah, and that the Book is guarded forever, he knows the mission can never fail. The tyrants can grip him and burn him; they can never touch the Book. That is the whole surah's gift to a hunted, oppressed believer: when you have nothing else, your strength is in this Qur'an. O Allah, make us people of the Qur'an, who hold to it when the fire is lit and find in it a strength the oppressor can never reach.

What this surah asks of you

- **Oppression is the fire that purifies gold.** The word for what was done to the believers is fitna, putting impure gold in the flame so the dross burns off and only the pure remains. The trial is not a sign Allah forgot you; it is the fire that separates real faith from false.
- **Watch the missing word.** The tormentors get their punishment as a result, with a because. The believers get gardens with no because at all. The Fire is earned; the Garden never is. You enter Paradise only by His mercy, never as the wage of your deeds.
- **His grip is severe, His love is intense.** The same surah that warns the tyrant of a grip beyond escape calls Allah al-Wadud, the One who loves intensely, and seats Him on the glorious Throne. When the Highest loves you in your lowest place, you can carry any pain.
- **Mightier than your enemy has been flattened before.** Pharaoh with his ocean of tents, Thamud who carved mountains by hand: the greatest armies the Qur'an names, ended with water and a single sound. Whatever power presses on you now is a fraction of theirs, and its turn will come.
- **Your strength is in this Qur'an.** Allah promised protection not to the believers but to the Book. Hold to a mission whose source is guarded forever, and you know it cannot fail, no matter what the oppressor does to you.

Why this surah stays with us

Al-Buruj was sent to people being tortured, and it did not hand them an easy rescue. It handed them a sky full of waiting armies, a buried story of believers who burned and did not break, a Lord whose grip on tyrants is merciless and whose love for the faithful is fierce, and a Book that can never be touched. The boy in the story could have run a dozen times and lived; he kept walking back to the king, because he was not chasing his own survival, he was chasing a whole town for Allah.

O Allah, make us people of the Qur'an, who hold to it when the fire is lit. When we are pressed and wronged, do not let us whisper that You have stopped loving us. Let us feel instead the grip that no tyrant escapes and the love that reaches us from the Throne, and keep our feet on the path of the boy, firm to the end, chasing not our own safety but Your pleasure.

Retold faithfully from Sheikh Abu Bakr Zoud's tafsir of Juz Amma. Qur'an: Sahih International, verified via quran.ai. The reflection is the Sheikh's, the phrasing is The Daily Wird's.

At-Tariq

The surah that swears by a star knocking through the dark, and turns it into proof that the One who made you can bring you back

At-Tariq opens the way a stranger arrives at your door in the dead of night: a single sharp knock that pulls your eyes up and will not let them rest. Sheikh Abu Bakr says this is the last surah of the first half of Juz Amma, an early Makkan surah, and the Prophet ﷺ loved to pair it in prayer with the one before it. Allah swears by the sky and by something that comes knocking out of the dark, and before the surah is done that knock will have become an argument: the same Lord who first made you out of nothing can just as easily make you again.

A surah that begins where the last one ended

Sheikh Abu Bakr starts, as he always does, by tying the surah to the one before it. The Prophet ﷺ used to recite Surah al-Buruj and Surah at-Tariq together, frequently, in Dhuhr and Asr and sometimes Isha, and when he paired two surahs like that it was a sign that they are bound, that there is a thread running from one into the other. Both open by swearing an oath by the sky. Both close on the Qur'an: al-Buruj ends by calling it a glorious Qur'an, preserved in al-Lawh al-Mahfuz, and at-Tariq ends by calling it a decisive word.

The Sheikh draws the seam tighter still. Al-Buruj left off telling you the Qur'an sits guarded in a preserved tablet, and the natural question is, where is that tablet? At-Tariq answers in its first breath: up there, in the sky. And al-Buruj closed by saying Allah has fully encompassed the deniers from every side; at-Tariq opens by telling you that not one soul is left without a watcher set over it. The end of one surah reaches into the start of the next.

An oath by the sky, and by something that knocks

وَالسَّمَاءِ وَالطَّارِقِ

By the sky and the knocker

AT-TARIQ 86:1

An oath in the Qur'an, the Sheikh reminds you, has two halves: the thing sworn by, and the thing being said. Allah only ever swears by what is a tremendous matter to us, and He swears by it to make it a witness to what comes next. So He swears by the sky, as-sama, a word that means everything above your head, and the Sheikh pauses to let its size land. The sky has no crack in it, no wear, no seam that needs patching. Look once, He says elsewhere, can you find a flaw? Look again and again, and your sight comes back to you exhausted, defeated, having found nothing. Compare it, the Sheikh says, to the roof you built over your own head: it cracks, it needs repainting, it sags, it leans on pillars. The sky is held up by none, balanced perfectly, five hundred years above you.

Then He swears by at-Tariq, the knocker, from a root that means to strike, the same root behind the word for a hammer and the word for a road (because the traveler's foot strikes it). At-Tariq is specifically the one who arrives at night and knocks, the Sheikh explains, because the old Arab traveled by night to escape the heat and would reach a house after dark and knock to be let in. A knock at night is loud precisely because the night is silent. So the word carries two things at once: something that arrives in the dark, and something that demands your attention. The Prophet ﷺ even forbade a man from coming home unannounced and knocking on his family's door at night, because a night-knock plants fear; he would arrive in morning or evening instead. Hold those two senses, the Sheikh says, and you are ready for what at-Tariq turns out to be.

The piercing star

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الطَّارِقُ

And what can make you know what is the knocker?

AT-TARIQ 86:2

النَّجْمُ الثَّاقِبُ

It is the piercing star.

86:3

Before He names it, Allah asks: and what can make you know what the knocker is? The Sheikh notes the exact form of this question. The Qur'an asks it (ma adraka) only about things a clue can give you a glimpse of, and then Allah answers it Himself; when the matter is so vast that

even a clue would not help, He uses a different form (ma yudrik) and leaves it unanswered. Here He answers. And the very asking is a way of telling you that you will never fully appreciate this thing, that whatever you come to know of it is a sliver of what it really is. Even the astronomers, the Sheikh says, with their libraries and documentaries and conferences, are nowhere near the reality of a single star.

Then the answer: an-najm ath-thaqib, the piercing star. At-Tariq is the brilliant stars of the night, called knockers because they arrive only at night and because, out in the desert away from our streetlights, they are the one thing you cannot help but see, millions of them, the whole sky alive. And thaqib carries two meanings the Sheikh holds together: blazing bright, and boring a hole through something. Picture the black night as a curtain, he says, and the star's light as a point of brightness poking through it, the way dawn finds the pinholes in your bedroom curtain and slips through. The star is so bright its light pierces the dark blanket of the night and travels the long distance down to your eye. Two themes are now lit for the whole surah: journey (the star's light on its long road to you, and soon the journey of man, and of the rain) and secrecy (the night, and a star that pries a few holes in the dark and lets the light leak through).

Not one soul without a watcher

إِنَّ كُلَّ نَفْسٍ لَّمَّا عَلَيْهَا حَافِظٌ

There is no soul but that it has over it a protector.

AT-TARIQ 86:4

Here is the answer to the oath, the thing the sky and the star were called to witness: there is no soul except that a guardian is set over it. The Sheikh reads the stronger view that this hafiz is two kinds of angels. There are the angels who guard you from harm Allah has not decreed for you: when something means you injury and it is not written for you, they fend it off, and the moment it is written, they step aside and let it through. And there are the angels who write your deeds, the noble scribes who record every action and word, even the blink of your eye. He pairs this with the hadith that an angel is appointed over you even in the womb: from that first moment you are never once left alone.

Watch the wording, the Sheikh says. Allah says the guardian is alayha, over the soul, upon it, almost against it, not there merely for it; it is stationed to watch and to document. And He says nafs, soul, not insan, man, and that is no accident in a surah whose theme is secrecy. The nafs

is exactly where you hide things, and the irony is sharp: the one place built for secrets keeps none of them, because a recorder stands above it catching everything, down to the thought that crosses your heart. He even draws the connection back to the oath: as far off as the stars are, they too are witnesses turned toward this earth, watching what we do, ready to testify on the Day, the way the earth you prayed on and the very ground that heard the call to prayer will stand up and testify for you. Next time you look up, the Sheikh says, know you are never alone.

Look at what you were made from

فَلْيَنْظُرِ الْإِنْسَانُ مِمَّ خُلِقَ

So let man observe from what he was created.

AT-TARIQ 86:5

خُلِقَ مِنْ مَّاءٍ دَافِقٍ

He was created from a fluid, ejected,

86:6

يَخْرُجُ مِنْ بَيْنِ الصُّلْبِ وَالتَّرَائِبِ

Emerging from between the backbone and the ribs.

86:7

The opening proved one thing, the Sheikh says: a guardian stands over you, recording, because there is a Day you will be held to account. But a man who does not believe he will be held to account does not believe he will be brought back at all; deny the reckoning and you have denied the resurrection underneath it. So Allah turns to prove the harder thing. He begins with *fa*, therefore: since a watcher is over you, since this all points to a return, then let man look. And the verb is *yanzur*, which is not a glance but a long, fixed stare, the kind you cannot pull your eyes away from. It is the same word, the Sheikh notes, used of Musa عليه السلام drawing his hand from his garment and watching it come out white, everyone frozen, staring. And it is present tense: keep looking, every day, the way scientists and doctors bend over the beginning of man and every single day something new comes out, by the command of the One who told you to look.

Then notice the word for man: al-insan, from a root that carries forgetfulness. He is called insan, the Sheikh says, precisely because he forgets, and what he forgets first is where he came from. He gathers wealth and power and authority and forgets that his beginning was humble to the point of being filthy, a drop you would wash off your clothes if it touched them. And watch the grammar carved around it. Allah does not even say from what I created him; He says mimma khuliqa, from what he was created, in the passive, His own name kept out of the sentence. The Sheikh reads two things in that veiling. One, it carries displeasure: in the Qur'an, when Allah recalls His favor on people He names Himself (those You have blessed), and when He recalls His anger He withdraws the name (not of those who earned wrath), and here the name is withdrawn over a man who forgot his Lord. Two, it meets the denier where he is: you will not even think about Allah, so forget Him for a moment and just look at what you were made from, and let that carry you back. Either way it keeps the surah's theme of secrecy alive, the hidden name folding into the night, the nafs, the secret of where each of us began. Even the phrase is shrunk: not the full minma but the clipped mimma, because in Arabic a shortened word carries a smaller meaning, and what you came from is too small and too lowly to deserve the full word.

And the fluid itself: maa daafiq, water that gushes. The Sheikh hears the surah rhyming with itself. The star was thaqib, light that bores and bursts through the dark; the fluid is daafiq, that which bursts and gushes out under pressure, like a dam giving way or a squeezed bottle, never seeping, never still, only rushing. Then its journey. The desert Arab cannot see the fluid inside the body, there is no technology to show him, so Allah speaks of where it emerges and traces it back: from between the backbone (as-sulb, the hardest, toughest bone in you, the spine) and the ribs (at-taraaib, the chest bones, where Ibn Abbas said a woman's necklace rests). A few centimeters of space, the Sheikh marvels, seven or eight, no more; and into that handspan Allah folded a mystery the world only began to unravel some fifteen hundred years later. He pointed you at the star's light crossing millions of years, and you cannot reach its reality; He points you at the inch between your own backbone and ribs, and you cannot reach that either. So He pairs them the way He always pairs them, the sign in the far horizons and the sign in your own self (We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves), and the lesson lands close: you do not need to travel the cosmos for proof. It is inside you. Just look.

The One who made you can bring you back

إِنَّهُ عَلَىٰ رَجْعِهِ لَقَادِرٌ

Indeed, He [i.e., Allah], to return him [to life], is Able.

AT-TARIQ 86:8

يَوْمَ تَبْلَى السَّرَائِرُ

The Day when secrets will be put on trial,

86:9

فَأَلَّهُ مِنْ قُوَّةٍ وَلَا نَاصِرٍ

Then he [i.e., man] will have no power or any helper.

86:10

Here is the argument the looking was building toward: the One who made you is fully able to return you. And the Sheikh draws the proof straight out of the fluid you were just told to watch. The nearest thing mentioned is that gushing drop, so when Allah says He is able to return it, the closest sense is this: a drop that is, in itself, dead, with no life in it, leaves the man, enters the woman, and nine months later a living, breathing newborn comes out. You have already watched the dead become alive. So when a dead body is laid into the earth, the Sheikh says, picture it as that same drop slipping into the womb of the ground, waiting to be brought back up. And reason it through: which is harder, to make a thing the first time or to remake it? The first, by far; even the scientists, picking through genes and chromosomes, never reach the bottom of how the first creation works. By His mercy He let you witness the harder feat up close, so the easier one, raising you again, would be simple to believe.

Then watch the certainty in the wording, the Sheikh says. Allah opens with *inna*, the particle Arabic reaches for when the listener is in doubt: you say the water is on the table and he shrugs, so you say indeed the water is on the table. Here it is *innahu*, indeed He is able to return him, because this is exactly where the denier balks. But back in verse six, when Allah said man was created from a gushing fluid, there was no *inna* at all; no one doubts that, it is in front of their eyes. Doubt clings only to the return, so only the return gets the indeed. And even here the name stays hidden: not indeed Allah is able, but indeed He is able, a pronoun with no

name yet spoken in the whole surah, the secret kept to the last. The Sheikh ties it back to the surah before, al-Buruj, which said it is He who originates and repeats: He started you from a drop and will start you again from the dust.

So you are returned, and you are standing, and Allah names the Day: yawma tubla as-saraair, the Day the secrets are put on trial. He says on that Day, the Sheikh points out, because today a secret can still be a secret, but on that Day the word loses its meaning; everything comes out. The verb tubla is from ibtila, to test something in order to see what comes out of it, the way you might hand a man a fortune or shut him in a room full of temptation just to watch what he does. Allah has no need to test in that sense; the trial here is the exposure, dragging the hidden thing into the open. And the word is saraair, the Sheikh is careful: not the plain asrar (ordinary secrets) but the plural of sariira, the secret you guard most fiercely, the one you alone were meant to know. Once more the word fits the surah's spine. He reads it on two levels. On the level of nations, it reaches back to al-Buruj and the People of the Trench, a whole community that committed mass slaughter and then buried the evidence so no one could point at them, the way regimes still hide their graves, bar the journalists, set guards on the ground; well-guarded secrets, and on that Day every one of them is exposed. And on the level of the single soul, the secret is your intention, the worship that passed between you and Allah alone, your prayer, your fasting, your sincerity or your show: in this life people judge you by the deed they can see, but on that Day what is laid bare is the intention inside, and by it you are made beautiful or made ugly.

And then the line that strips every defense: fama lahu min quwwatin wa la nasir, he has no power of his own, and no helper either. The Sheikh sets it against the powerful nations of al-Buruj, the Thamud, the armies. In this world the tyrant had the strength to bury his crime and allies to help him cover it; on that Day he has neither. Picture a man too weak in a hospital bed to so much as pull the blanket over his own exposed leg, the Sheikh says, who turns to the visitor beside him and begs, please, cover me. On that Day the secret lies exposed and the man has no strength to cover it himself and not one soul will rise to cover it for him.

Then a fresh pair of oaths swings open, and the Sheikh shows you they are the same theme again: by the sky that returns, and by the earth that splits. The returning sky (dhat ar-raj') is the rain, the water lifted up and sent back down, up and down, the cycle that never stops. The splitting earth (dhat as-sad') is the ground cracking open for the seedling to push through. And see the symmetry, he says: at the start of the surah, a fluid from the man gushes and gives life inside the woman; at the end, a fluid from the sky comes down and gives life inside the earth. Two impregnations, the same Maker, the same miracle of something dead brought to life, the

human and the plant placed side by side. These oaths are the run-up; the answer they swear to is the verse that follows, that this Qur'an is a decisive word.

A decisive word, not a thing to be entertained by

إِنَّهُ لَقَوْلٌ فَصْلٌ

Indeed, it [i.e., the Qur'an] is a decisive statement,

AT-TARIQ 86:13

وَمَا هُوَ بِالْهَزْلِ

And it is not amusement.

86:14

After a fresh pair of oaths (by the sky that sends the rain back down, by the earth that splits for the crop to push through), Allah lands the response: this Qur'an is a decisive word. And then He guards that word from the only thing that could cheapen it: wa ma huwa bil-hazl, it is not idle talk. The Sheikh stops on how heavily this is negated; the construction here is one of the strongest ways Arabic has to say no, absolutely not, in any form whatsoever. Hazl, he explains, is speech that is weak and useless, the kind that entertains and addicts and leaves you exactly as it found you: the film, the comic, the comedy show, the gathering where everyone has a good laugh and walks out changed by nothing. The Qur'an is the opposite of that. Every single ayah offers you guidance, shapes how you live, asks something of you.

And here, the Sheikh shows you, the surah folds back on its own opening. It began with the star, and one great purpose of the star is to guide the traveler through the dark; it ends with the Qur'an, which guides you through a dark of a different kind. The stars have three uses, he says (a guide for the traveler, a beauty for the sky, missiles against the devils), and the Qur'an has exactly the same three: it guides you, it beautifies the tongue and the home that holds it, and it strikes down the doubts and misconceptions thrown at you. So this is also a quiet threat to the deniers who laughed when the Prophet ﷺ recited about the Day of accountability: this is a decisive word, it is coming, do not treat it as a joke. And the tragedy, the Sheikh says, is that this is what many have turned the Qur'an into, an entertainment, a beautiful recitation to enjoy and scroll past, while the one question that matters (how does this ayah guide me, how does it change my life) goes unasked.

They plot, and Allah plots

إِنَّهُمْ يَكِيدُونَ كَيْدًا

Indeed, they are planning a plan,

AT-TARIQ 86:15

وَأَكِيدُ كَيْدًا

But I am planning a plan.

86:16

Allah tells His Messenger ﷺ, with certainty, that they are plotting; the verb is present tense, the Sheikh notes, so it means a plotting that never stops, that goes on against the believers to this very day. And the plural means many groups with many schemes, never quite agreeing with one another: you would think they were one hand, he says, but their hearts are scattered. He reads it against the Prophet's own life, the torture in early Makkah, the two migrations to Abyssinia, and the night the chiefs of Quraysh agreed to take one young man from every clan so the blood of the Prophet ﷺ would be shared and no single family could be blamed. That was the largest plot ever laid against Islam: end the Messenger and nothing is left.

Then the response, and the Sheikh savors its asymmetry. They plot a plot (kaydan), straining every effort. And Allah says, simply, I plot a plot. He does not say we, the royal plural He uses elsewhere; here He speaks of Himself as One, because no matter how many the groups and how many the schemes, the single plan of the One undoes all of them, and His plan costs Him no effort at all. He says be, and it is. The Sheikh hears something else in it too: Allah is speaking about the deniers to His Messenger ﷺ rather than to them, the way you would talk about a child in front of him to make him feel how little he is worth addressing. They are not even worth speaking to.

So give them a little time

فَمَهْلٍ الْكَافِرِينَ أَمْهَلَهُمْ رُوَيْدًا

So allow time for the disbelievers. Leave them awhile.

AT-TARIQ 86:17

The surah closes with a command to the Prophet ﷺ: give the disbelievers respite, let them be, for a little while. The Sheikh draws out the gentleness of it. Do not fight them yet, do not call down ruin, just give them an extension on their deadline. And the wonder, he says, is that this is a Makkan surah, revealed when the Muslims are the weak ones and Quraysh holds all the power: by rights Quraysh should be the ones granting deadlines, yet Allah has His Messenger ﷺ tell them their time is being extended. That phrasing only makes sense if victory is already promised, already as good as done.

And then He measures the respite. Not just amhilhum, leave them, but ruwaydan, and the Sheikh notes this is the diminutive of a word already meaning a short time: a little of a little, the smallest stretch. Give them just a sliver more. Because the plan was set long ago, the migration to Madinah, then Badr two years on, then the rest, until Makkah itself was opened in the eighth year. And see how the surah comes full circle, the Sheikh says: it opened by telling you a guardian stands over every soul, and it closes telling the deniers they may plot all they like under that same watch, and not one scheme slips past unseen. The Lord who set a recorder over you is the Lord who plots while they plot, and gives them only a little while.

O Allah, make us people of the Qur'an, who do not treat Your word as a thing to enjoy and forget but as a decisive word that moves us. You set a guardian over every soul and a star to knock through our darkness; let Your reminders pierce ours. When the Day arrives that puts the secrets on trial, leave us not without power and without a helper, but stand with us by Your mercy, the One whose plan never fails.

What this surah asks of you

- **You are never once alone.** A guardian is set over every soul, an angel who shields you from undecreed harm and a scribe who records even the blink of your eye, appointed over you since the womb. The one place you keep secrets, your own self, keeps none from the watcher above it. So live as one who is seen.

- **Read the sky as an argument, not a decoration.** Allah swears by the night-star and turns it from the traveler's old guide into a witness. He keeps doing this in the Qur'an: He takes the thing you glance at every day and asks you to see it as proof. The star that knocks through the dark is arguing for the Lord who placed it.
- **The Qur'an is not entertainment.** It is a decisive word, the strongest 'no' in the language set against the idea that it is idle talk. Useless speech leaves you exactly as it found you; every ayah is meant to change you. The only question that honors it is, how does this guide me, not how beautiful did that sound.
- **Let them plot; the plan is already His.** They strain at their schemes, group after group, while Allah, unhurried, plots His one plan that undoes them all. Your part in the meantime, the Sheikh says, is patience and worship, and to give even your enemies the small mercy of time, because the outcome was never in doubt.

Why this surah stays with us

At-Tariq takes the two things the desert Arab trusted most, the unbroken sky and the stars he steered by, and turns them into witnesses against his own denial. A star knocks through the dark to reach your eye; a guardian stands over your soul writing it all down; and the Qur'an that tells you so is a decisive word, not a thing to be entertained by and forgotten. Even the deniers' plotting becomes, in the end, more proof: it all happens under a watch that misses nothing, against a plan that cannot fail.

O Allah, make us people of the Qur'an, who hear its reminders and are changed by them. You set a guardian over every soul and a star to pierce the night; let Your word pierce our hearts and guide us home. On the Day the secrets are put on trial, when no soul has power or helper of its own, do not leave us to ourselves; be our protector and our helper, by Your mercy, O You whose plan never fails.

Retold faithfully from Sheikh Abu Bakr Zoud's tafsir of Juz Amma. Qur'an: Sahih International, verified via quran.ai. The reflection is the Sheikh's, the phrasing is The Daily Wird's.

Al-A'la

The surah the Prophet ﷺ loved, that opens by lifting the name of your Lord above every defect and closes by asking which life you actually prefer

Al-A'la is one of the surahs the Prophet ﷺ loved most. He carried it into the prayers where the largest crowds gathered, Jumu'ah and the two Eids and the night, because it is a whole religion folded small: that your Lord is above every flaw, that the One who made and balanced and guided the world will surely bring you back, and that one of these two lives, the one in your hand and the one He has promised, is worth far more than the other. It opens not with an argument but with a command, lift His name, and ends by quietly asking which life you have actually been choosing.

Lift His name above every flaw

سَبِّحْ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ الْأَعْلَى

Exalt the name of your Lord, the Most High,

AL-A'LA 87:1

Sheikh Abu Bakr opens on the word the whole surah turns on: *sabbih*, declare the perfection of your Lord. To make *tasbih* of Allah, he explains, is to disassociate Him from every defect and imperfection. When you hear something unworthy said of Him, that He has a son, that He sleeps, that He tires, your answer is *Subhan Allah*: He is above and beyond all of that. And the root itself is a picture. The word is tied to a kind of swimming where you do not sink under, you hold your level and float. So when you exalt Allah, you are declaring a perfection that never drops, that refuses to go down, the way something afloat refuses to go under.

Then notice, the Sheikh says, that this command lives inside your own prayer. Allah tells you to say it, *sabbih isma rabbika al-A'la*, and then in sujud you do it, with your tongue saying *Subhana Rabbiya al-A'la* and your whole body acting it out. And sujud is the closest you ever come to Allah. The distance to the sky is beyond counting, but the distance to your Lord is as near as lowering your forehead to the ground. So this is the ayah, he says, that pulls you closest to Him: you bring the highest part of you, your head, down to the lowest place, the

dust, and from there you announce that He is the Most High. You cannot get lower, and only from there do you say He is highest.

And He is named here as *Rabb*, your Lord, your Master. Out of all His names He chose this one, the Sheikh notes, because it is the heart of your whole relationship with Him: He is the Master, which means you are the slave. The believer and the denier both admit Allah created them, but the line between them is here, at *Rabb*. The one who says "why did Allah do this to me" has a quarrel, in the end, with this single word. Accept Him as Master first, carry what a slave carries, and only then can your exalting of Him come out whole.

Filling the silence of the surah before

The Sheikh keeps reminding you that a surah is not an island, and the seam here is striking. The surah just before this one, At-Tariq, had its own signature: Allah hid His own name all through it. Man is made from a gushing fluid, the secrets are exposed, He is able to return him, He is planning a plan, and never once "Allah" beside the arrogant. Then At-Tariq closed with a command to the Prophet ﷺ to leave the deniers be, to give them a little time. Al-A'la opens on the very next instruction: while you wait, occupy yourself with this. Exalt your Lord.

And where At-Tariq kept His name a secret, Al-A'la pours it back in. It opens with two of His names at once, *Rabb* and *al-A'la*, as if filling the silence the previous surah left. There is nothing hidden here anymore, so His name will keep appearing through the surah. At-Tariq had also drawn your eye to something high, that piercing bright star. Al-A'la answers it: you were impressed by the star, but there is One higher, *al-A'la*, the Most High, and nothing is above Him.

He made it, balanced it, then guided it

الَّذِي خَلَقَ فَسَوَّى

Who created and proportioned

AL-A'LA 87:2

وَالَّذِي قَدَّرَ فَهَدَىٰ

And who destined and [then] guided

87:3

Why does Allah deserve to be exalted at all? The next ayah answers, the Sheikh says: because He is the One who created, and no one else can. Then He did not just create, He *proportioned*, He evened and balanced what He made. Every creation is intricately leveled out. Your left side and your right, even the fluid in your two ears: let the balance in one ear slip and you are dizzy and aching. He balanced you in things you cannot see, and balanced you spiritually too, which is why this ummah is called the balanced nation, set in the middle between those who have knowledge without action and action without knowledge.

Then *qaddara fahada*: He destined, then He guided. The Sheikh draws out *taqdir* as the work of an architect, the exact plan drawn before a single stone is laid, the widths and depths and materials all measured first. And Allah decreed the whole universe fifty thousand years before He created anything. We already know, from our own small lives, that the more carefully a thing is planned ahead, the better it turns out. So the lesson buried in His planning is for you: do not rush, plan, let your work toward this life and the next be measured and unhurried.

And a plan is useless without guidance to follow it, so He guided. The Sheikh splits guidance in two. There is the guidance built into creation: who taught the newborn to find the breast, who timed the milk to be ready at the exact moment it is needed, who showed the ant to build on high ground away from floods and to nibble the edges off its stored seed so it cannot sprout in the dark? That is Allah guiding what He made. And there is the guidance of revelation: He did not leave us in the dark, He sent prophets and books to lead us out of darkness into light and home to Him.

The pasture that comes up, then turns to ruin

وَالَّذِي أَخْرَجَ الْمَرْعَىٰ

And who brings out the pasture

AL-A'LA 87:4

فَجَعَلَهُ غُثَاءً أَحْوَىٰ

And [then] makes it black stubble.

87:5

Then Allah gives you a worked example of all this making and guiding: He *brings out* the pasture, the green grazing land, up out of the earth. The Sheikh sets it beside the previous surah deliberately. At-Tariq spoke of man brought out alive from between the backbone and the ribs; here a different thing is brought out alive, the greenery from the womb of the ground. One comes living from the mother, the other living from the soil, and the parallel is the point. What was sent down dead into the dark and pulled back out alive is exactly what He says He will do with you.

And then He turns that lush green field into *ghutha'an ahwa*, dark withered stubble. The word *ahwa* is a deep, blackish color, and the scholars read this ayah two ways, the Sheikh explains, and the reading you pick shapes the rest of the surah. For most, this is the glory of the field collapsing into rubbish: green and beautiful one week, blackened and rotted and worthless the next, a picture of every enjoyment of this world and what it comes to in the end, which is why the surah will return to that very contrast at its close. (For others the darkening is a sign of ripeness, the plant reaching its mature fullness, which then sets up a gentle word to the Prophet ﷺ in the ayah that follows: just as the crop matures on schedule, so will the Qur'an settle in your chest, do not fear losing it.)

We will make you recite, and you will not forget

سَنَقْرَأُكَ فَلَا تَنْسَىٰ

We will make you recite, and you will not forget,

AL-A'LA 87:6

إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ ۚ إِنَّهُ يَعْلَمُ الْجَهْرَ وَمَا يَخْفَىٰ

Except what Allah should will. Indeed, He knows what is declared and what is hidden.

87:7

The Prophet ﷺ carried a quiet terror, the Sheikh says: that he might forget a piece of this revelation. There was nothing written, it was all heard, and he held in his chest the message of salvation for every generation to come. So he would rush, hurrying to lock the words in before they slipped. And Allah lifts the fear off him: *sanuqri'uka*, We will make you recite, *fala tansa*, and you will not forget. The very fact that an unlettered man who said "I am not a reciter" went on to recite the whole Qur'an is itself a proof that the Qur'an is a miracle. The grammar matters here, the Sheikh insists: this is not a command, "make sure you do not forget," which would have piled the burden back on him. It is a promise. Relax, look around at how everything grows on its schedule by Allah's plan, and know that gathering this book in your heart is part of that same plan, taken care of for you.

Then the exception: *except what Allah should will*. This opens the door to *naskh*, abrogation, where a ruling is revealed, serves its season, and is then lifted and even made to be forgotten. The Sheikh is careful: the word for "will" here is *sha'a*, a firm, knowing decision, not a casual wanting. So when an ayah is withdrawn it is not Allah changing His mind. He answers, in passing, a false idea (the Shia notion of *bada'*, that Allah might come to know later that something is better) by pointing back at the surah's own opening: to claim He lacked complete knowledge is to insult His perfection, the very thing you were just commanded to exalt, and to deny His names *al-Alim* and *al-Hakim*. And the wisdoms of abrogation are mercy: it comes in stages, the way wine was forbidden step by step so the believers could let it go without a shock; it tests submission, the way the qibla was turned to see who would obey; and it lightens the load. "He knows what is declared and what is hidden": the open recitation and the withdrawn verses both, the public word and the secret never spoken, all of it sits inside His knowledge.

Eased toward ease, then: remind

وَنيسركَ لِليسرى

And We will ease you toward ease.

AL-A'LA 87:8

فَذَكِّرْ إِنْ نَفَعَتِ الذِّكْرَىٰ

So remind, if the reminder should benefit;

87:9

The second comfort: *wa nuyassiruka lil-yusra*, We will ease you toward the utmost ease. The Sheikh lingers on a missing letter. In normal speech you would say you ease something *for* someone; Arabic would expect a small preposition there. Allah drops it, and dropping it pulls the words tight against each other. The easing is His act, the "you" is His Messenger ﷺ, and by removing the gap between them He draws His beloved close, an expression of His love folded into the grammar. He promises that the struggle, the memorizing first and then the whole weight of the mission, will be made miraculously light: the religion of Allah, the Prophet ﷺ said, is ease.

And once the worries are cleared away, the command lands: *fadhakkir*, so remind. The Sheikh points out that Allah names no object. Not "remind the people," not "remind so-and-so," just *remind*. So no matter where you are, who is listening, who walks out, who mocks you, your job is the verb itself. This is the second command of the surah, and with the first, *sabbih*, the two of them are a summary of the Prophet's entire life: by night exalting his Lord in prayer, by day out among the people reminding. He even reminded Abu Lahab, whose ruin was already sealed in the Qur'an, because the task is to remind, not to judge the outcome.

Two kinds of heart, two destinations

سَيَذَكَّرُ مَن يَخْشَىٰ

He who fears [Allah] will be reminded.

AL-A'LA 87:10

وَيَتَجَنَّبُهَا الْأَشْقَىٰ

But the wretched one will avoid it,

87:11

الَّذِي يَصَلِّي النَّارَ الْكُبْرَىٰ

[He] who will [enter and] burn in the greatest Fire,

87:12

ثُمَّ لَا يَمُوتُ فِيهَا وَلَا يَحْيَىٰ

Neither dying therein nor living.

87:13

The reminder lands, and people split. *Sayadhakkaru man yakhsha*: the one with any fear of Allah will take it and make the effort to remember. The Sheikh notes the open word *man*, whoever, not a named few: anyone carrying even a flicker of *khashya*, fear of a power greater than himself, can still turn back and benefit. On the other side, *yatajannabuha al-ashqa*, the most wretched goes out of his way to avoid it, turning his side to the Qur'an and putting all his effort into keeping his distance. Both verbs are built to show effort: one straining to come near, the other straining to flee.

And what marks this man as the most wretched, the Sheikh says, is shown by where he ends: he is the one who *burns in the greatest Fire*. Of all the punishments there, Allah names this one, the burning, because nothing is more desperate than a person on fire begging for it to stop. Then the verse that follows is the heavier blow: *thumma la yamutu fiha wa la yahya*, he neither dies in it nor lives. Death will come at him from every side and he will scream for it and it will not arrive. The denier who hated the thought of dying for Allah is now made to crave death as the most beloved thing, and it is withheld. The believer is the mirror of this: the one who loved to give his life for Allah is rewarded with a life that never tastes death, even the martyr feeling no more than a pinch as he passes straight on to his reward.

Which life are you actually choosing?

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ تَزَكَّىٰ

He has certainly succeeded who purifies himself

AL-A'LA 87:14

وَذَكَرَ اسْمَ رَبِّهِ فَصَلَّى

And mentions the name of his Lord and prays.

87:15

بَلْ تُوْثِرُونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا

But you prefer the worldly life,

87:16

وَالْآخِرَةَ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى

While the Hereafter is better and more enduring.

87:17

Now the good news arrives: *qad aflaha man tazakka*, he has certainly succeeded who purifies himself. The Sheikh hears the farmer in *aflaha*: the man who rises before dawn, plants and waters and frets over the season, pours in time and sweat, and then, at one harvest, gathers the fruit of all of it on the happiest day of his year. That is the believer, and his single harvest is the Day of Judgement. And the success comes in an order: first *tazakka*, purify yourself inside, clear out *shirk* and look honestly at your own character, charity being the surest way to cleanse both heart and wealth. Then *dhakara isma rabbihi*, mention your Lord's name, come to know Him through His names, because you pray better to a Master you actually know. And only then *fasalla*, and prays, the prayer standing last because it rests on the two before it.

Then Allah turns and faces you directly. Through the whole surah He had spoken in the third person, he, the one, this man. Here it snaps to second person: *bal tu'thiruna al-hayat ad-dunya*, but you prefer the worldly life. The Sheikh says the switch is deliberate, so you cannot file this away as being about someone else. And *dunya* carries two meanings at once: the close one and the low, inferior one. That is exactly why it wins. The Hereafter Allah calls success, the houses and rivers of the Garden, sits far off and unseen; the thing called success down here is right in your hand, the haram deal, the haram glance, all of it close, so you reach out and take it.

But *wal-akhiratu khayrun wa abqa*, the Hereafter is better and more lasting, two words the Sheikh notes are comparatives answering your comparison. He sharpens it with a picture:

imagine the costliest hotel suite in the world offered to you for a single week, against a rotting old cottage that is yours forever, and ask which an honest mind would take. This world is that week; the Garden is forever. And He asks you to buy it unseen, on nothing but His word, no brochure, no address, no viewing, paying the full price of your life and wealth now, precisely so He can see how much you truly trust His promise.

This was always the message

إِنَّ هَذَا لَفِي الصُّحُفِ الْأُولَىٰ

Indeed, this is in the former scriptures,

AL-A'LA 87:18

صُحُفِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَىٰ

The scriptures of Abraham and Moses.

87:19

The surah seals itself by reaching back through time: *inna hadha lafi as-suhuf al-ula*, this very reminder is already in the earlier scriptures, the *suhuf* of Ibrahim and Musa. Why these two prophets, the Sheikh asks, and not others? Because of who is sitting in front of the Prophet ﷺ as he recites. The Quraysh tie themselves to Ibrahim and never stop invoking him; the People of the Book tie themselves to Musa. So Allah tells each of them, in effect: this is not some new thing the Qur'an invented, it is the same message in the books of the very forefathers you claim. There is nothing here you should be hearing for the first time.

And the Sheikh draws the surah's three threads together to close. It opened with Allah and His perfection, ran through the revelation in its middle, and ended on the Hereafter, the same three matters carried in the scriptures of Ibrahim and Musa before it. One surah, the whole religion: know your Lord, hold His word, and live for the life that lasts.

What this surah asks of you

- **Get low to lift Him high.** You exalt the Most High from the lowest place there is, your forehead on the ground. The closest you come to Allah is in sujud, and the more you humble

yourself, the more He raises you. Perfection is declared from the dust, not from a height of your own.

- **Accept Him as Master first.** The fault line between belief and denial is the word Rabb. Both sides admit He created them; only one accepts that this makes him a slave who owes Him everything. Every "why did He do this to me" is really a quarrel with that one word.
- **The pasture is a sermon about you.** A dead seed goes into the dark earth and is brought out alive and green. The same verb, brought out, is the one He uses for raising people. The proof of your own return was growing in the ground the whole time.
- **Remind, and leave the outcome to Allah.** The command is just remind, with no object named. Not because every heart will respond, but because judging who deserves the message was never your job. He reminded even Abu Lahab. You speak; the benefit, if not to them, returns to you.
- **You are choosing a life, not just sins.** The world wins because it is close and in your hand, while the Garden is far and unseen. But close is also what dunya means: low, inferior. He asks you to prefer the life that lasts on nothing but His word, and that preference is the whole test.

Why this surah stays with us

Al-A'la is small enough to pray in a crowd and large enough to hold the entire religion: exalt your Lord above every flaw, trust the One who made and balanced and guided the world to gather His book in your chest and to raise you as He raised the pasture, and then, with the whole thing laid out, answer honestly which life you have been preferring. The Prophet ﷺ loved it, and the Sheikh shows you why: it does not argue you into faith, it lifts His name, points at the world, and waits for you to choose.

O Allah, You are the Most High, above every defect we could imagine and beyond every flaw. Make us of those who purify themselves, who mention Your name and pray, and who are not fooled by what is merely close. Let us prefer the life that is better and lasts, and meet our one harvest on the Day we stand before You with our hands full. Ameen.

Retold faithfully from Sheikh Abu Bakr Zoud's tafsir of Juz Amma (parts 1 to 4). Qur'an: Sahih International, verified via quran.ai. The reflection is the Sheikh's, the phrasing is The Daily Wird's.

Al-Ghashiyah

The surah that names the Day after the way it will cover you, and then asks you to look at a camel

Al-Ghashiyah opens the way you wake a sleeping house: a hand on the shoulder and a single question. Has the news reached you yet? Not a lesson, not a command, just news, of a Day so total it has been named after the way it will cover you. Sheikh Abu Bakr shows you that Allah is no longer even facing the deniers when He asks it. He has turned away from them and toward His Messenger ﷺ, and the turning away is the warning.

Has the news reached you?

هَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ الْغَاشِيَةِ

Has there reached you the report of the Overwhelming [event]?

AL-GHASHIYAH 88:1

The Sheikh keeps his habit of reading the seam between two surahs. Al-A'la, just before this, ended by exposing the people who prefer this passing world to the next, people walking, it says plainly, toward failure. Al-A'la closed with Allah speaking to those deniers directly, in the second person: you prefer the worldly life. Now Al-Ghashiyah opens with a second person again, but it is no longer aimed at them. Allah turns to His Messenger ﷺ and asks him: has the news of the Overwhelming reached you? It is as though, after all the warning, Allah is now angry enough that He will not address the deniers at all. He speaks past them, to His Prophet, about them.

Listen to the verb. Allah says the news *atak*, it came to you, and the Sheikh draws out why this is not the heavier verb *jaa*. In the Qur'an *jaa* is kept for something enormous arriving, the command of Allah, the Day itself crashing in. *Ataa* is for something that arrives lightly, easily: words, a story, a piece of news. Think of a student walking into school, an everyday arrival, against a president sweeping in with his entourage, a once-in-a-lifetime event. So here Allah is not describing the event of the Overwhelming landing on the world; He is describing the *news*

of it reaching the Prophet ﷺ, and news travels light. The event will be *jaa*. The report of it is *ataa*.

And why ask at all, when Allah knows the answer? The Sheikh hands you the scene of a principal who walks into a class that has just failed, ignores the students, and turns to the teacher: did you not teach them everything they needed? Two things happen at once. He turns his back on the failing students, which is itself a sign of his anger, and he affirms the teacher, who did his job. That is exactly the posture here. The question is a reproach aimed at the deniers, and at the same time a reassurance to the Messenger ﷺ: yes, you delivered it, the news reached you and it reached them, the failure is theirs. There is even a narration that the Prophet ﷺ, hearing an old woman recite this very ayah, stood and listened, and the report came to him heavy, the way truth this large always lands.

The event named after the way it covers you

Why call the Day *al-Ghashiyah*? The Sheikh traces it to *ghashiyah*, to cover something over completely, to envelop it whole. The Day is named after what it does: it will cover the entire earth and everyone on it. There is a mercy hidden in the choice of this name, he says. Think of how busy this life keeps people, their work, their families, their entertainment, the world that wraps itself around a heart until nothing else gets in. A person is shopping, driving, checking a bank balance, planning a move. Then the Overwhelming comes, and in a single instant it covers every one of those plans. The shopping, the schedule, the worry you were carrying a second ago, all of it gone under, and now there is only one thing in front of your eyes: the Day itself.

So the name works two ways. It covers the earth, and it covers your concerns. The very preoccupation Al-A'la accused these people of, drowning in the near life, is answered by a Day that drowns the near life out. The Sheikh also notes the word the surah uses for this news, *hadith*: literally a thing that happens, and the same word the Arabs use for something brand new, the way an accident just now is *hadith*. The Day of Judgement has been mentioned in the Qur'an again and again; it is not new at all. But here it is set before you as if you are meeting it for the first time, a fresh angle on a thing you already knew, so that it lands on you new.

The first faces: working, exhausted, with nothing to show

وَجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ خَاشِعَةٌ

[Some] faces, that Day, will be humbled,

AL-GHASHIYAH 88:2

عَامِلَةٌ نَاصِبَةٌ

Working [hard] and exhausted.

88:3

The surah opens its description not with the saved but with the damned, and the Sheikh explains why: Al-A'la ended on the people headed the wrong way, so Al-Ghashiyah simply picks up the same thread and shows you where they end up. Notice too that Allah says *wujuh*, faces, without the definite article, so the reading is *some* faces, and the doubled marks on the word carry the sense of *many*. Some faces, and they will be many. The instant you hear some, you are already waiting for the other group, and it is coming.

Khashi'ah, humbled, is a cousin of a word from the previous surah, but heavier, because this surah is heavier in theme. It is the look of a creature overwhelmed by terror until the muscles go slack and the bones go weak. And here is the piercing detail the Sheikh lingers on. For the believer, humility lives in the heart, which is an honor. For these faces, the dread is not in the heart at all; it is dragged out onto the face, the eyes, the features, where every onlooker can see it. To wear your terror on the outside rather than carry it inside is, the scholars say, the very floor of humiliation.

Then *amilah nasibah*: working, and worn out by the working. The Sheikh paints two men coming home, one from a day under the sun on a rooftop, one from a day of rest, and how you can read which is which on their faces. These faces are the exhausted kind. And the bite of it is this: in the world these people would not tire themselves for Allah, so on that Day they tire themselves running, fleeing, scrambling for an escape that is not there. The labor they refused to spend on Him is spent anyway, now, with nothing at the end of it. He even reads it against the people who do exhaust themselves, but in worship Allah will not accept, or in the endless chase after the dollar, all their lives poured into work, work, work, only to be handed, at death, a stone that reads rest in peace, and no rest in it at all.

The fire that will not let them die, and the thorn

تَصَلَّى نَارًا حَامِيَةً

They will [enter to] burn in an intensely hot Fire.

AL-GHASHIYAH 88:4

تُسْقَى مِنْ عَيْنِ آنِيَةٍ

They will be given drink from a boiling spring.

88:5

لَيْسَ لَهُمْ طَعَامٌ إِلَّا مِنْ ضَرِيحٍ

For them there will be no food except from a poisonous, thorny plant

88:6

These exhausted faces find no hotel waiting, no bed, no relief. They are cast into a fire that is *hamiyah*, and the Sheikh opens the word like a box with two compartments. *Hama* can mean a fire scorched to its fiercest heat, and it can mean to prevent, to hold back. Both are meant at once. The fire is at its most intense, and at the same time it prevents: it will not let the skin burn away to nothing, will not let the pain pause, will not let them die out of it. The mercy of an ending is exactly what is withheld.

When pain that deep sets in, the body screams for water. So they are given drink, *tuska*, the Sheikh notes, the very word used for pouring liquid into the mouth of an animal, their mouths held open and the fluid poured in. And the spring is called *'ayn*, a word with a hopeful ring to it, the place water flows from, the word for the eye, for a thing lovely to look at. You almost expect relief. Then comes *aniyah*: water at its boiling point, that only gushes once it has reached that heat. Elsewhere a hot drink cools on the way down; this one does the opposite, boiling in the stomach and tearing back out of them.

As for food, there is none but *dari'*. In the desert this is a known plant, thorny, poisonous, itchy, so vicious that grazing animals swerve to avoid its sting, and the only beast that will eat it is the camel. Hold on to the camel, the Sheikh says, because the surah will come back to it. The verse says *min dari'*, from it, which means they must even hunt for it, picking their way through

the thorns, pricked from every side just to reach the food that will not feed them. And it does the two things real food never does: it does not nourish (*la yusmin*) and it does not blunt hunger (*la yughni min ju'*). They keep eating, and stay starving. When some of Quraysh heard this and scoffed, our camels grow fat on thorns, so will we, the answer came in the verse itself: this thorn adds no fat, and lifts no hunger, ever.

The other faces, soft with delight

وَوُجُوهُ يَوْمَئِذٍ نَاعِمَةٌ

[Other] faces, that Day, will show pleasure.

AL-GHASHIYAH 88:8

لَسَعِيهَا رَاضِيَةٌ

With their effort [they are] satisfied

88:9

فِي جَنَّةٍ عَالِيَةٍ

In an elevated garden,

88:10

Now the surah turns, and the Sheikh turns with it. The same word that gave us *some* faces at the start, *wujuh* with no definite article, gives us *some* faces again, and the doubled mark on the word carries the sense of *many*, so this second group is large too, the followers of the prophets. Where the first faces were *hashi'ah*, these are *na'imah*, from *na'uma*, softness, ease, freshness. It is the look of a face that has just been handed a gift: lit up, rested, with no tiredness left on it. And once more Allah pins it to *yawma'idhin*, that Day, set early in the line where Arabic would usually leave it at the end. The placement means *especially* that Day. Not now. Now this group toils, gives its life and its wealth, finds no ease. The freshness is kept for later.

So the Sheikh sets the two side by side. One people work themselves to exhaustion in the wrong direction and wake on that Day worn out, with only more labor ahead. The other people exhaust themselves for Allah, and wake fresh, rested, ready, only now there is no more work to

do, just pleasure upon pleasure. The believer who spent himself here is handed rest there; the denier who chased the near life here is handed toil there.

Why are these faces so pleased? *Li sa'yiha radiyah*, satisfied with their striving. The Sheikh stops on *sa'y*, which is not a casual effort but a fast, urgent pace, the walk of someone with a deadline, a touch of panic in it, the way Fir'awn turned and paced when he saw the magicians fall in prostration. These believers ran like that in the world, eagerly, consistently, feeling the clock against them, and so on that Day they are content with every drop of it: the striving to purify the soul, the remembrance kept up, the prayer, the charity, the staying away from the haram, the carrying of this deen. Their worldly projects, the work and the business that filled their days, will not even come to mind. When they see the reward, the Sheikh says, they will wish they had spent their whole lives on nothing else.

He catches one more thing in the grammar. Allah says *li sa'yiha*, with a lam, where you would expect *bi*, pleased *by* their striving. The lam opens a second meaning on top of the first. Yes, they are pleased when they see the reward their effort bought. But they are also pleased that they were *given the chance* to strive at all, that Allah honored them by letting them be His servants. To be allowed to pray, to give, to obey, is itself the gift, the way a man thanks the one who promoted him not only for the higher pay but for the trust. They will thank Allah forever for the promotion of being His.

Keep in mind, the Sheikh insists, that this is a Makki surah, revealed when the Muslims were the ones humiliated and insulted as they recited and called to Allah. To them this comes as a turning of the tables: you are the honored ones, you are the ones who will rest, and the deniers at ease around you now are the ones who will labor and grieve later. And what is held for these fresh faces? A garden, *'aliyah*, raised high. The Sheikh asks why high, and answers from how we are built: on a road trip you pull over where the land rises and the eye runs far; at a hotel you ask for the top floor; hikers climb to the peak and only there sit down to take in the view. The longing for the high place with the open view is planted in us, and Allah meets it with a garden lifted above everything, pleasure laid on pleasure.

No idle word, a flowing spring, and couches raised high

لَا تَسْمَعُ فِيهَا لِأَغْيَةٍ

Wherein they will hear no unsuitable speech.

AL-GHASHIYAH 88:11

فِيهَا عَيْنٌ جَارِيَةٌ

Within it is a flowing spring.

88:12

فِيهَا سُرُرٌ مَّرْفُوعَةٌ

Within it are couches raised high

88:13

وَأَكْوَابٌ مَوْضُوعَةٌ

And cups put in place

88:14

وَنَمَارِقٌ مَصْفُوفَةٌ

And cushions lined up

88:15

وَزَرَائِبٌ مَبْثُوثَةٌ

And carpets spread around.

88:16

The first gift inside the garden is silence of a certain kind: *la tasma'u fiha laghiyah*, you will hear in it no idle, hurtful word. And the Sheikh catches a sudden shift. The whole surah has run in the third person, *tusqa*, they are given to drink, *tasla*, they are flung in. Here Allah turns and speaks straight to His Messenger ﷺ: *you* will not hear any nonsense in there. That turn, he says, makes this ayah a quiet guarantee that the first one promised Paradise is the Prophet ﷺ himself. And the gift fits the man precisely: the one who, as he called to this deen, was met with insult and useless talk, told he was insane, told he was possessed, is told that in the Garden none of that garbage reaches the ear at all. The Sheikh widens it: bad speech wounds wherever it lands, even in the most beautiful house, and how many fine homes hide a marriage

breaking on harsh words, children shouting at parents, a wretched life behind a lovely door. To be spared all of it is its own paradise. Just as you would never buy a house among bad neighbors, here is a neighborhood promised perfectly at peace.

Then the water: *fiha 'aynun jariyah*, within it a flowing spring. You are high in the garden, the Sheikh says, seated above a spring that pours without stop, the *jariyah* in its present tense meaning it never ceases and never stales, always fresh, always moving. Set that beside the people of the Fire forced to drink water at its boiling point. The most expensive hotels on earth build a waterfall in the lobby and a pool for the view; people travel to stand beside flowing water and photograph it; a man with a fine home will install an artificial fountain just to hear it run, because the soul is drawn to this. The Qur'an named the longing more than a thousand years ago and still we chase it, which is the Sheikh's point: Allah, who made us, offers us the very thing we are built to want, only without end and without a bill.

Next the seating: *fiha sururun marfu'ah*, raised couches. The Sheikh unfolds the whole idea of the couch in Arab life. The desert Arab sat on the floor, because his life was movement, camp to camp, and a couch is a burden to drag across the sands. Only the settled and the wealthy, those who built a house and meant to stay, owned couches. So a couch carried a meaning: permanence, a place you are not leaving. That is what Allah is offering with *surur*, a home to stay in forever, with no fear of loss, furniture that never wears out or falls from fashion the way the things of this world do. And He calls them *marfu'ah*, raised, an object-noun that means someone raised them *for you*, custom-built, Allah Himself designing your place. Why raised? So you can sit back and survey everything you own, the Sheikh says, the way a judge or a king is seated above the room, the way good design faces a couch down the hall so the eye runs as far as it can reach.

Then the cups and the comfort, laid out in a row of object-nouns that each mean *done for you*. *Akwabun mawdu'ah*, cups set in place: the *kub* is the tall, slender, handleless vessel kept in history for the finest drinks, and *mawdu'ah*, a noun rather than a verb, means it is not set down once but placed again and again, refilled the instant it empties, forever, and free, where the world's endless refill always ends in a bill. *Wa namariqu masfufah*, cushions lined up: the small pillows you tuck behind you for that extra ease, here in row upon row, so everywhere the eye lands it finds comfort. *Wa zarabiyyu mabthuthah*, fine carpets spread about: the rich, delicate rugs the wealthy lay in their grandest rooms, and *mabthuthah*, spread out as far as the eye can see, which tells you how vast the room is. The Sheikh draws the thread together: every single thing here, the high garden, the peace, the flowing spring, the lasting couch, the bottomless cup, the cushions and the carpets, is exactly what the human being chases his whole life, building a house, filling it, fixing it. So Allah speaks to the mind plainly. Which house do you

want, the one you scramble after here, or the one I am offering, guaranteed? The choice, the Sheikh says, is handed back to you: now decide how much striving it is worth.

Then look at the camel

أَفَلَا يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَى الْإِبِلِ كَيْفَ خُلِقَتْ

Then do they not look at the camels - how they are created?

AL-GHASHIYAH 88:17

Having shown both ends, the Fire and the Garden, the surah now turns your face to the world, and it begins with the very animal Quraysh had thrown in Allah's face. You boasted that your camels live on thorns, the Sheikh paraphrases, so let Me tell you about the camel. And notice the grammar: *kayfa khuliqat*, how it was created, in the passive. Had it said how *We* created it, the spotlight would fall on the Creator. By saying how it *was* created, the spotlight falls on the creation itself. Allah is not even asking these arrogant people to praise Him yet; He is asking the smaller thing, just look, just reflect on the animal, and perhaps that will walk you back to the One who made it.

And what a thing to look at. The camel is the largest of the tamed animals, strong enough to crush a man, yet a child can lead a whole train of them by a single rope. It survives up to eight days on the least water, feeds on the thorn no other animal can stomach, gives milk where there is no other drink, stores its own food in its humps, carries you high with a view of everything, and serves you even when it is exhausted. Its meat feeds you, its hide clothes you, and in a hadith the Prophet ﷺ taught that even its milk and its urine are a cure. From nose to hump the whole creature is a mercy custom-built for the desert, and the Sheikh sets it beside the custom-built Garden the surah just described: both perfectly fitted, both designed down to the detail.

But the deepest reason it is named, he says, is in a hadith: the believer is pliant and easy, like the trained camel, which goes wherever it is led, and when it is told to kneel, even on a hot, jagged rock, it kneels. This huge, powerful creature lowers itself in obedience to a master who may be no more than a child. That is the lesson aimed straight at the arrogance of Quraysh, and at ours: humble yourself before your Master the way this mighty animal humbles itself, and obey even when obeying is hard, even when there is pain in the kneeling. The Sheikh notes the Prophet ﷺ draws the same likeness to the honeybee elsewhere, but here it is the camel: power that chooses to bow.

The sky, the mountains, the earth

وَإِلَى السَّمَاءِ كَيْفَ رُفِعَتْ

And at the sky - how it is raised?

AL-GHASHIYAH 88:18

وَإِلَى الْجِبَالِ كَيْفَ نُصِبَتْ

And at the mountains - how they are erected?

88:19

وَإِلَى الْأَرْضِ كَيْفَ سُطِحَتْ

And at the earth - how it is spread out?

88:20

The Sheikh reads these as the eye traveling. You are seated up on the camel, so you are already looking; lift your gaze and you meet the sky, raised without a single pillar, a distance the narrations measure in centuries of travel. Ask yourself how it was lifted, and finding no answer, you arrive at the real point: the One who raised it like this can bring it down like this, and the bringing down is the Day the whole surah is warning you of.

Drop your eyes from the sky and the next thing you meet is the mountains, *kayfa nusibat*, how they were set. The Sheikh loves this verb because it holds two opposite meanings at once. *Nasaba* can mean driven down deep into the ground, and it can mean raised up high, and the mountain is exactly both: as much hidden root below as visible peak above, a thing modern study only lately uncovered and the Qur'an stated long ago. The same root even carries the sense of being worn out and wobbling, which is precisely what these firm mountains will become on the Day, shaken loose until nothing of them remains. One word holds the mountain as it is, and the mountain as it will be.

Then the eye falls lower still to the earth, *kayfa sutihat*, how it was spread and smoothed out flat for you. And the Sheikh catches the second life in this word too: *sath* is also a roof. Why would Allah call the earth a roof, in a surah all about the Day to come? Because one day this earth will be your roof, the moment you are laid in the grave and the dirt is pushed back over

you, and what was the floor you walked on becomes the ceiling above you. So even the flatness of the ground is quietly pointing you to where you are headed.

So remind, you are only a reminder

فَذَكِّرْ إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُذَكِّرٌ

So remind, [O Muḥammad]; you are only a reminder.

AL-GHASHIYAH 88:21

لَسْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِمُصَيِّرٍ

You are not over them a controller.

88:22

إِلَّا مَنْ تَوَلَّىٰ وَكَفَرَ

However, he who turns away and disbelieves -

88:23

فَيُعَذِّبُهُ اللَّهُ الْعَذَابَ الْأَكْبَرَ

Then Allāh will punish him with the greatest punishment.

88:24

After the signs comes the instruction, and the Sheikh hears in it the whole job of the Prophet ﷺ and of anyone who carries this message. *So remind*. Allah does not say remind them and make them believe, He says simply remind, with no object, so whether they listen or not is not your burden. Your task is to put the reminder before people: the nations Allah destroyed, so they do not repeat the mistake; the ones He saved, so they follow that path; the Day ahead; the covenant they once owed Him. Then leave the result to Allah. The effect may come late, as it came to Abu Sufyan years on, or arrive all at once, as it struck the magicians of Pharaoh the moment they saw the sign.

And He frees the Prophet ﷺ of the weight he was carrying: *you are not a musaytir over them*. A musaytir, the Sheikh explains, is one set in total charge of another, watching every move, controlling and recording it, like a warden who governs a prisoner's every act. You are not that, Allah tells him; you cannot force faith into a heart, cannot drive anyone into the Garden. This ayah is proof that there is no compulsion in the religion, and it is also tender: it lifts the grief of a Prophet ﷺ who nearly wore himself out with worry that his people would not believe.

The exception is sharp. *Except the one who turns away and disbelieves*, over him you will, in time, be given authority, and Allah Himself will seize him with the greatest punishment. The Sheikh hears in this a quiet promise made in Makkah, where the Prophet ﷺ held no power at all: a day is coming when you will have authority over those who turned from you, and that day arrived at the conquest of Makkah, when he stood over the very people who had driven him out and chose, like Yusuf with his brothers, to say there is no blame on you today. The punishment, *al-akbar*, the greatest, is set deliberately beside the *naran hamiyah* of the opening: the surah's beginning and end reaching out to clasp hands.

To Us is their return, and the reckoning

إِنَّ إِلَيْنَا إِيَابَهُمْ

Indeed, to Us is their return.

AL-GHASHIYAH 88:25

ثُمَّ إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا حِسَابَهُمْ

Then indeed, upon Us is their account.

88:26

The surah closes on two short, settling lines, and the Sheikh weighs the exact word for return. Allah does not use the everyday word for coming back, the kind where you return to a house and leave it again tomorrow. He uses *iyab*, the final return, the one with no second leaving. Even the grave is not *iyab*, he says, because you will come out of it; *iyab* is the standing before Allah after which there is nowhere left to go. And he reads it as the gentlest of hints to anyone returning to Allah in this life too: repent with that same finality, a turning back you never walk away from again.

Then *thuma*, then, a pause, a stretch of time, *upon Us is their account*. The word *alayna*, upon Us, carries the sense of something Allah has taken on Himself as a binding promise: the reckoning will come, certainly, and it is His to conduct. For the one who turned away, every deed is questioned, and to be questioned at all, the Prophet ﷺ warned, is to be ruined. The Sheikh closes by tying the surah's two ends together: it opened with the Overwhelming arriving, and it ends telling you what happens when it arrives, your final return to Allah and your accounting before Him. And the next surah, Al-Fajr, opens swearing by the dawn, as if to swear: by the daybreak, this reckoning is coming.

What this surah asks of you

- **The Day is named after how it will cover you.** Al-Ghashiyah means the thing that envelops everything. It will cover the earth, and it will cover every worry and plan you are drowning in right now. The world wraps itself around your heart until nothing else gets in; this Day unwraps it in an instant.
- **Effort spent anywhere but for Allah is still spent.** The damned faces are working and exhausted, worn out running for an escape that is not there. The labor you will not give Him now is taken from you anyway, later, with nothing at the end of it. Spend it where it counts.
- **Look, and let looking lead you back.** The camel, the sky, the mountains, the earth: Allah asks the smallest thing of the arrogant, not praise, just a look. Reflect on the made thing, and it will carry you to the One who made it, and to the Day He can fold it all back up.
- **Be like the camel before your Master.** The strongest of tamed animals kneels when it is told, even on a hot rock. The believer is pliant like that with Allah: obeying even when obedience is heavy, lowering a real strength rather than flaunting it.
- **Your job is to remind, not to control.** You are a reminder, not a musaytir set over hearts. Put the reminder before people and leave the result to Allah. It frees you of a weight that was never yours to carry, and it is why there is no compulsion in this religion.

Why this surah stays with us

Al-Ghashiyah wakes you with a question and then refuses to let you drift back off. It shows you both faces, the one wearing its terror on the outside and the one soft with the rest it earned, and then, instead of arguing, it points: a camel kneeling on a rock, a sky with no pillars, a mountain rooted as deep as it is tall, an earth flat underfoot that will one day be the roof over

your grave. The same Hand that raised all of this can bring it down, and on the day it does, your return is final and your account is due.

O Allah, make us people of the Qur'an, who hear its reminders and are moved by them. Let the news of the Overwhelming reach our hearts and not just our ears. Make our faces among the faces at ease, pleased with what they strove for, and not among the faces worn out for nothing. Teach us the humility of the camel before its master, and make our return to You a good return, and our reckoning an easy one.

Retold faithfully from Sheikh Abu Bakr Zoud's tafsir of Juz Amma (parts 1, 2 and 3). Qur'an: Sahih International, verified via quran.ai. The reflection is the Sheikh's, the phrasing is The Daily Wird's.

Al-Fajr

The surah that swears by the first light, walks you past the ruins of the mightiest men who ever lived, and ends with a soul called home

Al-Fajr does not begin with an argument. It begins with a hand raised to swear: by the dawn, by ten nights, by the even and the odd, by the night as it slips away. Each oath, the Sheikh shows you, is quietly pointing at the same thing the deniers kept laughing off, the Day they would have to stand for. And then the surah does something bolder than any oath. It takes you on a walk, past the ruins of the strongest men who ever lived, and asks you to read the silence where their cities used to be.

An oath by the dawn, and the ten nights

وَالْفَجْرِ

By the dawn

AL-FAJR 89:1

وَلَيَالٍ عَشْرٍ

And [by] ten nights

89:2

Before a single oath lands, the Sheikh stops to ask the question most of us read straight past: why does Allah swear at all? When you and I take an oath, it is because we are not believed, so we reach for something we hope will tip the balance, *wallahi, I was there*. But no one is more truthful in speech than Allah, and everything He says is already true. So when Allah swears, the Sheikh explains, it is never to settle a doubt. It is to do two things: to seize your attention, and to flag that the thing He is swearing by is something great, something He is telling you to stop at and reflect on. And there is more. In the Qur'an the object of the oath is always tied to its subject, to the lesson coming after it. So you will not really understand this surah, he says,

until you understand why Allah swears by the dawn, and the ten nights, and the even and the odd, and the night as it goes.

Take the first oath, *wal-fajr*, by the dawn. *Fajr*, the Sheikh draws out, literally means to explode, to rip something open so that light pours through. Picture a black curtain drawn across a window, and then it splits down the middle and the morning floods in. That is *fajr*: light tearing through the dark. And it is the beginning of life, the hour the animals leave their dens and the birds begin without anyone waking them, the hour when, of all the creation that has a choice, only the believer rises, and rises for no reason on earth but his Lord. Nobody wakes at *fajr* to cook or to clean or to catch a flight; whoever is up then is up for Allah alone, which is why, the Sheikh says, the heart is never closer to its Lord than at that hour. And the dawn after a night of sleep carries the whole argument of the surah inside it: sleep is the smaller death, waking is the smaller resurrection. Every morning Allah returns the soul He held through the night, the same way He will raise you on the Day. That is how this opening ties straight back to the surah before it, which ended on two things, the return to Allah and the reckoning. You get up for *fajr* only for Allah; you will rise from the grave only for Allah.

Then *wa layalin ashhr*, and by ten nights. The Sheikh has you notice the precision: Allah does not say *the* ten nights, with the article that would pin it to one set. He leaves it open, and so the scholars read it as the last ten of Ramadan, or the first ten of Dhul-Hijjah, and the scope is meant to stay wide. What binds these to the dawn is that both make you look up: you raise your eyes to the sky to catch the first light, and you raise them to the moon to know a month has begun or is ending, exactly when its changing face is most visible. These, he adds, are the greatest nights and days of the year for worship, and he tells you to hold that thought, because at the very end of the surah Allah will name the reward for the one who fills them.

The even and the odd, and the night as it goes

وَالشَّفَعِ وَالْوَتْرِ

And [by] the even [number] and the odd

AL-FAJR 89:3

وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا يَسِرُّ

And [by] the night when it passes,

89:4

هَلْ فِي ذَلِكَ قَسَمٌ لِّذِي حِجْرٍ

Is there [not] in [all] that an oath [sufficient] for one of perception?

89:5

Now the even and the odd, *ash-shaf wal-watr*. The broadest reading the Sheikh gives is the most striking: the even is all of creation, because Allah made everything in pairs, sun and moon, male and female, sky and earth, day and night, guidance and misguidance, joy and grief, down to the atom with its opposing charges. The one thing with no pair, no equal, no partner, is Allah Himself: He is the odd, *al-watr*. So everything you lay eyes on, precisely because it comes paired, is pointing past itself to the One who does not. He brings it closer too. Every day you have ever lived is even, paired with its night, and there is exactly one Day coming with no night to pair it, standing utterly alone, the Day of Judgement, the odd one. Even the rhythm of your week is arguing the point. And he files away one more layer for the end: the even and the odd are also the prayers, the ones with an even count and the lone *witr* that closes the night.

Then *wal-layli idha yasr*, by the night as it goes, as it slips away in its last third when you can feel it leaving and the new day coming on. A student once asked his teacher what this oath meant, and the teacher answered: people travel by night, but look, it is the night itself that is traveling. The Sheikh's point is that you control what you do in the dark, but you do not control the dark; it is Allah who drives the night on and brings the day, Allah who owns time itself. So the passing night is a witness to His power, and that last third is itself a sacred hour of worship, the time the night prayer is prayed and supplication is answered.

And He seals the oaths with a question rather than a claim: is there in all of this an oath enough for *dhi hijr*? *Hijr*, the Sheikh unpacks, comes from a word for a boulder, and for holding something back. The Arabs called the intellect *hijr* because, like a great rock blocking a road, it is meant to stop you crossing the line your Lord drew. So the verse is not flattering raw cleverness; it is addressing the mind solid enough to rein a person in. To the one who lets these oaths sink in and is moved by them, the surah pays a quiet compliment: this is for people

who can actually think. The Sheikh notes Allah only calls us to reflect on an oath in one other place in the whole Qur'an, which tells you how seriously this one is meant to be taken. And there is a piece deliberately left unsaid: the thing being sworn to, the answer to all this swearing, is dropped from the verse. You are meant to supply it from what comes next, and what comes next is ruin after ruin. The unspoken oath, he says, is this: I will surely punish.

Have you not seen how your Lord dealt with them?

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ فَعَلَ رَبُّكَ بِعَادٍ

Have you not considered how your Lord dealt with 'Aad -

AL-FAJR 89:6

The warning of the unseen Day had not moved the deniers, the Sheikh explains, so now Allah shows them a punishment they can see with their own eyes: the ruins of the nations who came before, the wrecked cities they passed on their trade routes. If the oaths and the threats of the unseen will not reach you, He says in effect, then at least look at what already happened to the people who refused their prophets.

And notice the exact wording. Allah does not ask, did you see *what* I did to them. He asks, did you see *how, kayfa*, your Lord dealt with them. The Sheikh says this is deliberate, because of who Aad were. They were a people famous for might and size and strength, so when an Arab walked past their flattened homes, his first thought was never "what happened here." It was "how, with all that power, were these people brought down?" That is the very question Allah puts in his mouth. And the verb is *tara*, to see, but here it is the seeing of the heart and mind, the way you say "do you see what I mean," not seeing with the eye. He is asking you to look and understand.

Aad of Iram, the people of the pillars

إِرَامَ ذَاتِ الْعِمَادِ

[With] Iram - who had lofty pillars,

AL-FAJR 89:7

الَّتِي لَمْ يُخْلَقْ مِثْلَهَا فِي الْبِلَادِ

The likes of whom had never been created in the land?

89:8

Iram, the Sheikh notes, is another name for the nation of Aad, a tall and powerful creation sent a prophet they belied. They were known for one arrogant boast they would throw around: who is stronger than us? No one, they answered themselves. *Dhat al-imad*, possessors of the pillars, carries two pictures at once: bodies as strong as pillars, and towering constructions like nothing else built. So when Allah says the likes of whom had never been created *in the land*, He uses *bilad*, a word for an established, defended, civilized place, telling you just how advanced and unrivalled this city was.

Their punishment, the Sheikh recounts, came as a wind. People who had never known a violent storm saw blackness gathering on the horizon and told themselves it was rain, a mercy coming. It was a freezing, screaming wind that fell on them and did not stop for seven nights and eight days, until they lay across the ground like the hollow trunks of fallen palm trees, lifeless, untouched, swept clean off the earth. The very name Iram, he points out, hints at being ground into rubble: the people of the pillars became the rubble their name foretold.

Thamud, who split the rock with their hands

وَتَمُودَ الَّذِينَ جَابُوا الصَّخْرَ بِالْوَادِ

And [with] Thamūd, who carved out the rocks in the valley?

AL-FAJR 89:9

Then Thamud, and the Sheikh slows down on the verb *jabu*. It does not mean to scratch a name into stone or etch a little artwork. *Jaba*, he explains, is to crack open, to drill a wide hollow into something, the way the opening of a collar cuts an opening into cloth. Thamud took the hardest thing there is, sheer rocky mountains, and bored homes straight into them with their bare hands. No drills, no machinery, no hydraulics, just manpower splitting open the rock. Their dwellings still stand today, he says, and you can go and ask how it was ever done.

And He places them in *al-wad*, the valley, and that detail is not idle. Water gathers in valleys, so a people who settle in one are clever people: they found water first, then carved their

permanent homes. The Sheikh draws the bitter irony out. All that intelligence, all that strength, and when their prophet came with the truth they belied him and slaughtered the she-camel they had been forbidden to touch. Given three days' warning, the punishment came, and their power and their cleverness bought them nothing at all.

Pharaoh, owner of the stakes

وَفِرْعَوْنَ ذِي الْأَوْتَادِ

And [with] Pharaoh, owner of the stakes?

AL-FAJR 89:10

The third name is the climax, the Sheikh says, the strongest of the three: Pharaoh, *dhi al-awtad*, owner of the stakes. He unpacks three things the word carries. The stakes are the tent-pegs of Pharaoh's vast army, so many camps pitched and pegged across the land that from above you would see nothing but his soldiers. They are also his cruelty: Pharaoh tortured people by staking their limbs down, nailing them to the trunks of palm trees, the way he is reported to have punished even his own wife. And they point to his monuments, the great pyramids the Egyptians prided themselves on, raised on stone hauled from far away.

Why was Pharaoh the mightiest of all? The Sheikh makes you see it. Thamud was stronger than Aad because Thamud carved houses out of mountains. But Pharaoh's people went further still: there are no rocky mountains for kilometres around the pyramids, so they had to break those massive stones somewhere distant, carry each enormous boulder across the land, lay it, and build upward until the pyramids rose. That is a power beyond the other two. And here is the point the Sheikh wants Quraish, and you, to feel: every one of these nations was famous for building, and the Arabs built nothing like it. They lived in mud houses. If Allah flattened the mightiest builders who ever lived, what exactly is a people of mud houses feeling so secure about?

What they all shared, and the Lord who lies in wait

الَّذِينَ طَغَوْا فِي الْبِلَادِ

[All of] whom oppressed within the lands

AL-FAJR 89:11

فَأَكْثُرُوا فِيهَا الْفَسَادَ

And increased therein the corruption.

89:12

فَصَبَّ عَلَيْهِمُ رَبُّكَ سَوْطَ عَذَابٍ

So your Lord poured upon them a scourge of punishment.

89:13

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَبِالْمُرْصَادِ

Indeed, your Lord is in observation.

89:14

Having shown you how He destroyed them, Allah now tells you why. They *transgressed*, *taghaw*, in the land. The Sheikh draws a line between two kinds of lawbreaking: breaking a command and feeling sorry for it, and breaking it while laughing, crossing the line and delighting in the crossing. This was the second kind. They did not regret the slaughtered camel; they mocked afterward. And rebellion against the Lord never stays still: *fa-aktharu fiha al-fasad*, they multiplied corruption in the land. The Sheikh makes it contemporary. The buildings can be magnificent and the architecture flawless, but where Allah's command is thrown off, the city rots from inside, injustice, racism, abuse, people sleeping on the street, even in the most advanced countries on earth.

Then the punishment: *fa-sabba*, He poured it on them. The word is the one you use for upending a full bucket of water over someone, so it carries intensity and a relentless flow. And He calls it *sawt adhab*, a *whip* of punishment. Of all the ways to inflict pain, the Sheikh notes,

the whip is the cruellest, because the lash lands on skin still intact and feels every nerve, again and again. The word is singular, one scourge, and he ties it back to the oath: this life's punishment was *odd*, one lash. On the Day of Judgement comes the second, making it *even*. The verb "poured" also points forward to Pharaoh, who was literally drowned, water poured over him until he sank.

And the seal of the passage: *inna rabbaka la-bil-mirsad*, indeed your Lord is in wait, in ambush, watching the road. The Sheikh hears the mercy folded into the menace. Allah does not say "Allah is watching"; He says "*your* Lord," turning to His Messenger with closeness, as if to say: do not think you are alone in this, the One on the lookout is your own Lord, and He sees every tyrant on the road.

The test that man keeps reading wrong

فَأَمَّا الْإِنْسَانُ إِذَا مَا ابْتَلَاهُ رَبُّهُ فَأَكْرَمَهُ وَنَعَّمَهُ فَيَقُولُ رَبِّي أَكْرَمَنِ

And as for man, when his Lord tries him and [thus] is generous to him and favors him, he says, "My Lord has honored me."

AL-FAJR 89:15

وَأَمَّا إِذَا مَا ابْتَلَاهُ فَقَدَرَ عَلَيْهِ رِزْقَهُ فَيَقُولُ رَبِّي أَهَانَنِ

But when He tries him and restricts his provision, he says, "My Lord has humiliated me."

89:16

From the ruins of nations the surah turns to the heart of one man. The Sheikh fixes on the word *ibtala*, to test. Allah does not say *if* He tests you, He frames it as a certainty, only the timing is unknown: it is never a question of whether the test comes, only when. And then comes the surprise. When Allah honors a man and showers him with blessings, position, respect, an open hand, the man declares, "My Lord has honored me," as if the gifts were a verdict that he is loved and deserving.

Why, the Sheikh asks, does Allah call *that* a test, the giving rather than the taking? Because people only recognise a test when it hurts. Lost money, lost health, a wrecked car, that is obviously a trial. But ease is the quieter, harder test, precisely because it does not feel like one. So when provision is tightened, the same man swings to the opposite false verdict: "My Lord

has humiliated me." Both readings are wrong. The Sheikh's point is that this is where the corruption of the human heart begins: the moment you treat what you were given, or denied, as the measure of your worth before Allah, when in truth both the gift and the lack are the test itself.

The orphan, the poor, and the love of wealth

كَلَّا بَلْ لَا تُكْرِمُونَ الْيَتِيمَ

No! But you do not honor the orphan

AL-FAJR 89:17

وَلَا تَحَاضُّونَ عَلَىٰ طَعَامِ الْمِسْكِينِ

And you do not encourage one another to feed the poor.

89:18

وَتَأْكُلُونَ التَّرَاثَ أَكْلًا لَّمًّا

And you consume inheritance, devouring [it] altogether,

89:19

وَتُحِبُّونَ الْمَالَ حُبًّا جَمًّا

And you love wealth with immense love.

89:20

Then Allah cuts the man off with *kalla*, no, that is not it at all. The Sheikh has you notice the precise wording on the poor. Allah does not even say "you do not feed the poor"; He says you do not *encourage one another* to feed them, *la tahadduna*. You will not so much as say to a brother, there is a hungry man down the road, go and take him something. Even the word of encouragement has dried up. And the orphan, the one with no one to honor him, is left unhonored.

And He names the engine underneath all of it: *wa-tuhibbuna al-mal hubban jamma*, you love wealth with a love that is piled up and immense. The Sheikh lands the whole passage here. That love is so consuming that the inheritance is devoured *lamma*, swallowed whole, the rightful and the unlawful share gulped together without a pause to ask whose it was. This, he says, is the beginning of corruption and its whole journey: the love of money, growing until the orphan goes unhonored and the poor go unfed, and a man can stand surrounded by blessings and never once turn them toward anyone in need.

The earth ground to dust, and a regret that comes too late

كَلَّا إِذَا دُكَّتِ الْأَرْضُ دَكًّا دَكًّا

No! When the earth has been leveled - pounded and crushed

AL-FAJR 89:21

وَجَاءَ رَبُّكَ وَالْمَلَكُ صَفًّا صَفًّا

And your Lord has come and the angels, rank upon rank,

89:22

وَجِيءَ يَوْمَئِذٍ بِجَهَنَّمَ ۚ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَتَذَكَّرُ الْإِنْسَانُ وَأَنَّى لَهُ الذِّكْرَىٰ

And brought [within view], that Day, is Hell - that Day, man will remember, but how [i.e., what good] to him will be the remembrance?

89:23

يَقُولُ يَا لَيْتَنِي قَدَّمْتُ لِحَيَاتِي

He will say, "Oh, I wish I had sent ahead [some good] for my life."

89:24

فَيَوْمَئِذٍ لَا يُعَذِّبُ عَذَابَهُ أَحَدٌ

So on that Day, none will punish [as severely] as His punishment,

89:25

وَلَا يُوثِقُ وَثَاقَهُ أَحَدٌ

And none will bind [as severely] as His binding [of the evildoers].

89:26

Now the surah turns to wake the sick heart the only way left, by showing it the Day it kept forgetting, and it opens with *kalla*, no. The Sheikh hears the *no* landing on everything just said: no, do not dishonor the orphan; no, do not leave the poor unfed; no, do not swallow the inheritance; no, do not love wealth like that. And then, soon you will see where it all leads. *When the earth is pounded, blow upon blow, dakkan dakka*, the word for grinding a thing down until it is dust you could blow off your palm. He draws the line back to the surah before, which had you reflect on this same earth spread out and these same mountains pegged into it; now the surah you were told to admire is being flattened. After the great quake the mountains move and crumble, the valleys and castles and buildings go, and nothing is left. And the wealth this man hoarded, the Sheikh reminds you, sat on that earth. It is crushed to useless dust with everything else.

And your Lord comes, and the angels rank upon rank. This is a verse of Allah's attributes, and the Sheikh handles it the way the early generations did: we affirm that your Lord comes, in the manner that befits His majesty, and we do not ask *how*. Allah did not describe the how, and there is nothing like Him, so His coming is not like ours, just as His hand is not like ours; the Companions, who loved Him more than we do, never asked, so neither do we. Then the angels descend rank upon rank, like an army with no end, circle upon circle closing around the whole of creation gathered on the plain. And he catches the irony for Quraish, who used to boast of their armies and their might: here is your Lord speaking of His army, pouring down out of a sky so packed with angels there is not a space the width of four fingers without one of them prostrating.

Hell is dragged into view, *and brought, that Day, is Hell*. The verb, he notes, is not the soft word for arriving but the heavy one, a grand and terrible coming: Jahannam hauled forward in chains, seventy thousand reins and seventy thousand angels to each. *That Day man will*

remember - and here is the bitterest stroke. The word for man, *insan*, comes from forgetting; so it is the forgetful one who now, all at once, remembers everything, every rejected reminder, every unhonored orphan, every right he ate. *But how will the remembrance help him?* In the world the reminder came and he waved it off; now it floods back and is worth nothing. He cries *ya laytani qaddamtu li-hayati*, oh, I wish I had sent ahead for my life, and the Sheikh stops on the word: not "for my life back there," which he now sees was nothing, a second or two, but *for my life* here, the real one, the life he treated as an afterthought. Then the seal on the terror: *no one punishes as He punishes that Day, and no one binds as He binds*. In this world a punishment might have a window, a loose chain, a door left open. Not here. The sky is gone, the earth is dust, the graves are empty, there is nowhere left to run.

O soul at peace, return to your Lord

يَا أَيَّتُهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ

[To the righteous it will be said], "O reassured soul,

AL-FAJR 89:27

ارْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً

Return to your Lord, well-pleased and pleasing [to Him],

89:28

فَادْخُلِي فِي عِبَادِي

And enter among My [righteous] servants

89:29

وَادْخُلِي جَنَّتِي

And enter My Paradise."

89:30

Then the surah turns, and the change of address is the whole point. Allah is done with the deniers; He warned them, they did not care, and He turns His face away from them toward the

believer with some of the gentlest words in the Qur'an: *ya ayyatuha an-nafs al-mutmainna*, O soul at peace. The Sheikh notes the grammar, *O you*, second person, the way you speak to someone you are standing close to, not about. And he is careful about what this peace is. The *mutmainna* soul, he says, is the one with settled certainty that Allah is its Lord, no doubt left in it. Tranquility is not in a meal, or a holiday booked at the edge of the sea, or a Sunday trip with the family; it is in the heart, in the remembrance of Allah, and it goes with you wherever you are. He brings Ibn Taymiyyah, who said of his enemies, *what can they do to me? My garden is in my chest*. They could imprison the body; the peace was untouched. And he ties it straight back to the start of the surah: the man earlier said "my Lord humiliated me" the moment his provision was tightened, but this soul says *alhamdulillah* when given and stays patient when withheld, which is exactly why the Prophet ﷺ marveled that the believer's whole affair is good, thankful in ease and patient in hardship, rewarded either way.

Return to your Lord, well-pleased and pleasing to Him. These words, the Sheikh explains, are said at three moments: as the soul is drawn out at death, again at the resurrection, and once more at the door of the Garden. *Return to your Lord*, He says, not "return to Allah", second person again, closeness again. And the rewards arrive in a deliberate order he tells you to watch. First *radiyatan mardiyya*: you are pleased with Him and, the staggering half, He is pleased with you. Then *fadkhuli fi ibadi*, enter among My servants, the company of the prophets and the truthful and the martyrs and the righteous, the very people you spent your life longing to meet, now open to you with no private door shut. And only last, *wadkhuli jannati*, enter My Garden. The order teaches everything, he says: Allah's pleasure is named before Paradise, because His pleasure is the greater prize and the thing your whole life should aim at; secure that, and the Garden follows. And notice He says *My Garden*, and says it to each soul in the singular, "you, enter," not "all of you", so that the closeness is personal, a Garden He built and adorned and named as His own, handed to you by name.

And the Sheikh closes the surah the way it opened, with the oaths folded back in. Where do you build a soul like this? In exactly the sacred times he swore by at the start. *Wal-fajr*: the dawn prayer, when the heart is clearest and the world has not yet reached for it. *Wa layalin ashri*: the ten nights of Ramadan and Dhul-Hijjah, the most tranquil and weighted of the year. *Ash-shaf wal-watr*: the even prayers and the lone *witr*, the prayers themselves, where the Prophet ﷺ would say to Bilal, *give us rest with it*. *Wal-layli idha yasr*: the last third of the night, the hour of the night prayer and the answered supplication. Fill those, and you are promised the soul at peace, and the last word of the surah is the last reward, *jannati*, My Garden. The man who read his blessings as a verdict and the soul that stayed at rest with its Lord through gift and through lack do not end in the same place.

What this surah asks of you

- **Every dawn is an argument.** The light that breaks only after the night runs out is the very shape of the resurrection. So is your week, every day paired with a night, except the one Day that stands alone. The proof of the Day you doubt is built into the calendar you live by.
- **Strength is no shelter.** Aad raised pillars, Thamud carved mountains, Pharaoh built pyramids, and a wind, a warning, and a flood undid them all. If the mightiest builders who ever lived could not hide from their Lord, neither can anyone who comes after them.
- **Ease is the harder test.** Hardship announces itself as a trial, so you brace for it. Blessing slips in disguised as a reward, and that is exactly when the heart starts reading its bank balance as a verdict from Allah. Both the gift and the lack are the test, not the score.
- **The love of wealth is where corruption begins.** Watch the chain the surah draws: love wealth too much, and the encouragement to feed the poor dies, the orphan goes unhonored, and the inheritance gets swallowed whole. Guard the love, and the rest stays in its place.
- **Aim to be the soul at peace.** The terror of that Day is real, but it is not the last word. The last word is an invitation to a settled soul: come home, well-pleased and pleasing. That peace is built now, by trusting your Lord through what He gives and what He withholds.

Why this surah stays with us

Al-Fajr swears by the dawn and then walks you through a graveyard of empires to make one quiet point: nothing you build, hoard, or boast of will stand between you and your Lord on the road He is watching. The mightiest men in history are now a ruin the caravans drive past. And the surah does not leave you in the rubble. It turns, at the very end, to a soul kept at peace through every test, and calls it home.

O Allah, make us of those who see the dawn and remember the Day, who are not deceived by what You give or broken by what You withhold, and who honor the orphan and feed the poor while the giving still counts. Do not let our love of this world swallow our share of the next. And when You call the soul back, let ours be the one You name *mutmainna*, at peace, returning to You well-pleased and pleasing to You, into Your servants and into Your Garden.

Al-Balad

The surah that swears by Makkah, tells you that you were made for struggle, and then points to one steep road worth climbing

Al-Balad opens the way a courtroom opens, with one word raised like a hand to stop you: no. Then Allah swears by the most sacred city on earth, the city the Prophet ﷺ was standing inside while the people who shared his streets were already planning to spill his blood there. From that oath the surah pulls a hard truth out into the open: you were not made for ease. You were made for struggle, and the only question is which struggle you choose.

From a tranquil soul to a sacred city

Sheikh Abu Bakr begins, as he does across this juz, by tracing the seam between this surah and the one before it. Al-Fajr had closed on the most beautiful invitation in the Qur'an: the tranquil soul called home, "return to your Lord," well pleased and pleasing. So where does Al-Balad open? On the most tranquil place that returning ever leads to, the city of Makkah, where the House of Allah is built. When you finally reach it, the Sheikh says, the feeling is not the ordinary excitement of a holiday or a wedding. It is a calm that overtakes the whole body, a peace you have never tasted anywhere else.

He keeps drawing the threads together. Al-Fajr spoke of the soul returning to its Lord, and Makkah is where, every single year, the pilgrim physically acts out that return, answering Allah's call, wearing what looks like the shroud he will one day be raised in. Al-Fajr promised a soul that is well pleased, and one of the deepest joys a believer knows is to finally lay eyes on that House. So the surah that begins on the city is really finishing a sentence the last surah started: this is where the journey home is headed.

No. I swear by this city.

لَا أُقْسِمُ بِهَذَا الْبَلَدِ

I swear by this city [i.e., Makkah] -

AL-BALAD 90:1

The first word is *la*, no, and the Sheikh will not let you skip past it. Allah never opens an oath in the Qur'an with a bare "I swear"; there is always something before it. Here that something is a flat refusal, and he gives you the way to hear it: it is the same "no" you use when someone tells you a lie and you cut in, "no, no, no, I swear he was at the masjid." The denial silences a falsehood first, then the oath lands the truth. Allah is shutting down the wrong assumptions the deniers were carrying out of the surah before, then swearing to set the record straight.

And notice the word *this*. In Arabic, the Sheikh points out, you say "this" for what is near and dear, and "that" for what you push away. When Allah destroyed the rebellious nations He said "those" cities, holding them at arm's length. Here He says *this* city, drawing Makkah in close, because it is beloved to Him. He also notes a precision worth pausing on: an earlier surah called Makkah the "safe" city, but here the word safe is dropped, because the theme of Al-Balad is a conflict erupting in Makkah between the Prophet ﷺ and his people, and there is no peace in the middle of a war. Every word, he reminds you, sits exactly where it belongs.

And you are free of restriction in it

وَأَنْتَ حِلٌّ بِهَذَا الْبَلَدِ

And you, [O Muhammad], are free of restriction in this city -

AL-BALAD 90:2

This single word *hill* opens like a hand, and the Sheikh turns it over to show several faces, each true. The first is the bitter one: it tells the Prophet ﷺ that the Quraysh are about to treat his blood as *hill*, permitted, in the very city they hold sacred. These were people who would not so much as hunt an animal inside Makkah; they would walk twenty kilometres out into the desert heat rather than break its sanctity. Yet when it came to the best of creation, they were ready to tear up their own most sacred law to be rid of him. The Sheikh lingers here, because this is the pattern of every age: the forces of denial pride themselves on their principles and their codes,

right up until Islam becomes a real challenge, and then they break their own rules to crush it. Pharaoh broke his law to hunt Musa. A tribe that never attacked its own attacked the one man in it who carried the truth. Allah is preparing the believer's heart in advance: when you carry this message, expect the rules to bend against you.

But the word carries mercy too. A second reading, the Sheikh explains, is a permission given to no one before or after: at the Conquest of Makkah, the Prophet ﷺ would be allowed, for a single hour of a single day, to shed blood inside the sacred city and execute a handful of war criminals. He notes how stunning this is, because Al-Balad is a Makkan surah, revealed years before that conquest ever happened. The word was a guarantee of a victory not yet won. A third reading, *hill* as resident, says: you are settled in this city, and even when they expel you, you will return to it. So inside one word sit a warning, a promise of conquest, and a promise of homecoming, all of it pointing forward to a triumph Allah had already sealed.

By the parent and the child, and a life of hardship

وَوَالِدٍ وَمَا وَلَدٌ

And [by] the father and that which was born [of him],

AL-BALAD 90:3

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي كَبَدٍ

We have certainly created man into hardship.

90:4

After the city, Allah swears by a parent and what they bore. The Sheikh notes the scholars differ on who is meant, with the relationship of father to child standing in for it, a bond soaked in compassion and care, which will matter when the surah arrives at mercy. Then comes the subject of all this swearing, the truth the oaths were building toward: *We have certainly created man into kabad*, into toil, struggle, hardship that does not let up.

This is the answer to a question the believer carries quietly, the Sheikh says: Allah created Adam in Paradise and could have kept us all there, so why place us in a life of struggle? Because the tranquil soul of the surah before is not handed out for free. He ties it directly back to Al-Fajr: that surah praised the soul at peace, and this surah tells you the only road to that

peace runs through hardship endured for Allah's sake. The Prophet ﷺ himself said no one was ever harmed for Allah's sake the way he was harmed. The struggle is not a glitch in the design. It is the design, and it is the price of the home you are returning to.

Does he think no one is watching?

أَيُّحْسَبُ أَنْ لَنْ يَقْدِرَ عَلَيْهِ أَحَدٌ

Does he think that never will anyone overcome him?

AL-BALAD 90:5

يَقُولُ أَهْلَكْتُ مَالًا لُبَدًا

He says, "I have spent wealth in abundance."

90:6

أَيُّحْسَبُ أَنْ لَمْ يَرَهُ أَحَدٌ

Does he think that no one has seen him?

90:7

Now Allah turns to the man who took all that strength and struggle and aimed it at the wrong thing. Does he really imagine, the verse asks, that no one has power over him, that he answers to nobody? He struts about boasting, "I have destroyed piles of wealth." The Sheikh draws out the small ugliness underneath the boast: a man inflating how much he has burned through, often as a shield against being asked to give, so that when the needy approach for charity he has his excuse ready, I have nothing left, do not come to me.

Then the verse closes the trap: does he think no one saw him? He answered to no one in his own mind, spent as he pleased, refused as he pleased, and forgot the One whose eyes never left him. The boast was loud precisely because he assumed the room was empty. It never was.

Two eyes, a tongue, two lips, and two roads

أَلَمْ نُجْعَلْ لَهُ عَيْنَيْنِ

Have We not made for him two eyes?

AL-BALAD 90:8

وَلِسَانًا وَشَفَتَيْنِ

And a tongue and two lips?

90:9

وَهَدَيْنَاهُ النَّجْدَيْنِ

And have shown him the two ways?

90:10

Against that forgetfulness Allah lays out the gifts the man never counted. Did We not give him two eyes? Look up and down at this gift, the Sheikh says, and ask who could possibly have made it. A tongue, so he could speak, and two lips. He draws out a striking point on the lips: Allah gave them so you could close them, so you could govern the tongue behind them. So when that tongue says something it should never have said, do not blame the gift, blame yourself, because the lips that could have stopped it were yours to shut. You were made responsible.

And then the two roads: We showed him the two ways, *an-najdayn*, the high road of good and the low road of evil, both made plain. The eyes to see, the tongue and lips to speak and restrain, the two paths marked out, every tool he needed was placed in his hands. The man who boasted that no one had power over him was, the whole time, walking on a road Allah laid, looking through eyes Allah opened. The equipment was never the problem. The choice of road is.

The steep pass: what is al-aqaba?

فَلَا اقْتَحَمَ الْعَقَبَةَ

But he has not broken through the difficult pass.

AL-BALAD 90:11

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الْعَقَبَةُ

And what can make you know what is [breaking through] the difficult pass?

90:12

فَكَرَّ بِنَاصِيَةِ رَقَبَتِهِ

It is the freeing of a slave

90:13

أَوْ إِطْعَامٍ فِي يَوْمٍ ذِي مَسْجَبَةٍ

Or feeding on a day of severe hunger

90:14

يَتِيمًا ذَا مَقْرَبَةٍ

An orphan of near relationship

90:15

أَوْ مِسْكِينًا ذَا مَتْرَبَةٍ

Or a needy person in misery

90:16

Given two roads, the man took the easy one downhill, and Allah voices the reproach: he did not storm the steep pass. Stay with the picture the Sheikh has been building, he says: a person

stands at the foot of a bare, rocky hill, and two clean paths climb away from him, one to good and one to evil, both steep, both hard, because anything uphill costs. The difference is where the hardship sits. The good road is brutal at the start and easy at the end, opening onto the Garden. The evil road is easy at the start and ends where the real difficulty begins, in the Fire. And the human being, the Sheikh observes, loves ease at the beginning. He grabs whatever is quick and immediate and shoves every difficulty to later, later, later, until it grows. So Allah's verb here is sharp. The word *iqtahama* is to plunge into something headlong, throwing yourself into hard labor without weighing it first, and once you are in you cannot climb back out. It is the feeling, he says, of buying a flat-packed cupboard, spreading the screws and glue and panels across the floor, and halfway through realizing what you have gotten yourself into with no way back. That is the energy Allah wants aimed at the high road, and the man would not spend it.

Then the Sheikh slows down on a piece of grammar that changes everything. Allah says *fa la iqtahama*, using *la*, the particle of negation that normally lives with the present tense, and pairs it with a past-tense verb where you would expect *ma*. That mismatch is deliberate and does two things. First, *la* opens the negation onto many things rather than one, so He is already signaling that the steep pass is not a single deed but several, which is exactly the list about to arrive. Second, the construction carries the weight of a question, a *why*: why did he not break through the pass? Did We not give him two eyes, a tongue, two lips, and guide him to the two roads? So with all of that in his hands, why would he not throw himself up the climb? It is a complaint and a summons at once. Allah is not merely reporting that the man failed, He is calling every one of us to plunge into the pass ourselves.

And what is the pass? Watch the verb in the next ayah, the Sheikh says. Allah asks, *and what can make you know what the steep pass is*, using *adraka*, the past tense. He explains a pattern that runs through the Qur'an: when Allah asks "what can make you know" in the past tense, *adraka*, He is about to tell you the answer, but when He uses the present, *yudrika*, He withholds it, as He does with the timing of the Hour. So the very choice of *adraka* here is a mercy. Allah has just commanded us to storm this pass; had He left us with *yudrika*, we would be ordered up a road we could never even identify, and that would be a terrible bind. Instead He leans in to spell it out, deed by deed.

The first is *fakku raqaba*, freeing a slave. The Sheikh notes that Arabic has several words for rescue, and they are not interchangeable: you use one word for pulling someone from a fire or from drowning, but *fakk* is reserved for releasing a captive or a slave. And the word for the slave, *raqaba*, is the *back* of the neck, not the front, and that is not random. He pictures the chain: linked at the front, a pull drags the slave forward, but the image of the back of the neck conveys the choke and the helplessness of bondage, a person with no choice but to move as

he is pulled. So the very word grieves over slavery before it commands the freeing. He points out that *fakku raqaba* comes as a noun, not a verb, and nouns in Arabic carry permanence, so this is not a single act of manumission but a standing commitment to keep freeing slaves. And this, he stresses, was revealed in the early Makkan years, which is the answer to anyone who claims Islam endorses slavery: from the very beginning Allah was urging people to set slaves free. Islam did not abolish every form outright, he explains, but it abolished the unjust forms, the man enslaved for a debt or a kidnapping or his poverty, and kept only the just, and even then it commanded that a slave be treated like family, never overburdened, called a brother under your hand. He also passes on Ikrimah's lone and striking reading, that *fakku raqaba* can mean freeing your *own* neck from the slavery of sin by turning back to Allah in repentance, which is itself the first and steepest step of the climb.

The second deed is *it'amun fi yawmin dhi masghaba*, feeding on a day of severe hunger, and again the Sheikh shows it as a noun, a settled habit of feeding rather than a one-off. But the precision is in *masghaba*. Allah does not just say feed the poor on any ordinary day. *Masghaba* is hunger, and the Arabic idiom describes a whole people gripped by famine, widespread hunger when an entire nation is starving. So the command, he says, is to feed especially on the day the hunger is everywhere, to run toward the famine-struck land and pour yourself into relieving it. He reads it as the cure for the disease named in the surah before, where the proud devoured wealth greedily and kept it for themselves; here the medicine is to open your hand exactly when the need is greatest.

Then Allah names who to feed first: *yatiman dha maqraba*, an orphan of near relationship. *Maqraba* is closeness, the Sheikh explains, and it points in two directions. The orphan who is your own relative comes first, and the orphan who lives close to you, in your own neighborhood, comes with him. He notes the sting in it: the Quraysh would not so much as care for their own orphaned kin, and an earlier surah had already exposed them for not honoring the orphan at all. So Allah is telling us to know the orphans in our own community, and he turns it into a question that lands hard: do you know even one orphan who lives near you? It is painful, he says, if the honest answer is no. And he widens the word, as he did before, to include the convert whose family abandons him the moment he enters Islam and who has nowhere to turn. That person is an orphan of a kind, owed the same honor, the same care, the same following-up to make sure he is alright.

The last named is *miskinan dha matraba*, a needy person in misery. A *miskin*, the Sheikh says, is someone left with barely the essentials to survive, the person you look at and wonder how he is even still going. And *matraba* is the possessor of dust, a word built for intensity, someone overwhelmed and coated in it. He unpacks what that single image tells you: the man is

homeless, because anyone with a home would not be that dusty; he is wandering in search of food, because the more you walk the more the dust clings; he is destitute, bankrupt, sleeping in the dirt. So Allah is not pointing at the merely poor but at the most desperate case of all, and again it answers the previous surah, whose people would not even *encourage* feeding the needy, holding back so no one would think them stingy, guarding their reputation while a hungry man went unfed. The whole list, the Sheikh sums up, is teaching us one thing: to become truly humanitarian. That is what the steep pass is, mercy spent on the freed, the famine-struck, the orphan, and the one lying in the dust, the very people the boaster of the verses before had brushed straight past.

And then, a believer who calls others to patience and mercy

ثُمَّ كَانَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْمَرْحَمَةِ

And then being among those who believed and advised one another to patience and advised one another to compassion.

AL-BALAD 90:17

After all that humanitarian effort, Allah names the condition that makes it count, and the Sheikh draws out why He saves it for last. He did not begin the steep pass with "first, be a believer." He began with the freeing and the feeding, then placed faith at the end, exactly the way you raise the bar by stating the condition last: "cut the grass, wash the car, and do it all without anyone's help, and I will reward you." The clause that lands at the end is where the weight falls. So it is here. None of the good deeds carry you up the pass without *iman* underneath them. He even reads hope into the past-tense verb: a disbeliever who did good, freed slaves, kept family ties, then entered Islam, keeps the reward of all of it, as the Prophet ﷺ told one man, you accepted Islam with all the good you already did.

And notice, the Sheikh says, that Allah says "among those who believed," in the plural. You are not meant to climb alone. Once the faith settles in your heart, look around for the others already doing this work and join them. Then comes the instruction twice over: they *advised one another to patience* and *advised one another to mercy*. Patience, because the climb is hard and people abandon good projects the moment it gets heavy, so you need someone beside you saying keep going, stay firm. And mercy, *marhamah*, the widest, most universal compassion, which the Sheikh says is the surah's deepest fruit. He gives it a piercing edge: real mercy is not only feeding a man today and tomorrow, it is caring about where he ends up

forever, feeding his body and also calling his heart, so you are not merciful to him for a few years and indifferent to him for eternity. He recalls Umar ibn Abdul Aziz, who once distributed the charity until even the poor were full, and then told his men to scatter grain on the mountains so that no bird in his city would die hungry. That, he says, is what mercy looks like once iman truly lives inside a person.

The right hand, the left hand, and a sealed fire

أُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْمَيْمَنَةِ

Those are the companions of the right.

AL-BALAD 90:18

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِنَا هُمْ أَصْحَابُ الْمَشْأَمَةِ

But they who disbelieved in Our signs - those are the companions of the left.

90:19

عَلَيْهِمْ نَارٌ مُؤَصَّدَةٌ

Over them will be fire closed in.

90:20

These climbers of the steep pass, Allah says, are the companions of the right, *al-maymanah*, a word the Sheikh notes is richer than a plain "right side": it carries blessedness and brightness, the people who take their record in their right hand and walk to the Garden, the happy ones. Set against them are those who disbelieved in Allah's signs, the companions of the left. He explains the signs are of two kinds: the recited verses and the Prophet's miracles, and the signs woven into creation itself, the sky, the seed pushing up out of the earth, the baby brought living from the womb, each one designed to lead a watching heart to the conclusion *there is no god but Allah*. To reject all of that is the mark of the left hand.

Then the surah seals shut. Over them is a fire *mu'sadah*, closed in upon them. The Sheikh distinguishes the word from an ordinary "closed": this is shut with no possible escape, the lid pressed down on the pot so nothing gets out and the heat only builds inside, the punishment intensifying with no door. And he notices the balance: when Allah spoke of the people of the

right He did not even describe the Garden here, yet for the people of the left He details the Fire, because the whole climate of this surah is hardship and toughness, from the "no" of its opening, to the *kabad* of a struggling life, to the steep pass, so it closes on the harshest image of all. The surah that told you life is a climb ends by showing you exactly what waits at the bottom of the easy road down.

What this surah asks of you

- **You were made for the climb, not the couch.** Allah created man into *kabad*, into struggle. The tranquil soul of the surah before is not handed out free; it is earned on an uphill road walked for Allah's sake. So stop waiting for ease that was never promised, and start climbing.
- **The steep pass is built of mercy spent on others.** The high road is freeing the trapped, feeding the hungry, reaching for the orphan and the needy. The man who boasted that no one had power over him walked right past all of them. The climb up is made of the very people the proud brush aside.
- **Your lips were given so you could close them.** Allah gave you two lips to govern the tongue behind them. When something escapes that should not have, the gift is not to blame. You were made responsible, with the eyes to see and the tools to choose.
- **Mercy means caring where someone ends up forever.** Real *marhamah* is not only feeding a man today and tomorrow, it is caring about his heart and his Hereafter. Feed his body and call his soul, the Sheikh says, the way Umar ibn Abdul Aziz fed even the birds so nothing in his city would die hungry.
- **Faith is the condition saved for last.** All the good deeds in the world do not carry you up the pass without *iman* beneath them. Allah places it at the end of the climb precisely to show how much everything rests on it.

Why this surah stays with us

Al-Balad swears by the city where the Prophet ﷺ stood surrounded by people sharpening their knives, and uses it to tell you something about your own life: you were made for struggle, so the only choice left is which struggle. The easy road downhill ends at a fire with the lid pressed shut. The steep road up is paved with freed necks and fed mouths and a heart that calls others to patience and mercy, and it ends in the right hand of the One who made you.

O Allah, You created us into hardship, so let our hardship be the kind that climbs toward You. Give us the courage to storm the steep pass, to free what we can free and feed whom we can feed, and join us to the people who hold each other to patience and to mercy. Make us companions of the right hand, and seal the closed-in Fire away from us, by Your mercy, O Most Merciful.

Retold faithfully from Sheikh Abu Bakr Zoud's tafsir of Juz Amma. Qur'an: Sahih International, verified via quran.ai. The reflection is the Sheikh's, the phrasing is The Daily Wird's.

Ash-Shams

The surah that swears by the sun seven times over to teach you the one thing you can ruin or rescue: your own soul

Ash-Shams does not begin with a command or a story. It begins with Allah swearing, over and over, by things you see every single day and never stop to weigh: the sun, its glow, the moon trailing behind it, the day that uncovers it, the night that hides it, the sky above, the earth below. Seven oaths, and the Sheikh shows you they all circle one object, the sun, the way the whole surah circles one subject you carry inside you and can either lift up or bury: your soul.

Why Allah swears, and what an oath is for

وَالشَّمْسِ وَضُحَاهَا

By the sun and its brightness

ASH-SHAMS 91:1

Sheikh Abu Bakr reminds you first of a rule he has built across the juz: a human being may only swear by Allah, never by the sun or the moon or the soul of his father, but Allah may swear by anything He made. And when the Maker swears by a created thing, He is pointing at it: stop here, this is great, look at what I built. So *was-shamsi* is not a phrase to read past. It is a hand on your shoulder turning your face to the sun, to the power it pours out, the warmth it gives the day, the safety people feel while its light is up, the growth it pulls out of the ground. An oath, the Sheikh keeps saying, is never meant to be rushed. It is meant to halt you and make you reflect on the thing sworn by.

Then notice He does not stop at the sun. He adds *duha*, its bright morning glow, the moment the full disc has lifted clear and you can look at it without it hurting your eyes, a clean, soft brilliance. And *duha*, the Sheikh points out, belongs to nothing else. You cannot call the light of a lamp or a torch or even the moon a *duha*. It is the sun's alone, so the most fitting word in the language was chosen for it. Already, in two short oaths, Allah has sworn by the sun and by the one quality only the sun can own.

Everything here is really about the sun

وَالْقَمَرَ إِذَا تَلَّاهَا

And [by] the moon when it follows it

91:2

وَالنَّهَارِ إِذَا جَلَّاهَا

And [by] the day when it displays it

91:3

وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا يَغْشَاهَا

And [by] the night when it covers [i.e., conceals] it

91:4

Watch what each new oath does, the Sheikh says, because not one of them is really about itself. The moon is sworn by only as something that *follows* the sun, *talaha*, rising as the sun sets in the first half of the month, and borrowing its light the way a person who follows the Qur'an takes light from it and reflects it back out. The day is sworn by only as the thing that *displays* the sun, *jallaha*, the same word an Arab used for washing a cup until it shines or pulling a cloth off a lamp so it can blaze: the day uncovers the sun and lets it show its full glory. And the night is sworn by only as the thing that *covers* the sun up.

So look at the chain. Sun, its glow, the moon that follows it, the day that reveals it, the night that veils it. Every pronoun at the end, the Sheikh notes, that little *-ha*, points back to the sun, the sun, the sun. The moon, the day and the night were each brought in not to be described themselves but to tell you something more about the sun. Something enormous is happening around this one body, and you are being held there on purpose, because soon Allah will draw the parallel between the sun and your soul, and you will need to have looked closely first.

What kind of power built this

وَالسَّمَاءِ وَمَا بَنَاهَا

And [by] the sky and He who constructed it

91:5

وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا طَحَاهَا

And [by] the earth and He who spread it

91:6

Now Allah swears by the sky, but listen to the wording: not *who* built it, but *what* built it, *wa ma banaha*. The Sheikh slows you down on that. When you do not know a person you ask "who are you," expecting a name. But sometimes you ask "what are you," and then you are after the qualities, the power, the trade. So *wa ma banaha* drops you in front of the sky and forces the question: what kind of power must this be, to raise a ceiling like that? A roof five hundred years above the earth with no pillar holding it, with no crack or tear anywhere in it, no patch and no renovation since the day it was made, one seamless, perfectly balanced piece with nothing higher and nothing lower. There is a second reading, he adds, where *ma* carries astonishment: and the sky, how amazing its making is. Both are true, and both leave you staring upward.

Then the opposite: the earth, and *ma tahaha*, how He spread it out, or what a power must have spread it so wide. The word, the Sheikh explains, is the one Arabs used for a mansion so vast that room opens onto room onto room and you keep asking when it will end. That is the earth: walk as far as you like and the horizon keeps unrolling. So one oath sends you reflecting up, the other sends you reflecting out, and both, in the second reading, simply leave you marveling at the thing itself and, behind it, at the One who made it.

The oath He saves for last: your own soul

وَنَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّاهَا

And [by] the soul and He who proportioned it

91:7

فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا

And inspired it [with discernment of] its wickedness and its righteousness,

91:8

Here, the Sheikh has you catch a small thing that changes everything. Through all the oaths Allah said *the* sun, *the* moon, *the* day. But when He reaches the soul He drops the *the*: *wa nafs*, not *wan-nafsi*. In Arabic, removing the definite article magnifies the word. It is His way of saying: pay attention now, you have no idea how great a matter this soul is. After sweeping you through the whole cosmos, He turns the camera onto the thing you carry in your own chest.

And He swears by it as something He *proportioned*, *sawwaha*: balanced it perfectly, every part weighed against every other, finished down to the last detail. The Sheikh draws the parallel the surah was building toward. You are two things, a body and a soul, the way the sun is a body and its light is the glow. The body is from this earth, and all its hungers, for food, for wealth, for comfort, are fed from the earth. The soul is from Allah's command, and it starves for one food only: revelation, what comes down from above. So the two pull in opposite directions, like the sun and the moon, like the day and the night. The lazy body wants to sleep through the prayer and stare at the haram; the soul inside it fights to reach the One it came from.

Then *fa-alhamaha*, He inspired it. The word means a certainty dropped straight into you, stronger than a fact, what people call a gut feeling. And what He inspired is the recognition of its *fujur* and its *taqwa*, its capacity to tear loose into sin and its pull toward protecting itself through obedience. Every soul, the Sheikh says, knows. A person of any religion, without reading a single law, knows stealing is wrong, because Allah pre-loaded the knowing inside the *nafs*. When you sin, the alarm goes off. That alarm is guilt, and the Sheikh calls it a gift: it is the proof, written into you, that a Day is coming when you will answer, because why else would the conscience flinch? The Prophet ﷺ told a companion to seek the fatwa of his own heart, for righteousness is what settles the soul and sin is what flutters and wavers inside it, even if the whole world tells you otherwise.

The whole surah turns on two verbs

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا

He has succeeded who purifies it,

91:9

وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا

And he has failed who instills it [with corruption].

91:10

After seven oaths, the answer they were all sworn for arrives in one line split two ways. *Qad aflaha man zakkaha*: he has truly won who purified this soul, cleaned it, grew it, gave its two halves their due. *Wa qad khaba man dassaha*: and he has lost who buried it, who shoved it down into the dirt and smothered it under the body's appetites. The Sheikh holds these two people side by side, the one who polished the soul like a clean cup catching the light, and the one who choked it.

And he does not let the warning float as theory. The success here is the same purifying the next surahs will teach you how to do, step by step. But Ash-Shams now does something striking: instead of describing the loser in the abstract, it walks you straight into history and shows you a whole nation that buried its soul, so you can watch with your own eyes what *dassaha* looks like when it is lived out to the end.

Why Thamud, and the camel they begged for

كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُودُ بِطَغْوَاهَا

Thamūd denied [their prophet] by reason of their transgression,

91:11

إِذْ أَنْبَعَثَ أَشْقَاهَا

When the most wretched of them was sent forth.

91:12

Of every nation Allah could have named, the Sheikh asks, why Thamud? Three reasons. The Arabs knew Thamud better than any other people, their ruined dwellings still standing in the north of Arabia, so the lesson would land close to home. They knew Thamud specifically as a people destroyed for their corruption, which made them a sharp mirror for Quraysh. And the sign Thamud was given, the she-camel, was the brightest, clearest miracle granted to any nation before the Prophet ﷺ, because they themselves had demanded it. The surah opened swearing by the brilliance of the sun; now it brings the brightest of signs, and shows a people who saw it with their own eyes and still rebelled.

Notice how the denial is described, the Sheikh says: *kadhhabat Thamudu bi-taghwaha*, they denied by reason of their transgression. The lie came out of their rebellion. They had crossed every line, so the truth was rejected. Then *idhi-nba'atha ashqaha*, when the most wretched of them rose, and the word *inba'atha* means he got up on his own initiative, sprang into it by himself, the most evil, most corrupt man among them rushing to commit the crime, the way crimes are always done quickly. This is the *nafs* of *dassaha* given a face.

Beware the she-camel of Allah

فَقَالَ لَهُمْ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ نَاقَةَ اللَّهِ وَسُقْيَاهَا

And the messenger of Allāh [i.e., Ṣāliḥ] said to them, "[Do not harm] the she-camel of Allāh or [prevent her from] her drink."

ASH-SHAMS 91:13

Salih (peace be upon him) was sent like every prophet, calling his people to worship Allah alone, and aided with a miracle so the message would be believed: a great she-camel that came out of solid rock. The arrangement was simple, the Sheikh recounts. One day the camel drinks from the well and the people take her milk; the next day the well is theirs. The young troublemakers of the town, the nine sons of the chiefs whom the Qur'an names as those who spread corruption and would not reform, could not stand the arrangement, and went house to house through the night taking a pledge from everyone to kill her.

Listen to the grammar of Salih's warning, the Sheikh says. Allah does not report it as "the she-camel of Allah," *naqatu-llah*; He puts it in the accusative, *naqata-llah*, and that case is used to shout a warning of danger, the way you would scream "the car! the car!" at a child about to step in front of one. So it is not merely "this is the she-camel of Allah," it is *beware* the she-camel of Allah, and beware her drink, her turn at the water, do not touch either. Salih went out of his way to warn them, because, like every soul that buries itself, they could not see the cliff they were running toward. And notice He says *the messenger of Allah* said it, not "Salih," because Quraysh, hearing this recited, would tune out a name, but the title lands: he was a messenger of Allah, and so is the one reciting to you now.

Pounded level, and a Lord who fears no consequence

فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَعَقَرُوهَا فَدَمْدَمَ عَلَيْهِمُ رَبُّهُم بِذُنُوبِهِمْ فَسَوَّاهَا

But they denied him and hamstrung her. So their Lord brought down upon them destruction for their sin and made it equal [upon all of them].

91:14

وَلَا يَخَافُ عُقْبَاهَا

And He does not fear the consequence thereof.

91:15

Two crimes are named, the Sheikh points out, not one. First *fa-kadhhabuhu*, they denied the messenger, and that crime alone was already complete, the same crime Quraysh had already committed against the Prophet ﷺ. Then *fa-'aqaruha*, they hamstrung her: 'aqr is not a clean kill, it is to cut the camel's lower legs so she collapses and bleeds slowly to a painful death. And though one man did it, Allah says *they* hamstrung her, because a crime has three parties, the Sheikh explains: the one who does it, the one who commands it, and the one who is pleased and stays silent. The whole town had pledged and not one rose the next morning to condemn it, so the whole town owns the deed.

Then the punishment lands in a word, *fa-damdama*. *Damdama*, the Sheikh says, is to pound something into the ground until it becomes one with the ground, level, the way you would fill a well with dirt until you could not tell a well was ever there. It carries a punishment with no escape, the same sealed, covered destruction the surah before this warned of. And He

chooses *rabbuhum*, their *Lord*, their Master, not the proper name Allah, because the point is ownership: they were His slaves the whole time, under His control all along. *Bi-dhanbihim*, because of their sin, He adds, so you understand Allah wrongs no one; people drag the punishment onto themselves, recompense shaped to match the deed.

And the surah closes on a line about Allah Himself: *wa la yakhafu uqbaaha*, He does not fear its consequence. When a person punishes someone here, the Sheikh observes, he half-fears the payback, the retaliation, what people will say. Allah fears none of it, because everything He does is justice, never oppression, so there is nothing to answer for. The whole surah has been describing a soul that did as it pleased thinking no one had control over it and no one would call it to account. The closing verse turns that on its head: the only One with nothing to fear is the One who balanced the soul, inspired it, and owns it all.

What this surah asks of you

- **An oath is a place to stop.** When Allah swears by the sun, the soul, the sky, He is pointing: look closely, this is great. The verses are short on purpose. Do not read past them, weigh the thing He swore by, because the lesson of the surah is hidden inside it.
- **You are a body and a soul, and both have a right.** The body is fed from the earth; the soul starves for revelation from above. Drown yourself in one and starve the other and you are imbalanced. The whole point is to give each its due, the way Allah balanced you.
- **Your guilt is a gift and a proof.** Allah inspired the soul to know its own wickedness and its own taqwa. The alarm that goes off when you sin is mercy, and it is evidence in your own chest that a Day of reckoning is coming. Seek the fatwa of your heart.
- **Two verbs decide everything.** He has won who purifies the soul; he has lost who buries it. Thamud is what burying it looks like lived to the end: a people who saw the clearest sign and still hamstrung it, and were pounded level for their sin.

Why this surah stays with us

Ash-Shams spends seven oaths walking you around the sun and the cosmos, all of it in flawless order, every body keeping its law and so giving the earth its harmony, only to set it beside the one thing that can refuse its order: your soul. Then it shows you both endings at once, the soul polished until it shines and the soul shoved into the dirt, and it puts a face on the second one, a whole nation that saw a camel walk out of a rock and still chose the knife.

O Allah, You who proportioned our souls and inspired them to know their wickedness and their righteousness, make us of those who purify and not of those who bury. Keep the alarm alive in our chests, and let us heed it before the warning becomes the punishment. Do not let us be the soul that did as it pleased thinking no one saw and no one would call it to account. Purify us, You who purify whom You will, and let us meet You with a soul made clean.

Retold faithfully from Sheikh Abu Bakr Zoud's tafsir of Juz Amma (parts 1 to 4). Qur'an: Sahih International, verified via quran.ai. The reflection is the Sheikh's, the phrasing is The Daily Wird's.

Al-Layl

The surah that swears by the night and the day, then tells you that everything you are running toward splits into just two roads

Al-Layl opens the way the surah before it closed, in the dark. It swears by the night as it covers everything over, then by the day as it breaks open, then by the One who made you male and female. Three oaths, and then one short verdict that sorts all of humanity: your efforts are not heading one way. They have split. Sheikh Abu Bakr walks you down the two roads they split into, and shows you that the fork is decided by something smaller and closer than you think: what your heart does with your money.

Read it as the night after a night

Sheikh Abu Bakr begins where he began the whole juz: the order of the surahs is not an accident. The Prophet ﷺ, before he passed, arranged them exactly as we hold them now, this surah here, that surah after it. So when Al-Layl follows Ash-Shams, the seam is deliberate, and the two were made to be read against each other.

Watch the reversal, he says. Ash-Shams swore first by the day, then by the night. Al-Layl flips it: the night first, then the day. And there is a reason it leads with darkness. Al-Layl is one of the very earliest surahs revealed in Makkah, sent down when kufr still covered the city like nightfall. So it opens on the night, because the night was the truth of Makkah then. Ash-Shams came later, when Islam had risen like a sun at midday, and so it could open on the light. The surah's first word already mirrors the world it landed in.

By the night, by the day, by the two of you

وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا يَغْشَىٰ

By the night when it covers

AL-LAYL 92:1

وَالنَّهَارِ إِذَا تَجَلَّىٰ

And [by] the day when it appears

92:2

وَمَا خَلَقَ الذَّكَرَ وَالْأُنثَىٰ

And [by] He who created the male and female,

92:3

Notice, the Sheikh says, what the night is covering. Allah does not tell you. He swears by the night as it covers, and stops, leaving the object blank. This is one of the great styles of the Qur'an: it leaves the blank for you to fill, so that you become a person who ponders. And the answer is back in the previous surah, where the night was said to cover the sun. So Al-Layl is built to send you back, to make its sister surah your reference point.

Then watch the two verbs. The night *yaghsha*, in the present tense, which in Arabic carries something that comes little by little, in stages, never all at once. That is exactly how the night arrives: it creeps in before *maghrib*, deepens hour by hour, and even at its darkest it is never total, there is always some light of the moon left. The day, though, *tajalla*, in the past tense, which carries something complete and total: the moment the sun lifts, everything is lit at once. And the Sheikh reads this as the parable of *kufr* and *iman*. Disbelief seeps into a heart and a society slowly, dot by black dot. But guidance can flood a person the instant the light reaches him. A nation sat in darkness for centuries, and the Prophet ﷺ turned it to full day in twenty-three years.

Then the third oath: the One who created the male and the female. He leaves this open too, male and female of people, of animals, of plants. And there is a lesson folded into the pair, the Sheikh says. Nothing here stands complete on its own. Day alone would be a torment; night that never lifted would be a disaster; each one needs the other to make harmony. Male and female are the same, each carrying a weakness only the other completes. And once you see that everything real comes paired, you are ready for the argument the surah is quietly making: this life, too, must have its pair. Its other half is the Hereafter. A life with no afterlife paired to it would be the one thing in all creation left incomplete.

Your efforts are not one road

إِنَّ سَعْيَكُمْ لَشَتَّىٰ

Indeed, your efforts are diverse.

AL-LAYL 92:4

Here is the response to all those oaths, and the Sheikh calls it the spine of the surah: everything that follows is just an unfolding of this one line. Your sa'y, your striving, the thing you pace toward all day, is shatta, scattered, going in opposing directions. And he lingers on that word. Arabic has a plain word for difference, mukhtalif. Allah does not use it. He uses shatta, which means something that was once a single piece and then shattered apart into many.

So the picture is not just that people differ. It is that mankind began as one, one community worshipping Allah, and then it broke. The believers strive to raise this religion up; the deniers strive to tear it down. In worldly life too, every one of us paces toward a different worry, a different job, a different door. And the Sheikh draws out something beautiful in the choice of shatta: even these shattered, opposing efforts come back together at the end to form one whole. The push of the believers and the push of their enemies collide, and out of that collision come the verses of patience, of hijrah, of jihad. None of it is one-directional. It is all part of a single plan. Do not complain about the opposition, he says. Understand that it is woven into the test.

The first road: the one who gave

فَأَمَّا مَنْ أَعْطَىٰ وَاتَّقَىٰ

As for he who gives and fears Allah

AL-LAYL 92:5

وَصَدَّقَ بِالْحُسْنَىٰ

And believes in the best [reward].

92:6

We will ease him toward ease.

92:7

Now the two roads. The first traveler is described by three things. He a'ta, he gave, and the Sheikh notes the word is not the ordinary one for giving: a'ta carries abundance, to give generously, to give a lot. He gave, and he wattaqa. Taqwa, the Sheikh explains, is not only fear; it is two things bound together, a fear and then an action to protect yourself from what you fear. You hear a sound at the door at night, that is the fear; you get up and check the lock, that is the taqwa. So this man gives generously, and at the very same time he is careful and afraid, never letting his giving fool him into thinking he has bought his safety.

And the third: he saddaqa bil-husna, he confirmed the truth in the best. Allah leaves husna open, the way He left the night and the male and female open. The Sheikh says it is as if one word, husna, gathers the whole religion: he believed in the best, in laa ilaaha illallah, in the Reward, in the Garden, in all of it. For such a man, Allah promises, We will ease him toward ease. Doing good will become the easiest thing for him; the path of goodness will be smoothed under his feet the way a saddle and reins make a wild horse easy to ride. Allah readies the road, and all he has to do is move.

The Sheikh pauses on the order. You would expect taqwa first, then giving as its fruit. But Allah names the giving first, then the taqwa, then the belief, and he reads a whole logic into it. For an individual, real life runs the other way: first you believe, then taqwa grows, then you give. But for a society, it begins with giving: to belong to any community you must first give back into it, then live by its law out of fear of the consequences, then submit to the highest law of all, the law of Allah. In three short words, he says, the surah maps how a soul and a society both come to good.

The second road: the one who hoarded

But as for he who withholds and considers himself free of need

AL-LAYL 92:8

وَكَذَّبَ بِالْحَسَنَىٰ

And denies the best [reward],

92:9

فَسَنِيْرَهُ لِلْعُسْرَىٰ

We will ease him toward difficulty.

92:10

The second traveler is the exact mirror. He bakhila, he withheld, he was stingy. And he istaghna, he saw himself as free of need, in need of no one. The Sheikh keeps returning to this as the root sickness of the whole surah: the man who finds himself wealthy starts to feel he does not need anyone, and so he begins to rebel. Picture a worker earning a thousand a week from his boss, the Sheikh says: he stays obedient, because he needs it. Now hand that same man a fortune, and the boss's wage means nothing, and the attitude grows in him, I am self-sufficient, I answer to no one. That is what wealth does when it gets into the heart.

And there is nothing wrong, he stresses, with money in your pocket. The danger is money in your heart. When Allah describes the worst people, He does not say they have wealth, He says they love it, and love lives in the heart. So this second man hoards, and counts, and denies the best reward, and for him the verse turns its own words inside out: We will ease him toward difficulty. The road to good is made hard for him, and bad deeds come easy, because he chose the night.

What the money was for

وَمَا يَغْنِي عَنْهُ مَالُهُ إِذَا تَرَدَّىٰ

And what will his wealth avail him when he falls?

AL-LAYL 92:11

إِن عَلَيْنَا لِلْهُدَىٰ

Indeed, [incumbent] upon Us is guidance.

92:12

وَأَنَّ لَنَا لِلْآخِرَةِ وَالْأُولَىٰ

And indeed, to us belongs the Hereafter and the first [life].

92:13

The man who thought his wealth made him free of need is asked one question: what will that wealth do for him when he falls? He spent his life convincing himself that the money was his, that it made him the owner and the one in charge, and at the edge it cannot reach down and pull him back. The Sheikh ties this back to the heart of the surah: we were only ever holding what Allah gave, and the proof of how deep the illusion runs is that even a small child, handed an ice cream for a moment, will clutch it within seconds and cry that it is his.

Then Allah answers the whole scene with two short claims, the Sheikh notes, and they correct an instinct both the believer and the denier share. We tend to file Allah's reward and reckoning away under the Hereafter, somewhere far off. But He says guidance is upon Us, here, now, it is His to give, and the Hereafter and the first life, this one, both belong to Him. He is not only the Lord of what comes later. He is in complete control of what you are walking through right now, and He knows exactly what you are doing with it.

A fire, and the two men who meet it

فَأَنْذَرْتُكُمْ نَارًا تَلَظَّىٰ

So I have warned you of a Fire which is blazing.

AL-LAYL 92:14

لَا يَصْلَاهَا إِلَّا الْأَشْقَىٰ

None will [enter to] burn therein except the most wretched one

92:15

الَّذِي كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلَّى

Who had denied and turned away.

92:16

وَسَيَجْنِبُهَا الْآتِقَى

But the righteous one will avoid it -

92:17

Then the warning, and the Sheikh marvels at how Allah phrases it. He does not say I warn you, and you are the wretched who will burn. He says I warn you of a Fire that only the most wretched will enter, the one who denied and turned away. And by warning you about someone else, He forces a thought you cannot escape: if only the worst go in, why is He warning me? Because, the Sheikh says, you may have sunk further than you realize. You may have become one of them without noticing. So check yourself, and get your act together.

Against the most wretched, the most pious: the atqa, the one of the very highest taqwa, will be kept away from the Fire. And the word, sayujannabuha, is gentle and powerful, the Sheikh says: jannab is to pull someone far to the side, away from danger, and this intensified form means kept far, far away, not even near it. Think of a mother crossing a busy road, holding her child tight to her side. He does not say merely that this person is saved; he says they are taken right past it, set down on the far side where it is wholly safe. And that is a mercy, because even the people who only stand near the Fire, not yet in it, cry out for death from the dread of it. To be kept far from it at all is already an immense gift.

And the Sheikh catches one more mercy in the wording. Of the wretched, Allah said none will burn except him: a locked door. But of the pious He did not say none will be saved except the atqa. He simply said the atqa will be kept away. So the most pious are saved, and the door is left open for those below them in piety to be saved too. He did not seal salvation behind the very highest taqwa. He left room.

The giving that cleans you, and the only audience worth having

الَّذِي يُؤْتِي مَالَهُ يَتَزَكَّىٰ

[He] who gives [from] his wealth to purify himself

AL-LAYL 92:18

وَمَا لِأَحَدٍ عِنْدَهُ مِنْ نِعْمَةٍ تُجْزَىٰ

And not [giving] for anyone who has [done him] a favor to be rewarded -

92:19

إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ رَبِّهِ الْأَعْلَىٰ

But only seeking the face [i.e., acceptance] of his Lord, Most High.

92:20

وَلَسَوْفَ يَرْضَىٰ

And he is going to be satisfied.

92:21

How does a person reach that highest taqwa? He gives his wealth, the verse says, yatazakka, to purify himself. And the Sheikh draws out a precise point of grammar. We would expect a small word, a lam, to say so that he may purify himself, your giving cleaning you. Allah omits it. And that omission teaches that the cleansing is not produced by your hand. You give, and giving alone does not purify you; it is Allah who purifies you, who washes the sins and the bad habits away. You give in hope that He will clean you.

And notice, the Sheikh adds, that here the word shifts from a'ta, give a lot, to yu'ti, simply give. The opening of the surah praised giving abundantly; this verse lowers the bar so no one is shut out. Even the poorest can reach the rank of the atqa, because the condition is not to give much, only to give, even half a date. So make it a habit, he urges: a few coins in the box every time you pass the masjid, and teach your children to give young, before greed hardens in them and can never be let go.

Then the purity of the intention: he gives owing no one a favor he is repaying, not settling a social debt, not buying back an obligation, but only seeking the Face of his Lord, the Most High. And the Sheikh hears the asbab al-nuzul behind it. Umayyah ibn Khalaf would drag Bilal into the midday heat, pin him under a boulder, and order him to renounce the Prophet ﷺ, and Bilal would answer only, Ahad, Ahad: the One, the One. Abu Bakr bought him and set him free, purely for Allah. The deniers sneered that Abu Bakr was just repaying a favor Bilal owed him, and this verse came down in his defense: he gave seeking no return from anyone, only the Face of his Lord. And so the surah that opened in darkness ends in light. The one overwhelmed by the night of sin denied and turned away and met the Fire; the one who brightened himself by giving for Allah alone is promised the last word of the surah, he is going to be satisfied. The Sheikh notes Allah swears to it, and leaves it unqualified, because we chase money thinking it is happiness we are chasing. Allah cuts in: I swear you will be satisfied, only do this, give for My sake, and the happiness you were running toward will be waiting on the far side.

What this surah asks of you

- **Everything you do funnels into two roads.** Your striving is shatta, scattered every which way, but at the end it sorts into exactly two: the one who gave and feared, and the one who hoarded and felt he needed no one. Ask yourself today which road your step is actually on.
- **Money in the pocket is fine; money in the heart is the danger.** Allah does not fault the wretched for having wealth, He faults them for loving it. The whole surah pivots on what your heart does with what you own, not how much of it you own.
- **Give first, and let Allah do the cleaning.** The verse drops the word that would have made your giving purify you. You give in hope; the purifying is His work. And the bar is only to give, even half a date, not to give a lot.
- **Want only one face turned toward you.** The atqa gives owing no one, repaying no one, seeking nothing but the Face of his Lord. Strip every other audience out of your good deed and one promise is sworn to you: you will be satisfied.

Why this surah stays with us

Al-Layl begins in the dark and ends in the light, and in between it does something quietly merciless: it takes the whole noisy scatter of human striving and shows you it was only ever two roads, decided by something as ordinary as an open or a closed hand. The Sheikh keeps

pulling you back to the heart, because that is where the fork really is. Not in how much you have, but in whether you can give it for nothing but Allah, and trust that He will clean you and that He will make you satisfied.

O Allah, make us people of the Qur'an who are moved by its reminders. Make us of those who give and fear You and believe in the best, and ease us toward ease. Loosen our grip on what was never ours, purify what You alone can purify, and let us seek no face but Yours, until we are among those of whom You said: he is going to be satisfied.

Retold faithfully from Sheikh Abu Bakr Zoud's tafsir of Juz Amma (parts 1 to 5). Qur'an: Sahih International, verified via quran.ai. The reflection is the Sheikh's, the phrasing is The Daily Wird's.

Ad-Duha

The surah Allah sent down when the revelation had gone quiet and His Prophet ﷺ was grieving, to tell him he was never once abandoned

For days, no revelation came. The voice that had been arriving like sunrise went silent, and the Prophet ﷺ was left sitting in the quiet, grieving, half-wondering if he had done something to deserve the silence. His enemies smelled blood: looks like your Lord has had enough of you. Then Ad-Duha came down, and Allah did not begin by scolding them. He began by swearing an oath on the morning light, and turning, gently, to the only heart in Makkah that needed steadying.

A surah is only the surah before it, continued

Sheikh Abu Bakr opens by reminding you where you are: this is the last stretch of the Qur'an, and Ad-Duha does not arrive out of nowhere. It picks up exactly where the surah before it, Al-Layl, left off. The very word surah, he notes, is close to a word for what is left over, the way you say a cup still has a little water in it. A surah does not stand alone; it carries forward what came before.

And the seam here is dense. The Sheikh walks through a whole series of parallels between Al-Layl and Ad-Duha. Al-Layl mentioned the night first, then the day; Ad-Duha flips it, the morning first, then the night. Al-Layl promised the believer that the path of goodness would be made easy; Ad-Duha promises the Prophet ﷺ that what is coming will be better than what has passed. Al-Layl ended on the one who seeks his Lord's pleasure and will be pleased; Ad-Duha names who that first pleased servant is. Al-Layl told the human being to give; here it is Allah who gives. The two surahs are one conversation, and Ad-Duha is its tender turn.

Why this surah came down

Before a single ayah, the Sheikh sets the scene, because Ad-Duha is one of those surahs you cannot feel without its story. Revelation, he explains, paused three times in the Prophet's life. This was one of those pauses: the wahy stopped, days went by, and nothing came. And the Prophet ﷺ was saddened by it, deeply, the way you grieve a silence from someone you love.

Into that silence walked the mockery. One narration names a woman who said to him, in effect, I think your Lord has bid you farewell and abandoned you, He is displeased with you. Another records a woman saying she hoped his 'companion' had finally left him, since nothing had come to him for nights. The Sheikh wants you to understand why this cut so deep. The Prophet ﷺ carried a burden no one else would ever carry: he was the final messenger, so if he failed to deliver, not just Makkah but all of humanity until the Last Day was at stake. So when people rejected him, he did not blame them; he turned inward and wondered if the fault was his. The disbelievers saw the pause and seized it, whispering that maybe the silence meant he had been dropped. Ad-Duha came down to end that thought entirely.

An oath on the soothing morning light

وَالضُّحَىٰ

By the morning brightness

AD-DUHA 93:1

Allah swears by ad-duha, and the Sheikh draws out two things about that time of day. First, it is when life is fully awake: past dawn, past the slow stirring, into the hour when the streets fill, the shops open, the traffic moves, the whole town is in motion. It is the rush hour of the day. The Qur'an uses this elsewhere, the Sheikh notes, the way Musa appointed the duha to gather the people, because that is the hour when everyone is out and present.

Second, and this is the heart of it, the morning light is soothing. Before the sun climbs to its scorching noon, its light is gentle, calm, easy on the eye. And that, the Sheikh says, is the point. When revelation came down on the Prophet ﷺ, it arrived like that soft morning light, bringing him calm and tranquility and life. So the oath itself is a quiet promise: just as the light of duha spreads across the whole earth, this message of yours will spread too. Do not measure it by who is rejecting you today. The light does not worry about who is watching; it simply fills the sky.

And the night, when it goes completely still

وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا سَجَىٰ

And [by] the night when it covers with darkness,

AD-DUHA 93:2

Then He swears by the night, but the Sheikh fixes on the exact word chosen for it: saja. The Qur'an has many words for the coming of night, he points out, and almost all of them carry motion: the night that covers, that arrives, that departs, that gathers. But saja means something has gone perfectly still. Motionless. Cut off. It is a word used for a corpse that no longer moves, for a stillness so complete that not even a leaf stirs.

Why this word, here, of all the words for night? Because, the Sheikh says, the whole theme of this surah is a pause: the revelation that went still, that was cut off, that stopped arriving. Of every word Allah could have used for the night, He reached for the one that mirrors exactly what the Prophet ﷺ was living. The morning light is the revelation that comes; the still night is the revelation that paused. The oath is not decoration. It is the surah quietly naming his situation before it comforts him in it.

He never said goodbye to you, and He is not displeased

مَا وَدَّعَكَ رَبُّكَ وَمَا قَلَىٰ

Your Lord has not taken leave of you, [O Muhammad], nor has He detested [you].

AD-DUHA 93:3

Now the answer, and the Sheikh slows almost to a stop, because the mercy here is in the precise words. Allah says ma wadda'aka rabbuka. Wadda'a, he explains, is not just any farewell; it is the warm goodbye between people who love each other, the kind with a return ticket, never the final, permanent goodbye. Just by choosing this word, Allah has already told His Prophet ﷺ: there is love between us, and even that loving farewell never happened. You do not bid farewell to an enemy; the word itself carries affection.

And notice, the Sheikh says, that He does not use a plain word for 'Lord.' He says Rabbuka, your Rabb, the most tender of His names, the one that carries care and provision and the patient raising of a child, the way a mother pours love into the one she is bringing up. Your

Carer, the One who has looked after you from the start, how could He of all beings abandon you? Then comes wa ma qala, and He has not detested you. Watch what is missing, the Sheikh urges: with 'farewell,' a warm word, Allah attached 'you' (wadda'aka). But with qala, detesting, a harsh word, He does not say 'detested you.' He leaves it open, unattached, refusing to place His Prophet's name anywhere near a word of enmity. And because it is left open, it widens: He is not displeased with you, nor with your companions, nor with your call to Him, nor with anything that has to do with you.

What is coming is better than what has gone

وَلَلْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لَّكَ مِنَ الْأُولَىٰ

And the Hereafter is better for you than the first [life].

AD-DUHA 93:4

وَلَسَوْفَ يُعْطِيكَ رَبُّكَ فَتَرْضَىٰ

And your Lord is going to give you, and you will be satisfied.

93:5

Having steadied his heart, Allah turns him toward the horizon. The Sheikh gives the two readings the scholars hold for 'the later is better than the earlier.' It may mean the Hereafter is better for you than this world. Or it may mean, very tenderly, that the later part of your life will be better than its early part. Either way the message to a grieving man is the same: this silence is not the end of your story, and the best of it is still ahead.

Then a promise so warm the Sheikh lingers on its tone: your Lord is going to give you, and give, and give, until you are pleased. This is not a measured gift; it is a giving without a stated limit, until the Prophet ﷺ himself says, enough, I am content. From the legible parts of the lesson the Sheikh reaches toward what that giving includes, even his standing one day reaching for the fruit of Paradise. The point lands softly: the One who is about to give you everything until you are satisfied is hardly the One who has abandoned you.

Three times He found you, and three times He carried you

أَلَمْ يَجِدْكَ يَتِيمًا فَآوَىٰ

Did He not find you an orphan and give [you] refuge?

AD-DUHA 93:6

وَوَجَدَكَ ضَالًّا فَهَدَىٰ

And He found you lost and guided [you],

93:7

وَوَجَدَكَ عَائِلًا فَأَغْنَىٰ

And He found you poor and made [you] self-sufficient.

93:8

Now Allah hands him the proof, and it is his own life. Were you not an orphan, and did He not give you shelter? The Sheikh ties this straight back to the comfort: a Lord who took you in when you had lost your father, who sheltered the orphan no one was obliged to shelter, is not a Lord who walks away now.

And He found you dallan, and guided you. Be careful with this word, the Sheikh warns, it does not mean 'misguided' or 'sinful.' From the legible teaching it carries the sense of one who was unaware, searching, not yet given the light, the way the same root is used elsewhere for simply not having something in mind yet. The Prophet ﷺ was seeking the truth, and Allah brought it to him and guided him to it. And He found you 'a'il, in need, and made you free of need. Here the Sheikh returns to a thread from Al-Layl: it is never wealth that makes a person free of need, for wealth will not save anyone at the edge of the Fire. It is Allah who makes you free of need. He took the Prophet ﷺ from need to sufficiency Himself. Three favors, three reminders: look how I have carried you the whole way, and ask yourself if such a One abandons His own.

So pass the mercy on

فَأَمَّا الْيَتِيمَ فَلَا تَقْهَرَ

So as for the orphan, do not oppress [him].

AD-DUHA 93:9

وَأَمَّا السَّائِلَ فَلَا تَنْهَرْ

And as for the petitioner, do not repel [him].

93:10

وَأَمَّا بِنِعْمَةِ رَبِّكَ فَحَدِّثْ

But as for the favor of your Lord, report [it].

93:11

The surah does not end in comfort alone; it ends by turning the comfort into instruction, and the Sheikh shows how each command answers a favor just mentioned. You were an orphan and were sheltered, so as for the orphan, do not crush him. The Sheikh notes how the Prophet ﷺ lived this, marrying widows and taking responsibility for those left behind, rather than seeking ease for himself.

You were in need and were asking, so as for the one who asks, do not push him away. The hand that was once empty does not get to slam the door on the next empty hand. And then the summit of it: as for the favor of your Lord, speak about it. The favors of this world, the Sheikh notes, are best handled with restraint, but the greatest favor, the gift of guidance, of being chosen, of revelation itself, that one you proclaim. The surah that began by reassuring a grieving man that he was never abandoned ends by telling him to announce, out loud, the blessings of the Lord who never left.

What this surah asks of you

- **Silence from Allah is not abandonment by Allah.** The revelation paused, and the Prophet's heart sank, and people called it rejection. Allah called it neither farewell nor displeasure.

When the answer goes quiet in your own life, do not let the silence get reinterpreted into something Allah never said.

- **Your worst season may be the still night before the morning.** He swore by the morning light and by the night gone completely still, and put the still night right beside the dawn. The pause was never the end of the light; it was the rest before a new day of it.
- **Read your own past as evidence.** He found you an orphan and sheltered you, found you searching and guided you, found you in need and enriched you. The God who carried you that far is not a God who drops you here. Look back when the present frightens you.
- **Let mercy received become mercy given.** You were the orphan, so do not crush the orphan. You were the one asking, so do not repel the one who asks. And the favor that saved you, speak about it, so someone else can find the same door.

Why this surah stays with us

Ad-Duha is the surah for the quiet seasons, when the help seems to have stopped coming and a voice somewhere starts whispering that you have been left behind. The Sheikh shows how Allah answered that whisper not with a rebuke but with an oath on the morning light, with the gentlest of His names, and with a careful word that means a loving goodbye that never even happened. Then He pointed His Prophet ﷺ back over his own life, orphan to shelter, searching to guidance, need to plenty, and forward to a giving that would not stop until he was pleased.

O Allah, when Your help feels far and the silence is long, keep us from reading abandonment into Your patience. Remind us how You have carried us this far, and let us trust that what is ahead with You is better than all that has passed. Make us, like Your Prophet ﷺ, people who shelter the orphan, never repel the one in need, and speak openly of Your favor, until You give us, too, what makes us pleased.

Retold faithfully from Sheikh Abu Bakr Zoud's tafsir of Juz Amma. Qur'an: Sahih International, verified via quran.ai. The reflection is the Sheikh's, the phrasing is The Daily Wird's.

Ash-Sharh

The surah where Allah, fresh off comforting His Messenger ﷺ, keeps counting the gifts, and lands on a promise you can lean your whole weight against

Ash-Sharh does not begin a new conversation. It leans across the gap from the surah before it and keeps the same one going. Ad-Duha had just talked the Prophet ﷺ down off the ledge of a grief, and rather than change the subject, Allah goes on counting His gifts to him, one by one, the way you reassure someone you love by reminding them of everything you have already done for them. Sheikh Abu Bakr shows you these two surahs are so close the Prophet ﷺ would read them together in one rakah, and by the end of this short surah you are handed a promise so steady you could build a life on it.

The surah that finishes the one before it

Sheikh Abu Bakr opens by tying Ash-Sharh back to Ad-Duha, and the links are striking. Both surahs speak to one audience only, the Prophet ﷺ himself, no deniers, no believers, just him. Both open with a gentle question that already knows its answer, the way you might ask a child you have helped a hundred times, did I not do this for you? In Ad-Duha it was, did He not find you an orphan and shelter you? Here it is, did We not expand your chest? The Sheikh notes how Ad-Duha ended with commands and a promise, and Ash-Sharh picks the thread straight back up, still counting, still comforting.

There is a reason in the history too. Ad-Duha came down after a hard silence, a pause in revelation when the deniers taunted the Prophet ﷺ that his Lord had abandoned him, and the weight of it pressed on his chest. When Jibreel finally descended with Ad-Duha, that pressure lifted. So Ash-Sharh opens by naming the state he was now in: a chest thrown open, at ease, the depression gone. The Sheikh wants you to feel that this whole surah is Allah leaning in close, still reassuring the most beloved of His creation.

Did We not open your chest?

أَلَمْ نَشْرَحْ لَكَ صَدْرَكَ

Did We not expand for you, [O Muḥammad], your breast?

ASH-SHARH 94:1

The word sharh, the Sheikh explains, is the word you use when you open up something closed and complicated so it can finally be understood. To explain a difficult book is to do sharh of it. So when Allah says He did sharh of the Prophet's chest, the picture is of something sealed and tight being thrown wide open. It is the same kind of expression as our coolness of the eye: it looks like one thing and means another. Here it means his chest was put completely at ease, content, no longer cramped by worry or grief.

Notice He says sadr, the chest, not qalb, the heart. The Sheikh draws out why. The chest is where knowledge is kept, and it is also where the whispers of the devil land and pile up: worry, love of this world, doubt, depression, until the heart inside is squeezed into a corner and you feel nothing from your worship. So opening the chest does two things at once. It clears out that suffocating weight, and it readies him to receive and to truly understand the revelation that was coming. To merely hear the words is not sharh. To hear them and grasp them, so your whole chest relaxes around them, that is sharh.

And catch the form of the sentence. Allah does not state it flatly, We expanded your chest. He asks it: did We not? A question like that, the Sheikh says, is built to make the one hearing it more grateful, to make him bow his head and remember. And He places laka, for you, before the chest itself, which in Arabic signals exclusivity: this opening was for you, specially, like nothing given to anyone before you ﷺ.

A chest opened to carry insult, and to carry the Qur'an

What does an opened chest actually let a person do? The Sheikh reaches for Musa to answer. When Allah sent Musa to Pharaoh, the man who had killed his people and hunted him, Musa's first plea was, my Lord, expand for me my chest. He was asking to be made wide enough on the inside that the insults and threats of Pharaoh would not move him, would not knot his chest up in anger so he lost his words. That is what the expansion gives: room to absorb abuse and stay steady.

The Prophet ﷺ needed exactly that. His was a daily, lifelong work of calling people who mocked him, swore at him, threw stones and filth at him, even his own relatives. Imagine, the Sheikh says, speaking to someone gently about the truth and being cursed in front of everyone you know. Your chest tightens, you feel humiliated, you want to stop. So Allah expanded the Prophet's chest wide enough that all of it, the slander, the laughter, the stones, could pour in and not shift him a single step. The same dua the next day, the same calling, the same patience. This, the Sheikh notes, is why a caller to Allah begins with Musa's words: my Lord, expand for me my chest.

There was a heavier reason still. Allah says elsewhere that had He sent this Qur'an down upon a mountain, you would have seen the mountain crumble in awe of Him. That same revelation was placed on the heart of a man. So his chest had to be opened and made ready, stronger than a mountain, so the weight of the words would settle in him without crushing him. The Sheikh adds the physical sign of all this: the narrations that the Prophet's chest was opened and his heart washed when he was a boy, and again before the revelation began, his heart cleaned and filled with wisdom and light.

The burden that was cracking his back

وَوَضَعْنَا عَنْكَ وِزْرَكَ

And We removed from you your burden

ASH-SHARH 94:2

الَّذِي أَنْقَضَ ظَهْرَكَ

Which had weighed upon your back

94:3

The second gift: Allah lifted a burden off him. And the Sheikh lingers on the exact words, because Allah did not say himl, an ordinary heavy load. He said wizr, which the linguists say is heavier still, the kind of weight that cannot even be carried, that would crush you if you tried. So this was no small thing being lifted off the Prophet ﷺ. It was something that had been pressing him toward the ground.

Then the next word makes you wince. Anqada, the verb for what the burden was doing to his back, is the sound a thing makes just before it breaks: the crack of a wooden chair under too much weight, the creak right before it gives way. The Sheikh is clear this is a picture, not literal, but the picture is vivid: this burden was so heavy his back had begun to crack under it. And again, anka, off you, comes early in the verse, marking it as personal, this lifting was for you in particular.

What was the burden? The Sheikh gathers five readings the scholars offer, and treats them all as meanings folded into the one word. The aching search for the truth before revelation came, when he would withdraw to the cave of Hira, starving on the inside in a world that fed his body but not his soul. The silence of revelation pausing, and the dread of not knowing why. The cutting insults of the deniers, day after day. The crushing responsibility of being the final messenger, knowing all of humanity until the Day depended on his conveying this. And the perceived mistakes, the small slips that weighed on his pure heart like sins even though they were not sins, the guilt of them. Each of these Allah eased, and the easing of any one of them opened his chest again.

And We raised your name

وَرَفَعْنَا لَكَ ذِكْرَكَ

And raised high for you your reputation.

ASH-SHARH 94:4

The third gift: Allah raised his mention. Where the burden was lowered to the ground and taken away, his name was lifted up, the two images sitting deliberately side by side, taking one weight off and replacing it with an honor. The Sheikh shares the hadith where Jibreel comes and tells the Prophet ﷺ that Allah asks him, do you know how I raised your mention? And the answer: when I am mentioned, you are mentioned with Me.

Think of how literally true that became. Every moment of every day, somewhere on earth the adhan is being called, and in it, right after the testimony to Allah, comes the testimony to His Messenger ﷺ. The sun is always setting or rising somewhere, so the call never stops, and his name never stops rising with it. The Sheikh notes the ways Allah lifted that name: He made obeying the Messenger ﷺ the same as obeying Himself, He sends His own praise upon him and commands the angels and the believers to do the same, He never once calls him in the Qur'an by his bare name the way He calls other prophets, always with a title of honor, and He

had told the earlier prophets that if this Messenger came in their time, they would have to believe in him and support him.

With the hardship, ease, and again, ease

فَإِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا

For indeed, with hardship [will be] ease [i.e., relief].

ASH-SHARH 94:5

إِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا

Indeed, with hardship [will be] ease.

94:6

Now comes the line people carry in their pockets for the rest of their lives, and the Sheikh slows right down to open it properly. First, the word maa, with: Allah does not say after the hardship there is ease, He says with it. The ease is laid alongside the hardship, walking beside it, not waiting at the far end of it. Then look at the words themselves. Al-usr, the hardship, carries the al that in Arabic sweeps in everything of its kind: not one specific difficulty but every hardship there is, big or small, of the body, the mind, or the soul. And yusr, ease, comes with no al and a tanween on the end, a sound that in Arabic signals greatness: not a little ease but a tremendous, abundant ease.

Then the promise repeats, almost word for word. And here the Sheikh shares the gift the Prophet ﷺ saw in it. In Arabic, when a word comes with al and is then repeated with al, it is the very same thing both times: one hardship. But when a word comes without al and is repeated without al, the second is a new and different one: so two eases. The Prophet ﷺ came out to his Companions laughing at this, saying one hardship will never overcome two eases. The one al-usr is the single difficulty in front of you. The two yusr are the relief Allah pairs with it here, and the greater relief waiting in the Hereafter. The Sheikh adds that the doubling is also simply tenderness, the way you tell someone you love who is hurting, it will be okay, it will be okay, twice, because once was not enough to carry the care.

So when you are free, tire yourself out

فَإِذَا فَرَغْتَ فَانصَبْ

So when you have finished [your duties], then stand up [for worship].

ASH-SHARH 94:7

وَالِى رَبِّكَ فَارْغَبْ

And to your Lord direct [your] longing.

94:8

The surah closes with two commands, and the Sheikh draws a quiet revolution out of them. Fa-idha faraghta, when you are free, when you have finished, fansab, then exert yourself, tire yourself out. The word nasab carries the sense of wearing yourself to exhaustion. So when the daytime work of calling people was done and the Prophet ﷺ came home spent, Allah did not tell him to collapse. He told him to stand in the night prayer and pour himself out there. The Sheikh compares it to Musa, who so loved his conversation with Allah on the mountain that he stretched out his answers just to keep it going, and was then sent off to face Pharaoh, from the sweetest conversation to the ugliest. The Prophet's day was the same: harsh conversation with the people, then the night prayer where his eyes were cooled and his strength recharged for the next morning.

And he understood it was not a burden but a recharge. When Aisha asked why he prayed until his feet cracked when Allah had already forgiven him, he answered, shall I not be a grateful servant? The Sheikh widens the lesson to your own life. There is no such thing for a believer as killing time or being bored: fa-idha faraghta fansab means the moment you finish one task, stand up to the next, and let that standing renew you, because life never truly finishes. Everyone in the grave still had unfinished business. Then the final command, wa ila Rabbika farghab, and to your Lord alone direct your longing: the placing of the words makes it exclusive, your worship and your yearning turned to Him and no one else.

The Sheikh ends on the most beautiful seam of all. The close of the surah is the condition for its opening. You want the expanded chest of the first ayah, that ease, that contentment? Then stand in prayer and turn your longing to Allah, as the last two ayat command. Do the end of the surah, and Allah gives you its beginning.

What this surah asks of you

- **Ask for the chest before you ask for anything.** Musa's first plea, and the caller's first dua, is my Lord, expand for me my chest. Before strength, before words, ask to be made wide enough on the inside that insult and difficulty can pour in and not move you a step.
- **Ease is laid beside the hardship, not after it.** Allah says with the hardship, not once it is over. While you are still in the difficulty, a relief is already running alongside it, and a greater one waits ahead. One hardship never overcomes two eases.
- **When you finish, do not collapse, stand.** Fa-idha faraghta fansab. The moment one task is done, rise to the next, and let the standing recharge you. There is no killing time for a believer, because the work of a life never truly finishes.
- **Turn your longing to Him alone.** The night prayer was where the Prophet's eyes were cooled and his strength was renewed for the next day's hardship. Your private worship is not what drains you, it is what charges you.

Why this surah stays with us

Ash-Sharh is Allah counting His gifts to His most beloved out loud: a chest thrown open, a crushing burden lifted, a name raised so high it is spoken every time His own is. And then, as if turning to face the rest of us, the promise that with every hardship He sends an ease to walk beside it, and the instruction for how to live in the meantime, when you finish, stand, and turn your longing only to Him.

O Allah, expand our chests the way You expanded the chest of Your Messenger ﷺ, until worry and grief no longer crowd out the light. Lift from our backs the burdens that have begun to crack them. And when hardship presses on us, let us feel the ease You laid beside it, and let us meet our free moments standing in prayer, our longing turned to You alone.

Retold faithfully from Sheikh Abu Bakr Zoud's tafsir of Juz Amma. Qur'an: Sahih International, verified via quran.ai. The reflection is the Sheikh's, the phrasing is The Daily Wird's.

At-Tin

The surah that swears by a fruit, an oil, and two holy mountains, and lands on what you were really built to be

Surat At-Tin begins the way you would not expect a chapter about your own worth to begin: not with you, but with a plate of food and a map. A fig, an olive, a mountain in the desert, a walled city. Allah swears by all four, and Sheikh Abu Bakr tells you to hold the question in your chest as you read, because an oath in the Qur'an always has a point it is swearing toward. By the time the surah names that point, it will be standing in front of a mirror, and the face in it will be yours.

One direction, wherever you are standing

Before the first oath, the Sheikh does what he does at the head of every surah: he ties it to the one before. The surah just before this, Ash-Sharh, ended on a command to the Prophet ﷺ, that when you finish the duties of your day, stand at night in worship and turn all of it to your Lord alone. At-Tin then opens by naming places that sit far apart on the earth. The fig and the olive point toward the holy land of Sham and Jerusalem, Mount Sinai points toward Egypt, and the secure city points toward Makkah.

And that scatter is the lesson. No matter where you are standing, the Sheikh says, in Sham or Egypt or Makkah, however many deserts lie between them, the direction of your worship is one. The message of every prophet was one. Musa was sent to Egypt, others to Jerusalem, Ibrahim to Makkah, and not one of them pointed his people anywhere but to the single Lord, Allah. The whole earth, with all its distances, bends toward one direction.

There is a deeper seam too. At the close of Ash-Sharh you were handed a task, worship your Lord. Earlier the Qur'an told you the purpose you were made for is exactly that. So a question hangs in the air: is a human being actually capable of it? At-Tin, the Sheikh says, is the answer. Yes. You were built for it, and the center of this surah will say so.

By the fig and the olive

وَالَّتَيْنِ وَالزَّيْتُونِ

By the fig and the olive

AT-TIN 95:1

Allah swears first by two things you can eat. The fig is the fruit you know, named only here in the whole Qur'an, and praised in a hadith where the Prophet ﷺ was given a bowl of figs and told the people to make a habit of it, saying that if any fruit had come down from Paradise it would be this one, because the fruit of Paradise carries no seed. So the fig is no ordinary snack; it is a blessed food.

But the Sheikh opens the word wider. In the old Arab habit, a place was often called by the thing it was famous for, so the scholars read the fig as also pointing to a land where figs grow in abundance, the region of Judi, the mountain in what is now Turkey where Nuh's ark came to rest and a masjid was later built. Some read it as a quiet nod to Adam himself, for when he slipped and his covering fell away, the narrations say every tree turned its leaves from him except one that offered them, and he covered himself with its leaves.

Then the olive, which Allah elsewhere calls a blessed fruit from a blessed tree, and which gives you not just food but oil, two gifts in one. So the Sheikh reads the olive as more than the fruit you press: it points to the Mount of Olives, and to Jerusalem, Bayt al-Maqdis, the land of prophets. Notice already the climb the surah is making, from blessed, to more blessed.

By the mountain Allah spoke from

وَطُورِ سَيْنِينَ

And [by] Mount Sinai

AT-TIN 95:2

Allah does not use the ordinary word for a mountain here, jabal. He says tur, and the Sheikh explains that a tur is a particular kind of mountain, the lush sort, green and thick with trees, not the bare stone you picture in the desert. And then He names this one: the mount of Sinai, the mountain in the blessed valley of Tuwa where the lord of the worlds spoke to a human being.

The Sheikh counts what happened on it. This is the mountain Musa saw aflame and walked toward. This is where Allah told him to remove his sandals, for he stood in a holy place. This is the only piece of creation Allah ever unveiled Himself to, and when He did, it could not bear the sight and shattered to pieces while Musa fell senseless. This is the mountain Allah tore from the earth and held above the heads of Bani Israel, telling them to take the Book with strength or be crushed beneath it. And it has one role left to play: near the end of days, when the Dajjal walks the earth, Allah will tell Isa to take His servants to this mountain, and it will shield them.

Then the Sheikh points to the name itself as a quiet miracle. Sinin, Sina, this mountain and its names lived in Hebrew, known to the Jewish scholars and not to the Arabs. Yet here is the Prophet ﷺ, unlettered and Arab, with no Jewish company in Makkah where this was revealed, reciting these names exactly. There was no human teacher for that knowledge. Allah taught him what he had never known, and the very word in the surah testifies to where the Qur'an comes from. And see why the olive sits right beside this mountain: the olive tree is the tree that grows on it, so Allah placed them shoulder to shoulder.

By this city that keeps its peace

وَهَذَا الْبَلَدِ الْأَمِينِ

And [by] this secure city [i.e., Makkah],

AT-TIN 95:3

The fourth oath is by Makkah, and the Sheikh stops on the small word hadha, this. You point and say this for what is near you, and that for what is far. Allah says this city, so the speaker is standing in it, which is part of why the surah is read as Makki, revealed before the hijra, not in Madinah far away. Of all the words for a town, He chose balad, a city with drawn and guarded borders, a settled and protected place. And calling it the secure city, He quietly turns your face to Ibrahim, the one who first asked Allah to make it safe.

Then the word amin, which the Sheikh opens two ways. It can come from amana, trust: a city entrusted with weighty things, for Allah placed His House here, sent His final Messenger here, entrusted His final revelation here. Or it can come from amn, peace, and there it points to a wonder. Even in the days when the Arabs would kill one another like gangsters over old blood, a man could meet his father's murderer inside this city and not lift a hand, because the place itself disarms the violence in you. Allah let the elephant army march all the way from Yemen to

its doorstep before He broke them, because near this place a strange peace rises and throws the violence out.

And the Sheikh sets this next to a sister surah, Al-Balad, where Allah swore by the same city but dropped the word secure. There the theme was the Prophet ﷺ being threatened and harmed in Makkah, so the safety was withheld from the verse to match it. Here the air of the surah is peace, so the adjective stays. Even an omitted word is deliberate.

The point of every oath: you, at your finest

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ

We have certainly created man in the best of stature;

AT-TIN 95:4

Here is what all four oaths were swearing toward. The Sheikh draws out the double weight at the front of the verse, the lam and the qad, two separate stresses laid on top of each other, the kind of emphasis you only reach for when people refuse to believe a thing. Already, the word says, the human being was made this way. Not earned later, not improved into. From the very first, and Allah honored the children of Adam even before you were placed in your mother's womb.

And He says We created, not it came together. So do not credit the chromosomes and the chance; it is Allah who designed it. The word ahsan, the Sheikh notes, is from ihsan, a beauty that is both outer and inner, unlike a word that means only beauty pleasing to the eye. You were made beautiful on the surface and balanced underneath. This is not to belittle the rest of creation, for Allah perfected everything He made, but the human being stands at the head of it. And because he is the best of creation, he alone carries the burden of worship; the tree and the mountain do not. So there is no excuse to say you cannot worship: you were built precisely for it.

That last word, taqwim, the Sheikh turns over slowly. It means to make a thing stand straight, the way you would straighten a bent spear, balancing many parts into one upright whole. It means to be made upright not only in body but in character, the soul balanced like the frame. And it means to be designed exactly for your purpose, the way a car is shaped for the road. Your purpose is to worship Allah, so you were fashioned to fit it. All of which makes this verse a flat refutation of those who taught that the human being began as a creature with no morals

and slowly civilized himself. They spoke that way, the Sheikh says, only because they forgot their Creator, and so Allah let them forget their own selves, until they had to invent theories to fill the gap.

And how far you can fall

ثُمَّ رَدَدْنَاهُ أَسْفَلَ سَافِلِينَ

Then We return him to the lowest of the low,

AT-TIN 95:5

Now comes the drop. We return him to the lowest of the low. And the Sheikh pauses on a delicate point of language: this is a low and ugly thing, so why does Allah attach His own name to it and say We returned him? Because of the active form. If you say I raised a boy and he became a criminal, you have admitted you raised him badly. Had the verse run he was reduced, in the passive, it would whisper that Allah failed at making the best of creation. So He says We returned him: We made him high, and when he was not worth it, We Ourselves brought him down. Every angle of blame is sealed off.

Then the meaning of that fall, which carries more than one reading. One is old age, the body and mind that were once strong returning to weakness, until a person can no longer work at all. Even an animal, the Sheikh notes, keeps laboring until it drops, while the human being reaches a point before death where he simply cannot, lower in working strength than the beast. The other reading is the Fire: that a person who was honored, then chose to debase himself, is cast to the lowest part of Hell.

And the word thumma, then, the Sheikh says, opens a long gap between the height and the fall, so it is never instant. Some place that gap at the covenant, when every soul, before it had a body, testified that Allah is its Lord, and only later broke the promise. Some place it at birth, every child born upon a pure nature, then turned away by what life did to him. And some read it as Allah's patience: He does not throw a person down the moment he sins, but gives him a long stretch to return, and only then, if he never does, lets him fall.

The ones who are not brought low

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فَلَهُمْ أَجْرٌ غَيْرُ مَمْنُونٍ

Except for those who believe and do righteous deeds, for they will have a reward uninterrupted.

AT-TIN 95:6

Out of the fall, an exception is carved: except those who believe and do righteous deeds. The Sheikh reads it as the inside and the outside together, faith in the heart and good works in the limbs, and you need both. He returns to his image of the car: tend only the engine and ignore the wheels, or polish the body and starve the engine, and either way it will not run. The human being is the same, an inner life and an outer life, and only when both are kept does he stand at his best.

He lingers on the word the verse uses for their deeds, amal, which carries intention and effort, not the bare reflex of a fi'l like a blink or a breath. The angels record everything you do, but Allah judges what you meant, a mercy folded into the language. So the believers are not those who merely do good; they intend it, and they pour effort into it.

And the reward is ghayr mamnun, uninterrupted, never cut off. Every wage in this world ends: you work, you are paid, the money runs out, you work again. Only one reward never stops, the reward of this deen, which is Paradise, entered once and never left. The Sheikh adds a tender note read in the light of old age: the Prophet ﷺ said that when a believer falls ill or travels, Allah keeps writing for him the good he used to do in health. So the one who worshipped in his strong years, when age and sickness take that strength, still has the reward of his healthy days written, unbroken, until he dies.

So after all this, what makes you deny?

فَمَا يُكَذِّبُكَ بَعْدَ بِالِّدِينِ

So what yet causes you to deny the Recompense?

AT-TIN 95:7

Is not Allah the most just of judges?

95:8

Having shown you the height you were made for and the depth you can sink to, the surah turns and asks: so what, after all of this, still makes you deny? The Sheikh reads takdhib as deliberately calling the truth a lie, accusing the honest of dishonesty. And he names the real reason people do it. It is not that the religion fails to make sense to them; it is that they do not want to admit they are bad. So rather than say I simply will not commit, they poke holes in the verses and mock the religion, because tearing it down is easier on the conscience than facing themselves. The word deen, he notes, holds both meanings at once: the religion that was brought, and the Day of Recompense to come.

Then the last verse, a question that is really a rebuke: is Allah not the most just of judges? When someone asks you didn't I take care of you, they mean you have forgotten that I did. So the surah scolds the one who forgot the most obvious thing of all, who created him, and who created him at his finest. And the Sheikh unpacks the closing word ahkam, which gathers two roots, wisdom and judgement, into four meanings at once: the wisest of the wise, the best judge among the wise, the best of all judges, and the wisest of all judges.

One last touch the Sheikh leaves you with. The whole surah opened on the legacies of prophets and now closes on judgement, and notice that Allah says is not Allah, in the third person, rather than are We not. Earlier, speaking of creating you, He drew near and said We. But this verse is about justice, and a judge cannot lean close to anyone he judges, or the judgement is no longer fair. So the nearness is withdrawn on purpose, to keep the justice clean.

What this surah asks of you

- **You were built for the very thing you were asked to do.** Allah made the human being in the best of forms, beautiful outside and balanced within, fashioned exactly for his purpose. So worship is never beyond you; you were shaped to fit it. There is no honest excuse of I cannot.
- **The proof of your worth is in the prophets.** If you doubt that a human can be made this noble, read the lives the oaths point to: Adam, Musa, Isa, Ibrahim, and the Prophet ﷺ. Their

character and their intelligence are the living evidence of what you, too, were made to be.

- **Faith and action are one machine.** Belief in the heart and good works in the limbs are the inside and the outside of the same engine. Tend one and neglect the other and nothing runs. The ones never brought low are the ones who kept both.
- **Denial is usually a hiding place.** Most who mock the religion are not confused by it; they simply do not want to face that they are choosing wrong. Tearing the deen down is easier on the conscience than admitting it. Name that to yourself before you ever name it in them.

Why this surah stays with us

At-Tin spends its first three verses swearing by ordinary blessed things, a fruit, an oil, two holy mountains, and a walled city, and then turns the oath on you. You are what it was swearing toward. You were made at the very top of creation, and you carry, every day, the freedom to climb toward the highest or to drop yourself to the lowest of the low. The surah will not let you forget either end of that, and it closes by asking, gently and pointedly, after all this, how could you still deny?

O Allah, You created us in the best of forms and honored us before we drew a breath. Do not let us debase what You raised. Keep our hearts in faith and our hands in righteous deeds, hold us back from the fall, and write for us the reward that is never cut off. And when we stand before You, the most just of judges, judge us with Your mercy, and let us be among those who believed and were not brought low.

Retold faithfully from Sheikh Abu Bakr Zoud's tafsir of Juz Amma (parts 1 and 2). Qur'an: Sahih International, verified via quran.ai. The reflection is the Sheikh's, the phrasing is The Daily Wird's.

Al-Alaq

The surah of the very first revelation, where the first word God ever sent down was an order to read, given to a man who could not

This is where it all began. Not a polished decree from a throne, but a single word pressed onto a frightened man in a dark cave on a mountain above Makkah: read. The strange thing, the Sheikh says, is who received it. The Prophet ﷺ could not read. He had never written a line in his life. And the people around him kept almost no books at all. Into that silence Allah sent down the loudest command a civilization could be given, and the whole of Surat Al-Alaq grows out of it: read, and then watch what kind of person refuses to.

A surah that answers the one before it

Sheikh Abu Bakr opens, as he always does, by setting the surah against its neighbor. The surah before this, At-Tin, honored the human being: Allah said He created him in the best and most upright form. Al-Alaq turns and shows you the other half of the picture: that same creature, capable of the highest faith, rebels and transgresses. At-Tin said "We created the human being," first person, close, because the mention was a kind one. Al-Alaq says "He created the human being," third person, with a step of distance built into it, because the surah is about to describe a man who deserved that distance.

There are more seams than that. At-Tin spoke of the human being in general; Al-Alaq gets specific, naming what he was made from. At-Tin honored the great prophets; Al-Alaq names Allah's own nobility, your Lord, the most Generous. At-Tin ended on a hard question, what kind of person would still deny the religion after all this, and Al-Alaq, the Sheikh says, walks you straight up to the answer and lets you look him in the face.

How the revelation began

اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ

Recite in the name of your Lord who created,

AL-ALAQ 96:1

The Sheikh slows right down to tell the story, because it is too often blurred. As the Prophet ﷺ neared forty, solitude was made beloved to him. He would climb to a cave on Mount Hira, a place no one else went, where he could look down on the Kaaba with no idols standing between him and it, and there he would sit for nights on end, pondering: who made me, what is the purpose of all this. We know these were his questions, the Sheikh notes, because the first revelation comes down as their answer.

Then, on a night in the last ten of Ramadan, Jibril came to him in the cave and said, read. The Prophet ﷺ answered, I am not one who reads. Jibril seized him and squeezed him until he could barely bear it, released him, and said again, read. Three times this happened, each squeeze harder than the last. From this, the Sheikh says, the scholars drew a lesson that runs through the whole tradition: knowledge does not arrive while you lounge in comfort. It comes through pressure and difficulty. Had it come easily, Jibril would not have crushed the chest of the Messenger ﷺ to deliver it.

Read with the name of your Lord

اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ

Recite in the name of your Lord who created,

AL-ALAQ 96:1

Iqra, the Sheikh explains, normally means to read off a written page, and Jibril brought no page. So it carries more here. It also means to convey: when you say iqra alayhi salam you mean carry my greeting to him. And it means to read what you feel, for the Prophet ﷺ later said it was as if the words had been written on his heart. So the command, given to a man who was ummi, who could not read or write, just as he was the day he left his mother's womb, was: convey, recite, deliver what is being placed inside you.

And read with the name of your Lord. The Sheikh is firm that the common translation, "in the name," misses it. The Arabic is with, the way bismillah means with the name of Allah I begin. Read using His name, so that everyone knows the words are not yours. Every time the Prophet ﷺ said bismillah and then recited, he was telling the people: reject this and you are not rejecting me, you are rejecting the One who sent it. And He says rabbika, your Lord, not Allah, because the Messenger ﷺ is terrified in the cave, and your Lord is the word that draws near and brings comfort: He is on your side. Then, when the question rises, who is this Lord, the answer is the one who created. The deepest proof of the Lord is His creation, and the more you ponder what He made, the more you know Him.

Made from a clinging clot

خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ

Created man from a clinging substance.

AL-ALAQ 96:2

Having said simply "who created," left open so it means He created everything, Allah now narrows to you. He made the human being from alaq. The word, the Sheikh draws out, comes from a root meaning to cling or hang: it is the clot of blood suspended in the mother's womb. Of all the words available, turab (dust), nutfa (a drop), He chose this one. Partly the rhythm of the surah needs it; partly the deniers of Quraysh, who would never swallow being told they came from dust, could be brought a little closer with alaq.

But there are two heavier reasons. First, humility. You began as a worthless fluid, the kind of thing that, if it touched your clothes, you would rush to wash off in embarrassment. So your wealth, your looks, your rank, your power, none of it earns you arrogance, because that was your beginning. Second, and this matters for a Makkan audience that denied resurrection, your origin is the proof of your return. A dead drop went into the womb and came out, nine months later, alive, seeing, hearing, speaking. The One who did that, the Sheikh says, can just as easily place you dead into the earth and bring you back out. You have already watched the harder version of the miracle with your own eyes.

Read again: your Lord, the most Generous, taught by the pen

اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ

Recite, and your Lord is the most Generous -

AL-ALAQ 96:3

الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ

Who taught by the pen,

96:4

عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ

Taught man that which he knew not.

96:5

Read is said a second time, and the Sheikh gives four reasons for the repetition, all delivered, remember, in the few seconds Jibril took in that cave. One: keep reading, do not stop. People grab the Qur'an at the start of Ramadan and put it down five days later; they buy a book, read a few pages, bookmark it, and never open it again. Two: reread what you have read, because some things only open up on the third and fourth pass. Three: the first read is for you to learn, the second is for you to teach. Four: it comforts a frightened student, the way you tell someone read, don't worry, read.

Why does He choose the name al-Akram, the most Generous, here? Because everything around these ayat is a gift: that He made you, that He gave you this Book, that He taught you. And the specific generosity He highlights is not food or drink but teaching. "Taught by the pen," with no object named, so it means He taught everyone and everything how to function: the nerves that yank your hand from a flame before you think, the newborn that knows how to nurse, the salmon that finds its way back to the very river it was born in with no compass at all. And note, the Sheikh adds, the Prophet ﷺ being unable to write is not a flaw here but the very proof: a man who can neither read nor write, telling the world to read and write, could only be carrying words that are not his own.

Then the summit: He "taught man that which he knew not." This, the Sheikh says, is the greatest gift Allah gave you, greater than every blessing of the body. Tell someone you ate a fine steak today and no one cares, because animals eat too. Tell them you learned the meaning of an ayah today and they lean in. That is why He placed His name, the most Generous, in the middle of these five ayat: so you would read everything before and after it as generosity poured out on you.

The man who thinks he needs no one

كَلَّا إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لِيَطْغَىٰ

No! [But] indeed, man transgresses

AL-ALAQ 96:6

أَن رَّاهُ اسْتَفْغَىٰ

Because he sees himself self-sufficient.

96:7

إِنَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ الرُّجْعَىٰ

Indeed, to your Lord is the return.

96:8

The second passage of the surah came down months later, after the pause in revelation, and it opens with a jolt: kalla. The Sheikh marks it as a word of scolding and warning, and a sign of a Makkan surah; landing it among the soft, comforting opening verses shocks the listener. If reading is the one knowledge only Allah can teach, then what kind of person sets no value on it at all? That person is the one here: he transgresses, layatgha, and the word does not mean ordinary rebellion. It means to rebel past every limit, to break the law and be pleased about it.

And the reason is exact. He transgresses because he "sees himself" self-sufficient, istaghna, free of need, certain that people need him and he needs no one. The Sheikh presses on the verb sees: the crime is not being rich, in wealth or knowledge or power. Many of the Companions were rich. The crime is when you see yourself with it and boast. The first man

these verses describe is Abu Jahl, but Allah says "man," not his name, so that everyone who walks his road is folded into it.

Then comes the cure, in one short line: to your Lord is the return. You are pinned between two facts, the Sheikh says: He made you (your beginning) and you go back to Him (your end). Locked between those two, how do you still rebel? Keep that return fixed between your eyes and your character straightens. He even contrasts two kinds of law: touch fire and you burn at once, so no one rebels against fire; but lie or steal and no lightning falls, so people take the moral law lightly. They forget that the One who set the instant punishment of the fire also set the delayed punishment of the lie, and is well able to hold it back until the Day.

Do you see the one who forbids a slave to pray?

أَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي يَنْهَى

Have you seen the one who forbids

AL-ALAQ 96:9

عَبْدًا إِذَا صَلَّى

A servant when he prays?

96:10

Now the third passage, and the Sheikh sets the scene from the narrations. Abu Jahl boasted to his circle that if he saw Muhammad ﷺ put his face to the ground he would step on his neck and grind his face in the dirt. One day he found the Prophet ﷺ praying near the Kaaba, picked up a stone, and started toward him, with Quraysh watching to see what their leader would do. Then he spun around and ran, beating at the air with his hands. Between me and him, he said, there was a ditch of fire and terror and wings. The Prophet ﷺ said that had he come any closer, the angels would have seized him limb from limb.

Read the word the surah chooses for the Prophet ﷺ here: not Messenger, not Prophet, but abd, a servant, a slave. The Sheikh says this cuts two ways. First, it lifts the Prophet ﷺ up: the most honorable thing a person can ever be is a slave of Allah; servanthood to anyone else is humiliation, servanthood to Him is the highest rank there is. Second, it shames Abu Jahl from his own angle: forget that this is the Messenger ﷺ, treat him merely as a servant, as you

would treat any servant, and you still would not stand between a man and his work. The amazement folded into the verse is exactly that: a slave doing the one job a slave exists to do, worshipping his Master, and someone steps in to stop him.

What if he was the guided one?

أَرَأَيْتَ إِنْ كَانَ عَلَى الْهُدَىٰ

Have you seen if he is upon guidance

AL-ALAQ 96:11

أَوْ أَمَرَ بِالتَّقْوَىٰ

Or enjoins righteousness?

96:12

أَرَأَيْتَ إِنْ كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلَّىٰ

Have you seen if he denies and turns away -

96:13

Here, the Sheikh says, the verses can be read two ways, and both are striking. The first: Abu Jahl is being told to stop and think. What if this man you are abusing is actually upon guidance, and is not only guided himself but calling others to the fear of Allah? If there is even a chance of that, you should be rethinking everything you are doing.

The second reading turns to the Prophet ﷺ himself, and it is the more piercing one. Do you see, it asks, what Abu Jahl could have been had he been upon guidance, what an extraordinary man? This is why the Messenger ﷺ once made dua that Allah strengthen Islam with one of two men, Abu Jahl or Umar. Abu Jahl was sharp, generous, a leader Quraysh seated in their councils at thirty when the rule was forty; he had in him the very potential that, once Umar mastered his pride, made Umar who he became. The tragedy is the contrast in 96:13: instead of guidance and calling to good, he "denies and turns away," lying with his tongue and turning others from the path with his deeds. And the Sheikh draws the believer's whole life out of this: either you are fixing yourself by learning, or you are fixing others by teaching. There is no third pastime of picking each other apart.

Does he not know that Allah sees?

أَلَمْ يَعْلَمِ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ يَرَىٰ

Does he not know that Allāh sees?

AL-ALAQ 96:14

The surah opened on knowledge, and here, the Sheikh says, is the one piece of knowledge a criminal most needs: that Allah is watching. What stops a thief faster than anything? Knowing there is a camera, knowing someone sees. Abu Jahl thought he was only lying to and harming the Prophet ﷺ; he did not grasp that the offence ran past the man, up to Allah, who sees all of it. Had he held even a sliver of that knowledge, he would never have done what he did.

And the verb is in the present tense, yara, He sees, not He saw, because the lesson only works when it is continuous. This is the medicine for anyone sunk in sin, not only Abu Jahl: to be told, over and over until it settles in the chest, that Allah is watching right now. When the one watching you is someone you love, you stop and you feel ashamed at once. Make Allah that watcher, and the sin loses its appetite.

Dragged by the lying forelock

كَلَّا لَئِن لَّمْ يَنْتَهِ لَنَسْفَعًا بِالنَّاصِيَةِ

No! If he does not desist, We will surely drag him by the forelock,

AL-ALAQ 96:15

نَاصِيَةٍ كَاذِبَةٍ خَاطِئَةٍ

A lying, sinning forelock.

96:16

Now the sentence comes down, but notice the mercy in its shape, the Sheikh says. Kalla, no; and then "if he does not desist," which means the door of repentance is still open even for a man who flung filth at the Prophet ﷺ and sent people to choke him. If he stops, this is lifted. The word for the threat, lanasfa'an, carries emphasis and warning both: if he dares to keep going, We will seize him.

And seize him by what: the nasiya, the forelock, the hair at the front of the head. In Arab usage this was the seat of two things, pride and knowledge, the place a beast is grabbed to be humbled. Abu Jahl's whole ruin came from those two, his arrogance and his ignorance, and he is taken by the exact part that held them. Then the forelock is named lying and sinning, the Sheikh notes, because the front of the head is where a deed is first thought and then sent out; it lied knowing the truth, for Abu Jahl had crept up to hear the Qur'an by night and admitted to his people that it was the truth, then refused it to keep his rank. There is a quiet symmetry the Sheikh lingers on: the head he would not lower in prostration is the head he will be dragged by. It comes down either way.

Let him call his gang

فَلْيَدْعُ نَادِيَهُ

Then let him call his associates;

AL-ALAQ 96:17

سَنَدْعُ الزَّبَانِيَةَ

We will call the angels of Hell.

96:18

Abu Jahl had his nadi, his club, his crowd of men lounging and laughing at the Prophet ﷺ. So let him call them, Allah says, let him summon every last one. The Sheikh paints the scene: on one side a knot of thugs ready to do anything to be rid of the Messenger ﷺ; on the other, when Allah answers, the zabaniya, the stern angels of Hell, who never disobey a command they are given. It is no contest. You call your friends; the whole army comes against you.

And the Sheikh points out a sign that arrives right on cue. The zabaniya named here are nineteen angels, and this surah is nineteen ayat: the threat lands in exactly the place the surah was built to hold it. The verb is even shortened, sanad'u, a missing letter where you would expect one, and the Sheikh reads the ease in it: how light a thing it is for Allah to call them down.

No. Prostrate, and draw near.

كَلَّا لَا تَطِعْهُ وَاسْجُدْ وَاقْتَرِبْ

No! Do not obey him. But prostrate and draw near [to Allāh].

AL-ALAQ 96:19

At the very end, the Sheikh says, Allah turns His face away from Abu Jahl entirely and toward His Messenger ﷺ. Kalla, no, pay him no mind, he is nothing, do not be intimidated, do not yield. And then the two commands the surah has been climbing toward: do not obey him, but prostrate and draw near. Abu Jahl refused to lower his head, so his head will be dragged; the Messenger ﷺ is told to lower his and come close, for the nearest a servant ever is to his Lord is in sujood.

Watch how the close shakes hands with the opening, the Sheikh says. The surah began with read, recitation, which in prayer happens when you stand at your tallest; it ends with prostration, which is your lowest. The first word demanded knowledge; the last demands action, the proof that you live by what you learned. And the order is the whole point: you cannot prostrate rightly, you cannot draw near, until first you have read, until you know the Lord you are bowing to. Knowledge at the top, surrender at the bottom, and a single wall holding the surah as one.

What this surah asks of you

- **The first word was read, so reading comes first.** Of all the commands the Prophet ﷺ would receive, this came before them all, because you cannot pray or do anything for Allah without first knowing how. Seeking the knowledge that brings you near to Him is the prerequisite for the rest of your worship, not an extra.
- **Keep reading, and do not stop.** Read is repeated for a reason: read on, do not abandon the Book after five days or the book after a few pages, and read it again, because some meanings only open on the second and third pass. From the pen to the grave, as the Sheikh quotes of those before us.
- **Your humble origin humbles your pride.** You began as a clinging clot, a drop you would have washed off your clothes in embarrassment. So no amount of wealth, status, knowledge, or power earns you arrogance. And that same lowly beginning is the standing proof that the One who started you can bring you back.

- **Wealth is not the crime; seeing yourself is.** Man rebels when he sees himself self-sufficient. Many of the Companions were rich. The sin is not having; it is boasting, the carefree certainty that you need no one and people need you. The cure is one line: to your Lord is the return.
- **Live as though Allah sees, because He does.** The one knowledge a wrongdoer most needs is that Allah is watching, now, continuously. When the watcher is someone you love, shame stops you at once. Fix that gaze between your eyes and the sin loses its taste.

Why this surah stays with us

Al-Alaq is the doorway of the entire Qur'an, and it is built like an argument that closes on itself. It begins by ordering a man who could not read to read, in the name of the Lord who made him from a clot and taught him what he never knew. Then it shows you the opposite of that man: one given a sharp mind and high rank who saw himself as needing no one, who tried to stop a slave from bowing, and who is warned that the proud head he will not lower will be the head he is dragged by. And it ends by turning to the believer with the only response that makes sense: do not obey him, prostrate, and draw near.

O Allah, make us people of the Qur'an, who read it and are changed by it. Teach us what we do not know, keep us reading until You take us, and guard us from ever seeing ourselves as self-sufficient. When we hear of that Day, do not let us answer it with a shrug, but bring our foreheads down to the ground willingly now, while bowing still draws us near to You.

Retold faithfully from Sheikh Abu Bakr Zoud's tafsir of Juz Amma (parts 1, 2 and 3). Qur'an: Sahih International, verified via quran.ai. The reflection is the Sheikh's, the phrasing is The Daily Wird's.

Al-Qadr

The surah that names the one night Allah hid from you on purpose, and tells you it is worth more than a lifetime

Surat Al-Qadr is five short ayat about a single night, and the strange thing about it is what it refuses to tell you. It will not say which night it is. It will tell you the whole Qur'an came down in it, that one night of worship outweighs more than eighty years of your life, that the sky opens and the angels pour down to greet you by name, that the whole night is nothing but peace until the sun comes up. And then it leaves the date a secret, and the Sheikh shows you that even the secret is a mercy.

The surah of the night, and where it sits

Sheikh Abu Bakr opens by placing this surah in its setting. It is the surah of Laylat al-Qadr, and although the scholars differ over whether it is Makki or Madani, the Sheikh holds that the stronger opinion is that it is Madani, revealed after the hijrah. His reasoning is simple and it tells you what the surah is for: the whole purpose of Surat Al-Qadr is to get the believer up off the floor and worshipping through this night, and that encouragement only made sense once the fasting of Ramadan had been made obligatory, in the second year after the hijrah. The surah exists to move you.

Then he draws the threads back to the surah before it, Al-Alaq, and the connections are beautiful. Al-Alaq told you how the revelation began (the angel pressing the Prophet ﷺ, iqra, read); Al-Qadr tells you when it began, in the night of Qadr. Al-Alaq said Allah taught the human being what he could never have known on his own; Al-Qadr is the living example of that, a night you could never have learned about until Allah Himself taught it. Al-Alaq ended with wasjud waqtarib, prostrate and draw near, and Al-Qadr names the very night when drawing near is easiest. Al-Alaq commanded iqra, read, and left you asking read what; Al-Qadr answers, inna anzalnahu, We sent it down, the Qur'an itself.

Why He says We, not I

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ

Indeed, We sent it down during the Night of Decree.

AL-QADR 97:1

The surah opens with Allah calling Himself We, and the Sheikh pauses here, because people sometimes wield this against the Qur'an, asking where the oneness of God is if He speaks of Himself in the plural. His answer is careful. Of the four pronouns Allah uses for Himself in the Qur'an (I, We, You, He), only one, We, is ever plural, and the other three never appear in any plural form. If the We truly meant many, you would see the others pluralised too, and you never do. The We is not a crowd. It is the royal We, the way a king says we have decided rather than I have decided, used in the Qur'an precisely where Allah speaks of something majestic: sending down rain, granting provision, creating, revealing. And to remove all doubt, He pairs it with the singular: read on a little and you reach bi rabbihim, by the permission of their Lord, one Lord, not many.

There is a second reason He chose anzalna, We sent down, the Sheikh adds, and it is the note of certainty. This word carries the force of without doubt, We sent it down, an assurance that Allah, and Allah alone, is the source of this Qur'an. Yes, Jibreel ﷺ carried it; the surah before this had already established that. But Al-Qadr makes the point that Jibreel is only the delivery. The words are Allah's own, and He takes credit for them Himself.

Sent down whole, then sent down piece by piece

Then the Sheikh draws out a difference English cannot show. Arabic has two words for sending down: anzala, which appears here, and nazzala, which appears elsewhere of the Qur'an. Both get translated as We sent it down, but anzala (built on the lighter pattern) means something that comes down all at once, while nazzala (with its doubled letter) means something that comes down gradually, over and over, across a long time. And we know the Qur'an reached the Prophet ﷺ in pieces, across twenty-three years, an answer arriving when a question was asked, a guidance arriving when an incident occurred. So why anzala, the all-at-once word, for the night of Qadr?

Ibn Abbas, the Sheikh relates, resolves it. There were two descents. In Laylat al-Qadr, the entire Qur'an came down as a whole from al-Lawh al-Mahfuz in the seventh heaven to the

lowest heaven, to a place called Bayt al-Izzah, the House of Might: that descent is anzalna, all at once. From there, across twenty-three years, Jibreel ﷺ would carry it down to the Prophet ﷺ in pieces, as life called for it: that descent is nazzalna, little by little.

And the wisdom of the slow second descent, the Sheikh says, is for you. Imagine handing a brand-new Muslim the whole Book and a translation and saying apply all of this by tomorrow. He would drown. So Allah taught even the Prophet ﷺ and his Companions gradually, a lesson at a time, until the Qur'an settled into them over the years. The Qur'an is not read the way you skim a newspaper to be done with it. It is internalised slowly. That patient, lifelong pace is the sunnah of Allah with His Book, and it is meant to be yours too.

One word, three meanings: why He called it Qadr

Why is it Laylat al-Qadr, the Sheikh asks, and not some other name? Because the single word Qadr holds three meanings at once, and the surah names it three times for the three. First, Qadr means honour, nobility, dignity. This is the night of high honour, and what gave it that honour is that the Qur'an came down in it. It is also the night of appreciation: the night Allah so values the worship of His servants that He counts one night of it above a thousand months. The one who rises for it learns his own worth to Allah, because the one worth nothing to Him sleeps straight through it.

Second, Qadr means decree, precise determination. It is the night when Allah, who already knows all things, hands His angels the year's decree: who will live and who will die, who will make hajj, where the rain will fall, every matter from this Laylat al-Qadr to the next. Third, Qadr means constriction, tightness, a crowding. It is the night the earth itself grows tight, because the angels descend in such numbers there is barely room for them, which is why, the Sheikh notes, a reported sign of the morning after is a sun that rises without its usual rays, as if a curtain of their light still hangs in the air. Honour, decree, crowding: pick any single synonym and you lose the other two. Qadr keeps all three, without compromising any. See, the Sheikh says, how perfectly Allah chooses His word.

What in the world could make you grasp it?

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ

And what can make you know what is the Night of Decree?

AL-QADR 97:2

Here the ma carries amazement, the Sheikh explains, so the line really reads: what in the world could ever give you a clue what this night is? And notice, he says, that Allah did not ask when is the Night of Decree, He asked what is it. Our whole conversation tends to circle the date, which night, the 27th or some other. But the Qur'an's emphasis falls on the what, the sheer weight of the night, not the when.

There is a grammar key here too. Allah has two ways of asking this kind of question: ma adraka in the past tense, and ma yudrika in the present. When the past tense is used, as it is here, it is a promise that the answer is coming, that Allah will give the clue. When the present is used, as it is of the Hour, it means this is knowledge Allah kept to Himself and shared with no one. So because He asked in the past tense, everything from this ayah to the end of the surah is the answer, clue after clue about what makes this night what it is.

And He honours this night even in His grammar, the Sheikh points out. Everywhere else in the Qur'an, when Allah asks what can make you know what such-and-such is, He names the thing once and then never repeats the noun, only alludes to it. But here, uniquely, the noun returns: Laylat al-Qadr, then Laylat al-Qadr, then Laylat al-Qadr, three times. Naming a thing again and again is heavier than pointing back to it, and Allah gave this surah a style He gave no other surah in the Qur'an, all because the Qur'an came down in this night.

Better than a thousand months

لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ خَيْرٌ مِنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ

The Night of Decree is better than a thousand months.

AL-QADR 97:3

The deeds you do in this one night, the Sheikh says, are worth more than the deeds of a thousand months that hold no Laylat al-Qadr. A thousand months works out to roughly eighty-three years, more than a full human lifetime. So Allah is offering you, in a single night, a bonus longer than the years you will live. For peoples whose average lifespan is short, He is offering twice their lives over in good deeds. It is a mercy almost too large to take in.

And the Sheikh sets it inside a tenderness about this nation. The Prophet ﷺ told us the lifespans of his ummah run between sixty and seventy years, far shorter than the nations before, who lived for centuries. Why so short? The scholars give wisdoms: a mercy, so we have less time to grow arrogant the way long-lived peoples did; a lighter reckoning, fewer

years to be questioned over; and a spur to work harder, knowing time is short. The Prophet ﷺ worried his people could never match the mountain of deeds the long-lived earlier nations piled up. So Allah began gifting him small things that carry enormous reward, and chief among them is this night. Take hold of Laylat al-Qadr even ten years running and you have gathered, in a handful of nights, the worth of a thousand years, and overtaken every nation before you.

Notice He said khayr, better than, the Sheikh adds, not merely equal to a thousand months. And the Arabs used a thousand as their figure for forever, for without end. So the word khayr cracks the meaning open past arithmetic: it points toward the limitless. The good of that night, he says, is not only counted, it overflows. Which is why the scholars stress that the khayr is not only ritual worship. Any good is multiplied that night. If you have been estranged from a parent, a sibling, a spouse for years, this is the night to reach out and mend it, because good done now is better than good done on any other night.

The angels and the Spirit pour down

تَنْزِلُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ وَالرُّوحُ فِيهَا بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ مِنْ كُلِّ أَمْرٍ

The angels and the Spirit descend therein by permission of their Lord for every matter.

AL-QADR 97:4

Even the shape of the verb carries meaning, the Sheikh says. Here it is tanazzalu, the shorter form; elsewhere, of the angels who descend on the dying believers, the Qur'an uses the longer tatanazzalu. As a rule in the Qur'an, the fuller a word is spelled, the more it carries, and the leaner the spelling, the less. The angels meet the dying every single day, so there the fuller word fits the constant traffic. But Laylat al-Qadr comes once a year, so the leaner word suits the rarer descent. He marvels at this: the Qur'an was recited aloud across twenty-three years, never written as it came, and yet the lighter word here and the heavier word there sit in perfect, deliberate harmony. No human, speaking over decades, could keep that consistency. That alone, he says, is a sign that the Speaker is Allah.

The Malaika are named first, then ar-Ruh, who is Jibreel ﷺ. Verbs of the angels are usually verbs of movement, ascending and descending, while Jibreel is described as stationed, still, by the Throne. The angels come down by their Lord's permission, the Sheikh explains, and the min in min kulli amr here carries the sense of because of: because of every command Allah entrusts to them, the decree of the coming year, they descend to carry it out. And what makes

the night so noble is exactly this visit: the very angel who carried the revelation down for twenty-three years comes down again, every year, reliving that descent.

And there is a staggering tenderness in why they come, the Sheikh says. The angels long to see the believers, so they seek their Lord's permission to come down and greet them. Think of what it costs in this world to meet a president or a celebrity: the screening, the ticket, and still he forgets your face. Yet here the angels treat the believer as the one worth seeking permission to visit. You are the superstar in this scene, and the messengers of the heavens descend just to find you, wherever you are kneeling.

Peace, until the break of dawn

سَلَامٌ هِيَ حَتَّىٰ مَطَلَعِ الْفَجْرِ

Peace it is until the emergence of dawn.

AL-QADR 97:5

Salam, peace, and the Sheikh lays out how the scholars read it. Read with one pause, the angels descend min kulli amr, salam, greeting the believers with peace: as they pass through the night, from sunset to the rise of dawn, they say to every worshipper they find, salamun alaykum, peace be upon you. Read another way, peace it is describes the whole night: every other night of the year can carry some harm, some descent of punishment, but in this night there is none. It is peace, start to finish, until the first light. Not even an evil deed, one narration says, can be carried out that night.

And watch how the surah ties its two ends together, the Sheikh says. It opened with the descent of the Qur'an, then told you of the descent of the angels, and now closes with the descent of peace: three things coming down, and the peace lasting until al-fajr, the dawn. The surah began on the Qur'an and ends on the dawn, and these two meet again elsewhere in the Qur'an, where Allah singles out the recitation at fajr as witnessed. So the surah quietly points you to the best hour to hold this Book: the recitation just before the dawn prayer, when the night's peace is deepest and the angels are still near.

He closes with a mercy about the night you cannot see. There is a world where it is daytime while it is your night, so how can one Laylat al-Qadr belong to everyone at once? It does not need to, the Sheikh says. The night travels, sweeping the earth, the angels descending on one land and rising as its dawn breaks, then descending on the next, until it has passed over every

believer on earth. Wherever you are, the night will reach you. Your task is only to be awake when it does.

Why the night was hidden

Then the question the Sheikh saves for the end: why did Allah not simply tell us which night it is? We know the times of hajj, of every prayer, of Ramadan itself, yet the one night worth more than a thousand months He left a secret. He gives two reasons. The first is plain: laziness. If the date were fixed, much of the ummah would sleep through the whole month, show up for that single night, and vanish. By hiding it among the odd nights of the last ten, Allah keeps you striving across many nights to be sure of catching it.

The second reason is gentler. Imagine you knew the exact night and still slept through it, doing nothing: how grave a sin that would be, to be handed the date and waste it anyway. So out of mercy to His weaker servants, the Sheikh says, Allah veiled the night, sparing them that heavier guilt. The safest position, he counsels, is to take the odd nights of the last ten seriously, and given how the ummah disputes the start and end of Ramadan, simply pour yourself into the last stretch of nights, and you will have all but guaranteed you did not miss the gift Allah sends down once a year.

What this surah asks of you

- **The whole point of the surah is to move your feet.** The Sheikh reads Al-Qadr as an alarm clock, not a lecture. Its purpose is to get you up and worshipping through this night, so the right response to it is to stand in the dark and pray, not merely to admire how special the night is.
- **One night can outweigh a lifetime.** Better than a thousand months is more than eighty-three years, longer than you will live. Allah hands you, in a single night, a bonus larger than your whole life. Reaching for it ten years running gathers the worth of a thousand.
- **Read the Qur'an the way it came down: slowly.** It descended piece by piece over twenty-three years so it could settle into hearts. So do not skim it like a newspaper to be finished. Internalise it gradually, a lesson at a time, the way Allah taught it.
- **The angels come looking for you.** They seek their Lord's permission just to descend and greet the believers by name. You are the one worth visiting in that night. Be somewhere worth being found: awake, in worship, on any of the odd nights of the last ten.

- **The secret is itself a mercy.** Allah hid the night so laziness would not let you sleep through a known date, and so no one would carry the guilt of wasting a night he was told about. The veil is a kindness. Treat the last ten nights as if each one were it.

Why this surah stays with us

Surat Al-Qadr spends five ayat building the case for a single night, the night the whole Qur'an came down, worth more than your lifetime, when the sky empties out its angels to greet you and the very air is peace until dawn, and then it withholds the one fact you most want, the date, and the Sheikh shows you that even that withholding is love. The surah is not really about a calendar. It is about whether you will be standing when the night passes over you.

O Allah, make us people of the Qur'an, who hear its reminders and are moved by them. Let us reach Laylat al-Qadr every Ramadan of our lives, awake and prostrate while the angels descend. Give us the worth of a thousand months from Your hand, accept the little we manage, greet us with Your peace, and do not let this night sweep over us while we sleep.

Retold faithfully from Sheikh Abu Bakr Zoud's tafsir of Juz Amma (parts 1 and 2). Qur'an: Sahih International, verified via quran.ai. The reflection is the Sheikh's, the phrasing is The Daily Wird's.

Al-Bayyinah

The surah that names the one thing that should have settled everything, and then shows you why people split apart anyway

Al-Bayyinah opens on people who were stuck, and they knew they were stuck. The People of the Book and the idol-worshippers had dug into their positions, and Allah says they were never going to be pried loose, not by an argument, not by the years, not by anything, until one thing arrived. A clear proof. The whole surah turns on that single word, and on the strange, painful thing that happened the moment the proof finally came.

The proof that ends the case

لَمْ يَكُنِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ وَالْمُشْرِكِينَ مُنْفَكِينَ حَتَّى تَأْتِيَهُمُ الْبَيِّنَةُ

Those who disbelieved among the People of the Scripture and the polytheists were not to be parted [from misbelief] until there came to them clear evidence

AL-BAYYINAH 98:1

Sheikh Abu Bakr starts with the word the surah is named for: al-bayyinah, the clear proof. To feel its weight, he sits you down in a courtroom. Two men come before the judge. One says, this man took money from me. The other says, I never took a thing. The judge does not raise his voice or take sides. He says one word to the accuser: bring your proof. Bring the bayyinah. The moment a real proof is laid on the table, a recording that shows the money passing from one hand to the other, the man promising to return it in two weeks, the case is over. There is nothing left to say. Proof is the thing that ends the argument.

Now hear what Allah says about these people. They were stuck, dug in, not budging from their disbelief, and they were not going to move on their own, not until the bayyinah came to them. The Sheikh wants you to notice the honesty buried in that. Allah is describing a knot so tight that human reasoning alone would never have loosened it. Something had to arrive from outside them. And then it did.

And the proof was a man

رَسُولٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ يَتْلُو صُحُفًا مُّطَهَّرَةً

A Messenger from Allah, reciting purified scriptures

AL-BAYYINAH 98:2

فِيهَا كُتُبٌ قَيِّمَةٌ

Within which are correct writings [i.e., rulings and laws].

98:3

Then Allah tells you what the clear proof actually was. Not a sign in the sky, not a miracle they could explain away by morning. The proof was a person: a Messenger from Allah, the final Messenger ﷺ, reciting purified pages. The Sheikh lingers on that word, purified. These are not pages stained by the hands that came before, edited and reshuffled over the centuries. They come down clean, exactly what was meant, two years and more of revelation descending until the case against every excuse was airtight.

And inside those pages, the surah says, are upright writings, kutub qayyimah, rulings that stand straight. The Sheikh draws the line from here to the whole point of the surah: this man and this Book were precisely what the world had been waiting for. The People of the Book, of all people, had been told he was coming. He was the proof their own prophets had pointed toward. So when he finally stood in front of them, reciting, the case should have closed the way it closes in the courtroom. There should have been nothing left to argue.

Why knowledge split them instead of uniting them

وَمَا تَفَرَّقَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُمْ الْبَيِّنَةُ

Nor did those who were given the Scripture become divided until after there had come to them clear evidence.

AL-BAYYINAH 98:4

Here the surah lands its most unsettling line, and Sheikh Abu Bakr slows right down on it. You would expect that people split apart because they were confused, because the truth had not

reached them yet. Allah says the opposite. The People of the Book did not divide until after the clear proof had come to them. The division came not from ignorance but from knowledge. They saw it clearly, and then they broke into pieces anyway.

Why? The surah elsewhere gives the Sheikh his answer: baghyan baynahum, out of sheer jealousy between them. It was envy. This man comes from outside their circle, and a voice rises in them: who is he? We have held the Book for generations, we have been the authority here for as long as anyone can remember, and now we are supposed to fall in line behind him? The proof was undeniable, so they did not deny the proof. They denied their own place behind it. The Sheikh reminds you this is the same disease the Prophet ﷺ warned of in his own nation: the People of Musa ﷺ split into seventy-one or seventy-two, and this nation would split into seventy-three. Knowing the truth was never the hard part. Bowing to it was.

Two men, one proof, two answers

To make it concrete, the Sheikh sets two men of Madinah side by side. Abdullah ibn Salam was a scholar the Jews of Madinah themselves called the best and most learned among them, right up until the moment he believed. When the Prophet ﷺ arrived, he looked, he recognized the truth, and he simply submitted: there is no god but Allah, and you are the Messenger of Allah. The proof reached him and he humbled himself under it. The instant he did, the very people who had praised him turned and called him the worst of them. Nothing about him had changed except that he had bowed to the truth.

Then there is Abdullah ibn Ubayy. Madinah, before the Prophet ﷺ came, had been tearing itself apart between its tribes, and they had finally agreed to crown one man king to end the fighting. They were preparing the ceremony. And then the Messenger of Allah ﷺ arrived, and the whole city turned to him instead. The Sheikh pictures the wound of it: this man watched his crown slip away to a newcomer, and he never forgave it. The proof stood right in front of him too. But his sickness was on the inside, and it ate him, because he could not bear to be small in front of someone he thought should have been beneath him. Same proof. Two completely opposite ends. The difference was never the evidence. It was the heart that met it.

The whole command, in one breath

وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ حُنَفَاءَ وَيُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَذَلِكَ دِينُ الْقِيَمَةِ

And they were not commanded except to worship Allah, [being] sincere to Him in religion, inclining to truth, and to establish prayer and to give zakah. And that is the correct religion.

AL-BAYYINAH 98:5

After all that division, the surah lays out how simple the thing they were fighting over actually was. They were commanded one thing: to worship Allah, sincerely, leaning toward the truth, to pray and to give. That is the upright religion, the deen al-qayyimah, the same straight thing every prophet was sent with. The Sheikh points to the cure folded inside this verse. The reason they divided was arrogance and envy. The word right at the front of the command, mukhliseen, sincere, is the opposite of all of that. The sincere person is not competing for a crown. He has nothing to be jealous over.

And the Sheikh draws out a difference he says people miss: not every worshipper is a slave, and not every slave is merely a worshipper. A worshipper, he says, is like an employee. He clocks in at a set hour, performs one set task, clocks out, and goes home, and the rest of his time is his own. Plenty of nations have a worship like that, walled off into a corner of the week. But a slave of Allah is a slave around the clock. There is no clocking out, no corner of the day that belongs to someone else. That total belonging is what sincerity really is, and it is the floor the whole religion stands on.

The worst of creation

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ وَالْمُشْرِكِينَ فِي نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أُولَئِكَ هُمْ شَرُّ الْبَرِيَّةِ

Indeed, they who disbelieved among the People of the Scripture and the polytheists will be in the fire of Hell, abiding eternally therein. Those are the worst of creatures.

AL-BAYYINAH 98:6

Now the surah separates the two roads and follows each to its end. The ones who saw the proof and turned away, the Book-people and the idol-worshippers alike, are in the Fire of Hell,

staying there with no exit. And then the verdict on them, the Sheikh notes, is as heavy as language gets: they are the worst of creation. Not merely mistaken, not simply unlucky. The worst of everything Allah made.

The Sheikh draws a hard, practical lesson from that title, the kind he says we would rather not hear. If Allah Himself calls them the worst of creation, then we should not be naive about where treachery tends to come from, and we should not assume good where Allah has named the opposite, except for the few who keep their word and prove trustworthy. He grounds it in the way the Prophet ﷺ dealt with the tribes who signed pacts in Madinah and then broke them, betrayal after betrayal, until they were expelled and their land passed to the believers. The point is not bitterness. It is clear sight: take a person at the truth of what they do, not at the comfort of what you wish they were.

The best of creation, and the home that never ends

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمْ خَيْرُ الْبَرِيَّةِ

Indeed, they who have believed and done righteous deeds - those are the best of creatures.

AL-BAYYINAH 98:7

جَزَاؤُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ جَنَّاتٌ عَدْنٌ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ خَشِيَ رَبَّهُ

Their reward with their Lord will be gardens of perpetual residence beneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide forever, Allah being pleased with them and they with Him. That is for whoever has feared his Lord.

98:8

Then the other road. Those who believed and did good are the best of creation, the exact mirror of the verse before it. The Sheikh stops you on the size of that swap. The same man the disbelievers sneered at and called the worst of them, Allah here names the best of all creation. Once your Lord is pleased with you, he asks, what is left to care about? Let the whole world line up against you. The One whose word is final has already ruled in your favor.

Their reward is gardens of perpetual residence, Adn, with rivers running beneath. The Sheikh notes how the human heart aches for exactly this: a permanent home. The entire world, he

says, is one long fight over residency, who gets to stay, who gets pushed out, whose name is on the deed. And here is Allah offering a residence with no rent, no taxes, no upkeep, no notice to leave, ever. The rivers there do not even need a channel to run in. It is the thing people have been chasing all along, finally given for keeps.

And then the surah seals it with a phrase the Sheikh calls the heart of the matter: Allah is pleased with them, and they are pleased with Him. He asks you to weigh that against your own life. Is there a single person here you are completely, perfectly pleased with, with nothing you wish were even slightly different? Not a spouse, not even your own child. That total, mutual contentment exists nowhere in this world. It is kept for the Garden. And the verse hands you the one door into it: that is for whoever feared his Lord. The Sheikh is careful with that fear. It is *khashyah*, the fear that grows out of knowing Whom you stand before. You cannot truly fear a Lord you never bothered to know. Learn His names, learn how He is, and the fear comes, and with it the whole reward. That, he says, is why Allah says only the scholars truly fear Him.

What this surah asks of you

- **Seeing the truth is not the same as bowing to it.** The People of the Book split apart after the proof reached them, not before. Knowing was never their problem. Submitting was. Ask yourself which truths you already see clearly and still have not bent your life around.
- **Envy is what breaks the believers apart.** They divided out of jealousy over who would lead, not over what was true. Wherever there is a scramble to be in charge, the cure is the first word of the command: sincerity. The sincere person has nothing to be jealous over.
- **Be a slave, not just a worshipper.** A worshipper clocks in and out of one set hour. A slave belongs to Allah around the clock, with no corner of the day fenced off. The upright religion is total belonging, not a scheduled appointment.
- **Aim for the gaze that outweighs every other.** If Allah is pleased with you, the world's verdict stops mattering. The same person the deniers called the worst, Allah names the best of creation. Live for the one ruling that is final.

Why this surah stays with us

Al-Bayyinah is only eight ayat, but it walks you the whole distance: from people who could not be moved, to the clear proof that should have moved everyone, to the envy that split them anyway, and finally to the two ends those two answers earn. The Sheikh keeps pressing one quiet question through all of it. The proof reaches every one of us. The only thing left to decide

is whether we will humble ourselves under it, like the scholar who bowed, or guard a crown that was never ours, like the man who could not.

O Allah, make us of those who not only see the truth but submit to it. Empty our hearts of the envy that splits Your servants apart, and fill them with the sincerity that is the whole of the upright religion. Teach us to know You so that we may truly fear You, and on the Day we stand before You, be pleased with us, and let us be pleased with You, and settle us in the home that never ends.

Retold faithfully from Sheikh Abu Bakr Zoud's tafsir of Juz Amma. Qur'an: Sahih International, verified via quran.ai. The reflection is the Sheikh's, the phrasing is The Daily Wird's.

Az-Zalzalah

The surah where the ground you trusted turns witness, and an atom's weight of anything is finally seen

You spend your whole life trusting the ground. You build on it, you bury your dead in it, you walk it as if it will hold forever. Surat Az-Zalzalah opens on the one moment it stops holding: the earth convulsing under your feet, throwing up everything it ever swallowed, and then, when you ask what could possibly be wrong with it, opening its mouth to answer. The ground you walked on has been keeping a record, and on that Day it reads it back to you.

When this earthquake actually happens

Before a single word of the surah, Sheikh Abu Bakr stops to fix the scene, because everything depends on knowing which earthquake this is. It is not a tremor of this world. He walks you to the very end of time: the major signs have all come and gone, the last of them a fire that drives the living to the land of gathering, and then a cold wind takes the soul of every last believer, until only the worst of creation remain. The Trumpet is blown and they all die. The whole earth falls silent, no soul left on it.

Then the rain comes down and bodies begin to grow again in their graves, lifeless, the way a seed swells in the dark. The Trumpet is blown a second time, the souls fly back into the bodies, and that is the instant this earthquake strikes. The Sheikh is precise: the zalzalah of this surah is the quake that heaves the people up out of the ground at the resurrection itself. It does not happen here. It is the gate the dead walk out through.

A short surah laid before a long one

Sheikh Abu Bakr points out that Az-Zalzalah was placed deliberately right before the surah that follows it, and the placement is itself a teaching. The surah before this one ended by naming the final destinations: the believers in their gardens, the disbelievers in their fire. And when you read that, the Sheikh says, a question rises in you. When does any of that actually arrive? When does the believer finally walk into the garden, when does the wrongdoer fall into the fire? The answer is this surah: when the earth is shaken. The end of one surah names the reward, the beginning of the next names the day it is handed out.

He notes its place in the prayer too. The Prophet ﷺ once recited Az-Zalzalah in both units of a prayer, so a person short on time can lean on it and still be honored by reciting what the Prophet ﷺ recited. And there is a narration that reading it equals half the Qur'an, but the Sheikh is careful and honest with you: that particular virtue is weak, not authentic. What is sound is enough. This is a surah about the Day of Judgement, sent to a people who were certain the Day would never come, to prove to them that it will.

The shaking that will not stop

إِذَا زُلْزِلَتِ الْأَرْضُ زِلْزَالَهَا

When the earth is shaken with its [final] earthquake

AZ-ZALZALAH 99:1

The first word, the Sheikh says, is already doing work. The surah opens with *idha*, the word Arabic reaches for when a thing is certain and coming, not *in*, the word of doubt. Say to a friend "when I come over, we'll have lunch," and the lunch is settled, it is only a matter of time. Say "if I come over" and you have planted a maybe. Allah does not say if the earth is shaken. He says when. The doubt the deniers were clinging to is removed in the opening syllable.

Then the name itself. The root of *zilzal* means to slip, to lose your footing, the way the Sheikh notes Allah describes Shaytan causing Adam and Eve to slip out of the Garden. But here the letters are doubled, and in Arabic a doubled word carries a doubled meaning: not one slip but slipping over and over, falling, rising, falling again, never able to stand straight. That is exactly what an earthquake does to a body. So this is no five-second tremor that ends and is repaired. The Sheikh calls it the single greatest catastrophe ever to strike the earth, a shaking with no pause and no end, until the ground itself becomes unlivable.

And look, he says, at what Allah did not say. Not "I shook the earth," but the passive: it was shaken. Two things are hidden in that. First, the doer is so obviously Allah that naming Him is unnecessary, and His name will arrive later in the surah anyway. Second, the passive turns your eyes onto the event itself: stop looking around, focus on the quake, picture yourself in it. And a third gift sits in the passive too: it tells you how effortless this is for Allah. Not "I will shake it," which would imply some labor, but "it will be shaken," as if by nothing at all. The thing that ends your whole world costs its Maker no effort whatsoever.

The earth empties what it was carrying

وَأَخْرَجَتِ الْأَرْضُ أَثْقَالَهَا

And the earth discharges its burdens

AZ-ZALZALAH 99:2

Every earthquake you have ever seen buries: the high tower stands, then it is rubble, the visible made hidden, bodies pinned under the wreckage. The Sheikh makes you feel how this quake runs the opposite way. The verb Allah uses, the root behind *akhrajat*, is the verb for bringing out what was concealed, drawing the hidden thing into the open where every eye can see it. This earthquake does not bury. It disgorges. He reaches for the bluntest image: the earth is sick of what is inside it, and like a stomach that can hold no longer, it vomits everything out onto its own surface.

And the word for what comes out, *athqal*, means heavy loads, the same word used for the furniture of a house and for the baggage you pack for a journey. The scholars read it two ways, the Sheikh says, and both are true. The first heavy thing is the dead, the human beings and the jinn, whom Allah elsewhere calls the two burdens, because the disobedient were a weight the earth carried like a patient mother, longing for the day she could finally set them down and see them answer for what they did on her back. The disbeliever is the heaviest load of all. The Prophet ﷺ taught that when a wicked soul dies, the land and the trees and the animals are relieved of him.

The second thing the earth pours out is its treasure: the gold, the minerals, the buried wealth, everything precious that men hid or never even found. Imagine, the Sheikh says, coming home to find all your furniture dumped in the street, the shock of seeing what belongs inside lying outside. That is the face of every person at the resurrection. They are stunned that they were raised at all, and then stunned a second time, staring at the gold spilling free from the dirt, asking: this is what I spent my life chasing? It pours out now for nothing, and I would have given everything for it. They see at last how worthless the thing was that they ran their whole lives after.

What is wrong with it?

وَقَالَ الْإِنْسَانُ مَا لَهَا

And man says, "What is [wrong] with it?"

AZ-ZALZALAH 99:3

Now Allah quotes the human being himself, staggering out of the ground, still slipping and falling, and the words he blurts are *ma laha*: what is wrong with it, what has gotten into this earth, we have never known it to behave like this. The Sheikh draws your attention to the singular. Not "the people said," but "the human being said," one man, alone. Because that is exactly the state of that Day. When a disaster like this hits, the Sheikh says, every soul thinks only of itself, you would abandon your own children and run. So Allah uses the singular to capture it: each person raised on his own, speaking only to himself, no tribe, no nation, no friend, no brother beside him.

And there is a deeper loneliness in that single word. This is the largest gathering that has ever existed, every human from Adam to the last man standing in one place, packed so close, the Prophet ﷺ said, that you have room only for your two feet, and yet the Sheikh says you will feel more alone than you have ever felt in your life. Surrounded by all of creation, utterly by yourself. But notice, he adds, who this is. It is the disbeliever who stands there bewildered, crying out what is wrong, who woke us from our sleep. The believer is not lost like this. He read the Qur'an, he believed these words, so he is not humiliated with confusion. He says instead: this is what the Most Merciful promised, and His messengers told the truth. The one terrified by the Day is the one who never expected it.

The ground turns witness

يَوْمَئِذٍ تُحَدِّثُ أَخْبَارَهَا

That Day, it will report its news

AZ-ZALZALAH 99:4

بَانَ رَبِّكَ أَوْحَىٰ لَهَا

Because your Lord has inspired [i.e., commanded] it.

99:5

Then comes the turn that the Sheikh says is the heart of the surah. The earth will *speak*. The word *tuhaddith*, he explains, means to tell someone something it is as if they are hearing for the very first time, even a thing they once knew and forgot. And what the earth reports is its *akhbar*, its news, every deed done on its surface, good and evil. It will testify against the one who disbelieved and sinned on it, and it will testify for the one who bowed and worshipped on it. This, the Sheikh says, is the justice of Allah laid bare. The disbeliever will deny, will swear he never did it, and before any other proof is brought, the very ground he walked will open and say: you did this, on such a day, here. His own skin, his hands, his feet, his tongue will join the ground in witnessing, until he turns to his own body and asks why it betrayed him.

If that sounds impossible, the Sheikh says, the next ayah answers the doubt at once. The earth speaks *because your Lord inspired it*. The word *awha* here does not mean revelation as it comes to prophets, it means Allah signaled to it, commanded it, gave it leave, and it obeyed. And the earth has spoken before: when Allah told the heavens and the earth to come willingly or by force, they answered that they came willingly. The Day of Judgement, he reminds you, runs on a different measure entirely, where the things you swore could never happen, your own hand giving evidence, the ground finding a voice, simply happen. So the Sheikh leaves you with a practical mercy: Allah's earth is vast, so scatter your good deeds across every patch of it you can, pray in places no one has prayed, because on that Day each one will speak up for you. The ground beneath you is not neutral. It is taking down everything, and one day it will read it back.

Scattered to be shown, down to the atom's weight

يَوْمَئِذٍ يَصْدُرُ النَّاسُ أَشْتَاتًا لِيُرَوْا أَعْمَالَهُمْ

That Day, the people will depart separated [into categories] to be shown [the result of] their deeds.

AZ-ZALZALAH 99:6

فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ

So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it,

99:7

وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ

And whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it.

99:8

The earth has emptied its graves and reported its news, and now Allah moves the crowds. The verb He chooses, the Sheikh says, is *yasdur*, and it carries a whole journey inside it. *Sudur* in Arabic is the return home: the man who leaves his house, walks out to the water well, and comes back the way he came. Its opposite is *wurud*, the going out with no return in view. So the word maps your entire path. This life is where you leave the house and pack the bags with deeds. Then you go down into the grave. Then, when the earth is shaken, you come back, the Sheikh says, to the very same earth you walked, except it has been replaced with another earth and another sky, and you barely recognize it. You return to open the bags you packed and take out what is inside.

And you do not return as one people. The word is *ashtatan*, scattered, and the Sheikh draws out its root: it means a thing that was one and is then broken into pieces. Picture the world now, he says. Your neighbor on one side denies, your neighbor on the other follows a different book, another hates you for your faith, and yet you all live pressed together, one street, one city, looking like a single humanity. That closeness ends on that Day. The people stream out sorted apart, the people of the right hand and the people of the left, and inside each of those, group upon group: the foremost, the near-stationed, the righteous, rank below rank. What shatters the one crowd into all these scattered parties, the surah says next, is *their deeds*. The deeds are the dividing line, and that is why old neighbors and even family cannot find their way back to one another.

Why are they brought out at all? *Li-yuraw a'malahum*, the Sheikh reads: so that they may be shown their deeds. Because in this life you act but you do not see the deed itself, only on that Day is it set before your eyes. He lays out the ways a person is shown what he did. You are handed your book and you read it, every act with its time and its manner written down. Your deeds are placed on the scale and you watch which pan sinks. And sometimes Allah turns the

deed into a thing you can see: the wicked man meets a foul, dark, stinking figure at his grave who says, I am your deeds, and rides on his back to the Fire, while the good man is weighed in his own body, the light-legged Companion whose thin shins the people laughed at, heavier on that scale than the mountain of Uhud. Nothing stays invisible. What you did is brought out where you must look at it.

Then comes the *fa*, the Sheikh says, the little word that means *as a result*, and it tells you that everything before it was only the build-up to this. All of it, the quake with no end, the graves emptied, the gold pouring out for nothing, the ground finding its voice, the people scattered and stunned, all of it was staged so that one tiny thing could be brought forward and weighed: so whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it.

These, the Sheikh says, are the two ayat the Prophet ﷺ called the most comprehensive in the whole Qur'an, the verses that gather everything. And he warns you off the mistake everyone makes: you assume you will be shown the big things, the great sins and the great good. Allah corrects you. Not the big things, *an atom's weight*. A *dharrah*, the scholars say, is an ant, or the egg of an ant, or the speck of dust you see drifting in a shaft of sunlight through the window, the thing so light it has no weight a scale could ever read. Bring the most sensitive balance ever built and it will not register a mote of dust. The scale of Allah registers it at once. And the Sheikh adds a mercy folded into the wording: the atom of good does not stay an atom, Allah grows it, ten times, a hundred, seven hundred and beyond, while the atom of evil is left exactly as it is, never multiplied.

Look closely at the verb, he says. Allah does not say *whoever does* with the word for any random act, He says *ya'mal*, the doing that carries intention behind it, and He keeps it in the present tense, the tense of going on and on. So two things are being taught. First, a deed only counts as the good you will see if it meets the two conditions the surah before this one already laid down: that it is sincerely for Allah alone, and that it follows the way of the Messenger ﷺ, no innovation bolted onto it. Pray a thousand units the wrong way, the Sheikh says bluntly, and not one is accepted. Second, the present tense is a call to *continuity*. Gave charity today, give it tomorrow. Read a page, read it again. And continuity, he says, runs on patience, the harder, quieter patience of staying on the worship day after day, the patience that walks a person straight into Paradise without reckoning.

Notice too that the good is named before the evil, and the Sheikh gives the reason: Allah leads with the encouragement, the way you would tell a child what he earns for doing well before you ever mention the cost of doing wrong. He also points to the artistry. The surah just before

this one put evil first and then good, and here that order is flipped, good then evil, a deliberate mirror laid across the two surahs. And then a hard truth he will not soften: the disbeliever who dies on his denial does see his good, but he already spent it, paid back in full in this world, so on that Day he comes with nothing. *Yarah*, finally, means to see and to *understand*. Unlike a courtroom of this life, where a man is sentenced in language he cannot follow and led away not knowing why, in the court of Allah every person grasps exactly what his deed was and exactly why it weighs as it does. No confusion, no excuse left to offer.

So the surah that opened on the greatest catastrophe ever to strike the earth closes on a speck of dust, and that, the Sheikh says, is the whole point. The terror at the beginning was built to make you take the smallest thing at the end with absolute seriousness. The mercy you are chasing is not the justice of that Day, no one could survive being judged on every line of his book, it is the easy reckoning the Prophet ﷺ asked for, the glance over the sins that passes them by and says: you are forgiven, go. Pack the bags now, the Sheikh urges, with every atom you can, because the bags are opened over there, and over there you can no longer add a single thing to them.

What this surah asks of you

- **The Day is certain, not possible.** The surah opens on *idha*, the word of when, not in, the word of if. Allah removes the maybe in the first syllable. The earthquake is not a risk to weigh, it is an appointment already on the calendar.
- **The world you chase pours out for nothing.** The earth disgorges its buried gold for free, and the raised soul is stunned: this is what I spent a life running after? See the worth of it now, while there is still time to chase something that lasts.
- **The ground is keeping a record.** On that Day the earth will speak every deed done on it, for you or against you. So lay down good deeds on every patch of it, pray where no one has prayed, because each spot will testify.
- **Read the Qur'an now so you are not lost then.** The one crying "what is wrong with it" is the one who never believed. The believer who carried these words knows exactly what is happening, and meets the Day with recognition instead of terror.

Why this surah stays with us

Az-Zalzalah takes the most ordinary, most trusted thing in your life, the ground under your feet, and turns it into the first witness against you. The earth you build on and bury your dead

in is not a silent floor. It is patient, it is carrying you like a load, and it is taking down every step. One day it will heave you up, pour out everything it hid, and tell the truth about what you did on its back.

O Allah, make us people of the Qur'an, who believe the news of that Day before it arrives. Let the ground we walk testify for us and not against us. Fill the earth beneath our feet with our prostrations and our good, so that when it finally speaks, it speaks in our favor, and gather us among those who are shown an atom's weight of good and are made glad by it.

Retold faithfully from Sheikh Abu Bakr Zoud's tafsir of Juz Amma. Qur'an: Sahih International, verified via quran.ai. The reflection is the Sheikh's, the phrasing is The Daily Wird's.

Al-Adiyat

The surah that paints a war horse so loyal it will die for you, then asks why you will not even live for your Lord

Al-Adiyat does not begin with the Day, or with a command, or with a warning. It begins with a horse. Allah swears by the war horses charging at the enemy, and the Sheikh wants you to feel why: the desert Arab loved nothing the way he loved his horse, so Allah opens on the very thing that would pull him to the edge of his seat. Five ayat of pure cinema, a trailer with the sound turned all the way up, and then the screen goes black and the real subject walks in, and it was never about the horse at all. It was about you.

An oath by the things he loves most

وَالْعَادِيَاتِ ضَبْحًا

By the racers, panting,

AL-ADIYAT 100:1

Sheikh Abu Bakr sets the scene before he reads a word. When Allah swears by something, he explains, it is to swing the attention of the listener around: an oath says watch closely, something great is coming. And He swears here by *al-adiyat*, the chargers, from *adw*, which carries the sense of animosity, a hatred running inside. These are the battle horses storming the enemy, not glancing left or right, driven by something burning in them. To the Arab around the fire in Makkah this was the greatest entertainment there was. They had no screens, the Sheikh says; their cinema was poetry recited at night, words so vivid you watched them like a film. And the one thing the Arab loved above all was his horse. So the surah speaks his language and shows him exactly what he wants to see.

Notice, the Sheikh adds, that *al-adiyat* is feminine: Allah swears by the *mares*, because the female horse is faster on the battlefield than the male, and that detail alone leans the Arab in further. Then *dabha*, the heavy panting of the horse as it runs flat out. Arabic has separate words for the sounds a horse makes standing, walking, and finally galloping, and this is the last

one, the labored breath you only hear at full speed. And the same word was first used for the growl of a wolf as the pack closes on its prey. A pack will only charge when it is sure it is the stronger. So in one word Allah has shown you horses that are furious, breathing hard, and utterly certain they will win. The Arab is already inside the story.

Sparks in the dark, an attack at dawn

فَالْمُورِيَّاتِ قَدْحًا

And the producers of sparks [when] striking

100:2

فَالْمُغِيرَاتِ صُبْحًا

And the chargers at dawn,

100:3

The Sheikh pauses on a small grammatical hinge: this ayah and the next open with *fa*, the letter that means immediately after, in order, with nothing in between. So these are not separate scenes; it is one unbroken shot, each moment crashing into the next at speed. *Al-muriyat qadha*: the horses striking sparks. The metal of their hooves hammers the rock of the earth so hard and so fast that fire flies out, and a spark only flies when the strike is violent and the speed is at its peak. So the camera that was at the horse's mouth, the Sheikh says, drops to the ground, and now the screen is full of sparks. And sparks are only visible in the dark, which tells you the hour: they have been galloping through the night.

Then *al-mughirat subha*: now they raid, *ighara* meaning to attack and ambush, and the time given is *subh*, the morning, just as the sky's redness fades. You would think the clever attack comes at night, slipping in unseen. But these horses strike in broad daylight, and that, the Sheikh says, makes it far more terrifying. A crime at night is half-hidden; a robbery or a killing in daylight terrifies a whole town, and even today the headlines reach for that word, a *brazen daylight* attack. These horses are so brave and so sure of themselves that they will do it in the open, in front of everyone, so that all may see how strong they are. The Sheikh notes this is also the way of the Prophet ﷺ: he would not attack a sleeping town at night. He would camp and wait for Fajr, and if he heard the adhan called he would hold back, and if he heard none, then he advanced.

The dust rises, and they plunge into the middle

فَأَثَرُنَ بِهِ نَقَعًا

Stirring up thereby [clouds of] dust,

100:4

فَوَسَطْنَ بِهِ جَمْعًا

Arriving thereby in the center collectively,

100:5

Here, the Sheikh points out, the grammar itself shifts: the first three ayat were nouns, still images, but now the surah turns to verbs, because the action has finally begun. *Fa-atharna bihi naqa*: they kick up dust. *Naq* is whatever rises from speed, and at dawn the ground is damp with dew, so the horses are tearing along fast enough to dry the wet earth and fling it up behind them in a rising trail. The dust thickens until the riders can barely see one another, and so they begin to shout across it, calling out names through the cloud, the noise itself part of what the word carries.

And then *fa-wasatna bihi jama*: with that same dust they plunge straight into the *middle* of the enemy. Not the edge, not the outskirts; *wasat* is the very center. The Sheikh marvels at the word *jama*, all together, all at once. In real war that is suicide: you send waves, you keep a reserve. But these few exhausted horses, who have run all night without rest, do not pause and do not hold any back. They go in as one, into the heart of an army standing in rows, as if they were created for exactly this. And then, the Sheikh says, the trailer ends. The screen goes black. The Arab is leaning forward, desperate to know what happens to the horse, to the battle, what comes next. And what comes next is not what he expects at all.

It was never about the horse

إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لِرَبِّهِ لَكَنُودٌ

Indeed mankind, to his Lord, is ungrateful.

100:6

Now the oath pays off, and it lands like a blow. The Arab has been admiring the horse: the female horse that is faster, the loyal horse that will charge into spears and die for the man on its back, when every other animal flees from danger. They even say, the Sheikh notes, that after the dog the horse is the most loyal animal to a human, so loyal that some have died of grief when their owner died. The Arab loves that loyalty. And right there, while his heart is wide open and tied to the scene, Allah strikes: *inna al-insan li-rabbihi la-kanud*. Truly the human being, toward his Lord, is ungrateful.

Do you see the turn, the Sheikh asks. The horse gives its master everything, even its life. And you, the slave of your Lord who fed you and made you and gave you your eyes and your hands, do you show Him anything like that loyalty? The horse stayed; you separate yourself and run. And see how the verse uses the singular, *al-insan*, the human being, one person. When the singular is used, the Sheikh says, the only person you are meant to think about is yourself. Not your friend who should have heard this, not someone else who needs it. You are sitting here for a reason. Ask yourself: have I been loyal to my Master, or not?

Kanud: the heart that only counts what is missing

وَإِنَّهُ عَلَىٰ ذَٰلِكَ لَشَهِيدٌ

And indeed, he is to that a witness.

100:7

The Sheikh slows on the word *kanud*. It is close to *kafur*, ungrateful, but heavier: built on a pattern that intensifies, it means *extremely* ungrateful. And its particular flavor, he explains, is the heart that remembers only its problems and never its blessings. Ask a man how life is and he hands you a list of complaints and cannot name one good thing, that is *kanud*. You open a fridge stocked with ten kinds of drink and you are upset that the one you wanted is not there, blind to the ten that are. Everything Allah gave you, your wealth, your hands, your eyes, your mind, was a tool to help you fulfill why you are here, to worship Him; the *kanud* is the one who took the gifts and forgot the Giver, and even cut himself off from Him.

The Sheikh warns how early this disease takes root. The worst thing you can do to a child, he says, is take him to a toy store: no child walks out happy, because his eyes are on the million-dollar shelf he did not get, not the toy in his hands. Teach a child to be grateful for what Allah gave rather than to ache for what he wants, or he grows into an adult who scans everyone else's car and house and salary all day, then comes home to a meal and a bed and children

that are pure blessing and sees none of it, falling asleep wondering how to get what the next man has. And then comes ayah seven: *wa innahu ala dhalika la-shahid*, he is a witness to that. The word is *shahid*, not *shahid* of a single moment but the form for one who witnesses continually. You are, every hour, a standing witness against your own ingratitude, the Sheikh says, and on the Day the greatest witness brought against you will be you yourself, your own limbs speaking when you fall silent.

Why he turned away: a love tied too tight

وَأَنَّهُ لَحِبٌّ لِّخَيْرٍ لَّشَدِيدٍ

And indeed he is, in love of wealth, intense.

100:8

So why did the human being turn away and grow cold, when the horse never would? Ayah eight gives the reason. *Khayr* here, the Sheikh explains, means wealth, called *khayr*, good, only because man imagines it is good. And *shadid* comes from *shadd*, to tie something tight: he is bound to the love of wealth, lashed to this world and running behind it. That love is what entered the heart and pushed everything else out.

But money is not the crime, the Sheikh is careful to say. You can carry a million in your pocket and be fine. The crime is when one dollar of it gets into the *heart*, because love does not live in the pocket, it lives in the heart, and when the love of wealth moves in, it evicts the love of Allah. A heart like that lives only for the few days left to it, beautifying a world it will leave. The horse, treated well, will never throw you or flee. The human being, the Sheikh says, becomes lazy, tired, makes excuses, needs a break from worship, separates and runs, and the root of all of it is this one love, tied too tight.

The cure: the day the graves are emptied

أَفَلَا يَعْلَمُ إِذَا بُعْثِرَ مَا فِي الْقُبُورِ

But does he not know that when the contents of the graves are scattered

100:9

وَحَصِلَ مَا فِي الصُّدُورِ

And that within the breasts is obtained,

100:10

إِنَّ رَبَّهُمْ بِهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ خَبِيرٌ

Indeed, their Lord with them, that Day, is [fully] Aware.

100:11

Then Allah hands you the cure for that tight love, and the Sheikh says it plainly: visit the grave. *Afala yalamu idha buthira ma fi al-qubur*: does he not know, when whatever is in the graves is overturned and flung out? The whole point of the verse, the Sheikh says, is to send you to the cemetery, because remembering death loosens the world's grip on the heart. The same wealth he ran after will be turned out of the earth that Day, free for the taking, and no one will want it, worthless at last. When a person forgets this, the Sheikh warns, his heart hardens until it is like a stone, and a stone heart no longer weeps at a reminder; it stands at a burial filming on its phone instead of trembling. Stay connected to Allah, by prayer, fasting, dhikr, the visit to the graves, and the heart softens and finds its peace.

And then it goes smaller still. The surah before this weighed an atom's weight of good and evil; now, the Sheikh notes, *wa hussila ma fi al-sudur* reaches in even finer: what is collected and laid bare is *what is in the breasts*, the contents of the heart, the hidden intention. *Hussila* is to extract, to peel out, the way you peel a fruit; every secret love, every hatred, every buried intention is drawn out and exposed. So clean the heart now, the Sheikh urges: from the love of this world, from showing off, from envy and animosity toward other Muslims. Be more concerned with the cleanliness of your heart than of your clothes, because clothes are for people's eyes, but the heart is for the eyes of Allah. The surah seals on that: *inna rabbahum bihim yawma-idhin la-khabir*, their Lord, that Day, is fully Aware of them, *khabir*, aware of the inside as much as the outside, the perfect word to close a surah about what the breasts conceal.

What this surah asks of you

- **Let the horse shame you a little.** The war horse charges into spears and dies for the one who fed it. Allah swears by that loyalty, then asks why you, fed and made and given

everything by your Lord, will not even live for Him. The animal's faithfulness is the standard the verse holds up to your own.

- **Kanud is counting only what is missing.** The disease the surah names is the heart that lists its problems and forgets its blessings, upset at the one drink it lacks while ignoring the ten it has. Catch yourself doing it, with the car, the house, the salary, and name it for what it is: ingratitude to the Giver.
- **Money in the pocket is fine; money in the heart is the crime.** You can hold a fortune and be safe. The danger is when love of it slips into the heart, because that love evicts the love of Allah and ties you so tight to this world that worship starts to feel like a burden.
- **Visit the grave to loosen the grip.** The surah's own cure for a heart bound to wealth is to remember death. The same money you chase will be flung out of the earth that Day, worthless. A heart that forgets this hardens to stone; a heart kept near Allah stays soft.
- **Clean the inside, not just the outside.** What is in the breasts will be peeled out and laid bare, every hidden intention, every buried envy. Your clothes are for people to see; your heart is for Allah to see. Be more careful with the one He looks at.

Why this surah stays with us

Al-Adiyat is a piece of cinema with a hook hidden in it. It lets you fall in love with the charging horse, its speed, its courage, its impossible loyalty, and the moment your heart is open it turns the lens around and shows you yourself: the one who took every gift and forgot the Giver, tied too tight to a world he will leave. Then, gently, it hands you the way back, the memory of the grave that will empty everything out, and the promise that the One who made you sees even what your chest is hiding.

O Allah, untie our hearts from the love of this passing world and bind them to You. Do not let us be of the kanud, blind to Your gifts and counting only what we lack. Soften our hearts with the remembrance of the Day the graves are overturned and the breasts are laid bare, and on that Day, when You are fully Aware of all we concealed, let You find our hearts cleaned and turned toward You.

Retold faithfully from Sheikh Abu Bakr Zoud's tafsir of Juz Amma. Qur'an: Sahih International, verified via quran.ai. The reflection is the Sheikh's, the phrasing is The Daily Wird's.

Al-Qari'ah

The surah that names the Day after a sound, a single word that strikes you, then refuses to tell you what it is until you have read to the end

Al-Qari'ah does not begin with a sentence. It begins with one word dropped on you like a sound in the dark, and then it leaves you standing there with it. The Sheikh wants you to feel that gap before anything else: a single, heavy word, no explanation behind it, and your own mind already leaning forward to ask, what is it? That leaning forward is the surah's first move. Allah lets you do it, and only then begins to answer.

A surah that sits in a cluster

Before the first word, Sheikh Abu Bakr sets Al-Qari'ah in its neighborhood. It is not a lone surah, he says, it belongs to a tight family of four that lean on one another: Az-Zalzalah, then Al-Adiyat, then this one, then At-Takathur. Watch the rhythm of them. Az-Zalzalah is about the Last Day, Al-Adiyat about the human being and his attitude here in this world, Al-Qari'ah about the Last Day again, At-Takathur about the human being again. Last Day, the human, the Last Day, the human. Surahs one and three are a pair, two and four are a pair, and the whole quartet braids together.

And there is something running underneath those surahs that the Sheikh wants you to catch: the process of being judged, laid out in five steps across them. First the books are handed out, into the right hand or the left. Then your deeds are shown to you. Then the intention behind those deeds is exposed, because a person can arrive with mountains of good deeds that are worth nothing if the heart behind them was wrong. Then, here in Al-Qari'ah, those deeds are placed on the scale and weighed. And then the verdict: a life of pleasure, or the Fire. Al-Adiyat left a question hanging in the air. The people come out of the grave, the secrets of the chest are turned out, and then what? Al-Qari'ah is the answer. The scales are brought, the deeds are weighed, and two groups are formed.

One word, and it strikes

القَارِعَةُ

The Striking Calamity -

AL-QARI'AH 101:1

Allah made this single word an ayah on its own, and the Sheikh stops to ask why one word could carry that weight. Al-Qari'ah comes from qar', and qar' is when two things are brought together and collide so hard that they throw off a loud, blasting sound, and the sound itself reaches into you and leaves you disturbed, frightened, shaken from the inside. If a noise does not rattle your heart, the Sheikh says, it is not a qari'ah. Sit in a quiet room and hear a sudden enormous bang outside, and your chest is suddenly pounding before you have even understood what happened: that is the thing this word is named for.

The Arabs used the word in ordinary, vivid ways, and each one adds a layer. They used it for the heavy crack of a cane striking down hard, the kind of blow that makes a bystander flinch and ache for the one being struck. They used it for a fist hammering on a door in the dead of night, qara'a al-bab. Think of that knock, the Sheikh says. You were not expecting it, so it shocks you. It tears your peace away. And you do not even know who is on the other side. The Qari'ah is every one of those at once: unexpected, peace-stealing, and unknown, arriving all of a sudden on a people who have no idea what just smacked them. It is one of the many names of the Day of Judgement, the Day that comes like that knock in the night.

What is it? You could never know on your own

مَا الْقَارِعَةُ

What is the Striking Calamity?

AL-QARI'AH 101:2

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الْقَارِعَةُ

And what can make you know what is the Striking Calamity?

101:3

Here the Sheikh slows down on the grammar, because the grammar is doing the work. Al-Qari'ah, standing alone, is a subject with nothing said about it yet, and a subject with nothing said about it leaves you hanging. Say to someone "the man," and stop, and watch their face: what about the man? So when Allah says only "the Striking Calamity," the question rises in you by itself, what is it? And the next ayah is exactly that question, read off your mind and handed back to you: ma al-Qari'ah, what is it?

And there is an art in saying just one word and stopping, the Sheikh points out, that no full sentence can match. A man who walks in calmly and explains, there is an accident outside near the petrol station, please be careful, was clearly not panicking. But a man who bursts in and screams one word, accident, has told you by the single word that there is no time, it is happening now, move. That is what al-Qari'ah on its own does to you. Not "the Qari'ah is on its way," which would leave room to breathe, but the bare word, an alarm with the urgency built in. Then the third ayah closes the door on your own cleverness: and what can make you know what it is? You will never reach the answer by yourself. The only way you will ever learn what this Day is, is if the One who built it tells you. Notice, the Sheikh adds, that Allah says adraka in the past tense here, and whenever He uses that past form, He is about to give you a clue. The rest of the surah is that clue.

The day people scatter like moths

يَوْمَ يَكُونُ النَّاسُ كَالْفَرَاشِ الْمَبْثُوثِ

It is the Day when people will be like moths, dispersed,

AL-QARI'AH 101:4

Now the clue begins. It is the Day, Allah says, when people will be like scattered moths. The Sheikh tells you to go and actually watch a moth before you read this. A moth has no order to it: it does not fly in a line like a bird, it lurches up and down and sideways with no direction, and near a flame it throws itself in loops, crashing into the others, pure chaos. And the word mabthuth, scattered, piles even more dispersal on top of a creature that was already all over the place. That is mankind on this Day, running into one another, flung in every direction, when the great sound comes.

And here is what pierces the Sheikh about the moth: it has no home. The bee returns to its hive, the wasp to its nest, the ant to its hill, but the moth has nowhere to go and nothing it was ever heading toward. So the people on that Day are described as having no shelter to run to,

no refuge, scattered and lonely even while standing in the largest gathering that has ever assembled, every soul from Adam onward raised at once. The biggest crowd in history, and the loneliest day in history, each person alone with his own deeds. The Sheikh leaves you with the Prophet's own image of it, the hadith in Muslim: the Prophet ﷺ is like a man who lit a fire, and once it blazed bright and beautiful the moths and insects rushed headlong into it, and he stands there snatching them back by the waist while they keep slipping from his hands and falling in. That, he said, is me with you: I am holding you back from the Fire by your waists, and you are pulling toward what only looks like light. A moth flies into the candle believing there is life inside the flame, and burns. A person can spend his whole life that way, all surface, dazzling wings over a creature that is really nothing inside, chasing a glow that turns out to be his ruin.

And mountains turn to fluff

وَتَكُونُ الْجِبَالُ كَالْعِهْنِ الْمَنْفُوشِ

And the mountains will be like wool, fluffed up.

AL-QARI'AH 101:5

Then the eye lifts from the people to the mountains, the toughest, heaviest, most immovable thing on the earth, the pegs that hold the land down. On that Day they become like wool, the Sheikh says, carded and fluffed, and then a wind takes them and they are gone like nothing ever stood there. He notes the precise word: Allah does not say plain wool, He says 'ihn, which is colored wool, and that is no accident, because the mountains themselves come in streaks of white and red and black. And manfush, fluffed, is what happens to wool when you strike it again and again with a staff until the packed mass loosens into drifting threads. Even that fits the surah, he says, which is named after striking.

And then the lesson lands. If the mountains, the strongest creation on this earth, are beaten loose into wool and scattered, what do you imagine happens to the human heart on that Day? That is why the surah opened by striking at your chest with al-Qari'ah. If the mountain cannot stand it, neither can you.

Then the scales come out

فَأَمَّا مَنْ ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِينُهُ

Then as for one whose scales are heavy [with good deeds],

AL-QARI'AH 101:6

فَهُوَ فِي عِيشَةٍ رَاضِيَةٍ

He will be in a pleasant life.

101:7

Notice the little word that opens this, the Sheikh says: "then," as a result. As a result of all of it. The blasting sound, the people flung about like moths, the mountains beaten into wool, the whole universe torn up and remade, all of that upheaval was the build-up to one quiet moment: your deeds placed on a scale and weighed. On the Day the mountains lost their weight, your deeds gain theirs. It is as if Allah is showing you that this world you thought was so solid had no real weight at all, and the deeds you almost did not bother with were the heavy thing the whole time. And it is not only the deeds that are weighed; the person himself is weighed. The Sheikh recalls Ibn Mas'ud, so thin the wind swayed his legs and some of the Companions laughed, and the Prophet ﷺ told them his two legs would be heavier on the scale than the mountain of Uhud.

Whoever's scales come down heavy has had his deeds accepted, and his reward is named with care. Allah does not just say he will have a life, the Sheikh notes, He says 'ishah, the kind of living in which food and shelter and every necessity are simply no concern, the way a king never wonders where his next meal comes from. And then, not content with that, He adds radiyah, a pleasing life, brimming with contentment and joy, without one moment of boredom or want. And see how it is the life itself that Allah calls pleasing, not the person, because if the life is made perfect, the one living it will live it in perfect joy.

And the other scale

وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَفَّتْ مَوَازِينُهُ

But as for one whose scales are light,

AL-QARI'AH 101:8

فَأَمَّهُ هَوَايَةً

His refuge will be an abyss.

101:9

And the other scale rises, light. A person can stand at the scale with a great heap of deeds and still watch it stay up, weightless, the Sheikh says, because what fills it was never done sincerely for Allah, never built on the way of His Messenger ﷺ. A deed only carries weight if it was done with a true heart, in the right way. Without that, the heap is just scattered dust, and the scale will not move.

His end is hawiyah, and the Sheikh opens the word. Hawiyah comes from hawa, to plunge down a steep cliff, faster even than falling, the way an eagle throws itself down on its prey, forcing itself down quicker than gravity alone would pull it. It is a valley in the Fire so deep that only Allah knows its depth. And the word Allah chooses for it is ummuhu, his mother. A child runs to his mother without thinking; he cannot help it. So the one whose scale is light runs to this Fire whether he wills it or not, drawn to it like a child to a mother's arms. And when a mother takes hold of her child she wraps him up and locks him in so he cannot get away. That, the Sheikh says, is how the Fire receives them: it embraces them, closes around them, holds them so there is no escape.

What is it? A fire, intensely hot

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا هِيَ

And what can make you know what that is?

AL-QARI'AH 101:10

It is a Fire, intensely hot.

101:11

Once more Allah turns to you with the question, and what can make you know what that is, and the Sheikh hears the terror in how it is asked. That long ending sound on *hiyah* is like a person too horrified to speak plainly, blurting out, did you hear what he said? It magnifies the dread of the place before you are even told what it is. And then the answer, two words: a Fire, intensely hot. The Sheikh brings the Prophet's measure of it, that the hottest fire we can kindle in this world is but a fraction of the Fire of the Hereafter, which burns many times hotter than anything our hands could light.

And there is a last shade in the word *hamiyah*, the Sheikh says, that ties back to a root meaning to protect. A protective fire. Not protective of the one in it, but protective of the punishment itself: it does not reduce the body to ash and end, the way an ordinary fire would. It burns the skin down to where the nerves are, and then, as another *ayah* describes, the skin is replaced with fresh skin so the burning can begin again, on and on, the agony never permitted to finish. And see how the surah closes the way it opened: it began by striking terror with *al-Qari'ah* and ends striking terror with *hamiyah*, it opened with a question you could not answer and ends with a question you could not answer. The two ends of the surah shake hands.

What this surah asks of you

- **The Day is named after a sound that shakes you.** *Al-Qari'ah* is not a fact to file away, it is a knock in the night, a blast that grabs your chest before your mind catches up. The surah strikes at your heart on purpose. If the mountains cannot stand it, the response it asks of you is not calm interest but a moved and wakeful heart.
- **You could never have known this on your own.** Twice Allah asks, what can make you know what it is, and the answer is nothing, no one reaches this except by revelation. The whole point of the surah is to teach you what no human mind could have found by itself, so receive it as a gift, not a debate.
- **Do not live like the moth.** The moth has no home and no direction, dazzling wings over a creature that is nothing inside, hurling itself into a flame it mistakes for life. A life that is all

surface and no purpose ends the same way. Let the sight of it remind you to be the opposite.

- **Only weighed, accepted deeds are heavy.** On the Day the mountains lose their weight, your deeds gain theirs, but only the ones done sincerely for Allah and upon the way of His Messenger ﷺ. A great heap done for other than Him stays weightless on the scale. Build deeds that will actually weigh something.

Why this surah stays with us

Al-Qari'ah spends eleven ayat refusing to let you stay calm. It drops a single striking word on you, reads the question off your face, tells you that you could never have answered it, and then walks you through the Day itself: people scattered like moths with nowhere to run, mountains beaten into colored wool, and at the center of all that ruin one still moment, your deeds on a scale, opening onto a life of pleasure or a fire that will not let you finish burning. The whole universe is undone, the Sheikh keeps saying, just to bring those scales out, just for that.

O Allah, make us people whose scales are heavy on that Day with deeds we did only for You. When the Striking Calamity comes like a knock no one was expecting, do not leave us among the scattered with nowhere to flee. Let our weight come down on the side of Your mercy, and settle us in a pleasant life, and protect us from a Fire that does not cool. Ameen.

Retold faithfully from Sheikh Abu Bakr Zoud's tafsir of Juz Amma. Qur'an: Sahih International, verified via quran.ai. The reflection is the Sheikh's, the phrasing is The Daily Wird's.

At-Takathur

The surah that catches you mid-count, busy piling up a world you will leave, and asks what all that counting was really for

Surat At-Takathur opens by catching you in the middle of an activity you did not even notice you were doing: counting. Adding up what you have, measuring it against what the next person has, and quietly keeping score. The Sheikh sets the scene with two Makkan tribes who boasted to one another over wealth, men, horses, and property, and could not stop, until the counting ran out of the living and they walked into the graveyard to count their dead. The surah names that whole frenzy in a single opening word, and then asks you, gently and then not so gently, what it was all for.

Where this surah sits, and why it shouts

Sheikh Abu Bakr begins, as he likes to, by placing the surah in its neighbourhood. At-Takathur belongs to a cluster, and it finishes a thread the surah before it began. Al-Qari'ah ended on a blazing, furious Fire, the home of the one whose scale came up light. At-Takathur opens on the reason a person ends up there in the first place: he was distracted, busy wanting more and more, with no time left for the deeds that would have weighed something. The end of one surah and the beginning of the next reach out and shake hands.

There is also the matter of tone, and the Sheikh wants you to hear it. Al-Qari'ah was spoken almost entirely in the third person, about that person, about whoever, everyone hidden under one blanket. At-Takathur drops that blanket. From its first word it is you, you, you. You have been distracted. You will come to know. You will be asked. It is the difference, he says, between a teacher announcing that whoever failed the exam will be punished, and the same teacher turning, pointing, and saying you failed. The second one lands like a jolt. That jolt is the whole design: a personal alarm, aimed at each chest, meant to wake the one who had drifted out of the room.

The one word for wanting more

أَلْهَاكُمْ التَّكَاثُرُ

Competition in [worldly] increase diverts you

AT-TAKATHUR 102:1

The Sheikh opens the first word like a box. Alha, to distract, comes from lahw, and lahw is not just any distraction: it is the entertainment that takes hold of the heart. He separates it from la'ib, mere play, which is something the limbs do. Lahw is what happens when a film pulls you so far in that your own heart climbs into the story and you forget where you are sitting. So Allah is not describing something that merely kept your hands busy. He is describing something that captured the heart and turned it away from what mattered more. That is already the verdict, folded inside one verb.

Then takathur, from kathra, plenty, a wanting of more and more and more. The Sheikh unpacks three things living inside it. First, the raw desire to keep increasing: the business runs well, so you want a second; the car still drives, so you want the newer one. He recalls the hadith that the son of Adam, given a valley of gold, would only crave a second valley, and that nothing fills the son of Adam but the dirt of his grave. Second, competing with others to get more: he has those shoes, so I need them or better; his wedding cost that much, so mine must cost more, even into debt. Third, taking pride in having more, steering a conversation just to let the other person know you are ahead.

And notice what Allah leaves out. The sentence says this rivalry distracted you, and then stops. Distracted you from what? He never says. The Sheikh lingers here: the silence is deliberate, and it throws the door wide open. It distracted you from Allah, from His remembrance, from a single page of Qur'an a day, from the night prayer, from sitting still long enough to ask what this life is even for. You were so busy stacking one thing on another that you never paused over the question, and a life of nothing but hunting and gathering and hunting again, he warns, is the life of an animal. The verse hands you the blank on purpose, and waits for you to fill it in with your own name.

Not the having, the being pulled away

أَلْهَاكُمْ التَّكَاثُرُ

Competition in [worldly] increase diverts you

AT-TAKATHUR 102:1

Here the Sheikh stops you from misreading the surah. The crime is not the wealth. The crime is the wealth that distracts. He splits increase into two kinds. There is an increase that pulls you away from the worship of Allah, and that one is ruinous, the road that ends in the Fire of the surah before. And there is an increase that never pulls you anywhere, and that one is no sin at all. A pocket full of money is not the problem; a heart dragged off by it is.

He sketches the warning as a portrait you will recognise. A man who owned almost nothing, always in the front row, reciting, fasting, asking you to make du'a for his rizq. Then Allah opens the world to him, the business takes off, the cash flows in, and slowly he slides to the back row, if he comes at all, and when you say we have missed you, he says, brother, I have no time. The phone rings as the prayer is about to begin, and he wonders what job might be on the other end, and answers it, and the congregation leaves without him. That, says the Sheikh, is exactly the distraction the verse is naming.

And then the other portrait, so you do not despair of wealth itself. He points to Dawud and Sulayman, peace be upon them, who held kingdoms and armies and judgeships and still were not distracted: Dawud who fasted a day and broke a day, and stood a third of the night in prayer, carrying all of that and missing none of this. The purpose of money, the Sheikh reminds you from the texts, is that the prayer be established and the zakat be given, that wealth become a support for the religion of Allah. Live by that purpose and your increase will never distract you. Lose it, and the smallest amount will.

Until you visited the graves

حَتَّىٰ زُرْتُمُ الْمَقَابِرَ

Until you visit the graveyards.

AT-TAKATHUR 102:2

The counting does not stop, the surah says, until you visit the graves, and the Sheikh wants you to weigh the verb. Zur is to visit, and in the older Arabic it carries the warmth of greeting, even of an embrace. Allah does not say until you are buried, He says until you visit, and that single choice carries the whole lesson. A visit is short. A visit is not where you stay. You do not move into the house you are merely visiting; you knock, you sit an hour, and you leave. He is telling you that your time in the grave is exactly that, a visit, brief, and not the end of the road, because you are coming back out of it.

So if the first verse named the disease, this one quietly hands you the cure, and the cure is to visit the graves before you are carried to them. The more you walk through that silent place, the Sheikh says, the more the world drains out of the heart; the longer you avoid it, the tighter the world grips. Do not let the first time you enter a grave be the day they lower you in. Go now, alone, at different hours, and feel what waits there, because at the end of it you will know what every chaser eventually learns: the only thing that finally fills the mouth of the son of Adam is the dirt of that grave.

And he leaves you with a meeting that puts all the counting in its place. On the night journey the Prophet ﷺ met Ibrahim, peace be upon him, in the seventh heaven, and of everything the two of them might have spoken about, Ibrahim sent a single message back to this ummah: tell them the soil of Paradise is sweet and its land is wide, and that what you plant in it is subhanallah, walhamdulillah, wa la ilaha illallah, wallahu akbar. That, says the Sheikh, is the whole point. The world you are counting comes and goes as fast as it can. The words you plant are what you will one day stand among, growing, in the Garden.

No. And again, no. You will know.

كَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ

No! You are going to know.

AT-TAKATHUR 102:3

ثُمَّ كَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ

Then, no! You are going to know.

102:4

كَلَّا لَوْ تَعْلَمُونَ عِلْمَ الْيَقِينِ

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

102:5

Then the rebuke comes down, and it comes down twice. Kalla, the Sheikh explains, is a word of restraint and refusal: stop, no, not like this. And the doubling is not filler. We repeat ourselves, he says, when we are emphatic and when we are angry, the way you warn someone who has pushed you too far, watch, just watch. So the two verses carry both certainty and displeasure, and they point at two separate moments of finding out, one nearer and one further on, each its own threat stacked on the last. The deniers will know. And then, the verse insists, they will really know.

The third kalla turns the knife into something almost tender: if only you knew, with the knowledge of certainty. The Sheikh draws out yaqin, certainty, and it is more than information. It is conviction sunk so deep into the heart that you are at rest with it and never question it again, the way you do not argue with the ground under your feet. That, he says, is exactly how our conviction of the Hereafter is meant to sit, not a fact we nod at, but a certainty settled in the chest. If the deniers carried even a grain of that certainty, the rivalry of the first verse would collapse on the spot. There is no time to keep score when you truly know where this is heading.

You will see it, and you will be asked

لَتَرَوُنَّ الْجَحِيمَ

You will surely see the Hellfire.

AT-TAKATHUR 102:6

ثُمَّ لَتَرَوُنَّهَا عَيْنَ الْيَقِينِ

Then you will surely see it with the eye of certainty.

102:7

ثُمَّ لَتَسْأَلُنَّ يَوْمَئِذٍ عَنِ النَّعِيمِ

Then you will surely be asked that Day about pleasure.

102:8

Now the certainty becomes sight. First you will surely see the Hellfire, and then, the verse presses, you will see it with the very eye of certainty. The Sheikh walks up the ladder of the word: there is the knowledge of certainty, the kind you hold by being told; then the eye of certainty, the kind you hold because it is in front of your own eyes; and beyond that the truth of certainty, when you are in the thing itself. The surah moves you from hearing about the Fire to standing where every soul passes over it, each at his own speed, no longer a report but a scene you cannot look away from.

And the surah ends on the question that follows you home: then you will surely be asked, that Day, about the blessing. The Sheikh lets it land through the famine in Madinah, the day the Prophet ﷺ and Abu Bakr and Umar were driven from their homes by sheer hunger and a generous man of the Ansar slaughtered for them and brought cold water and fresh dates and meat. As they ate, the Prophet ﷺ wept, and told them this very comfort is from the blessing you will be asked about on that Day: this cool water, these dates, this food. Three things on the table, the Sheikh notes, and they were a matter for tears; so what of a table piled with far more that ends up in the bin?

He hears the lesson the surah has been driving at all along. The more you reach for, the more you will stand answering for; so hold yourself, and take from this world only what you actually need. He recalls the hadith where a man recited this verse to the Prophet ﷺ, who said: the son of Adam says my wealth, my wealth, and what is your wealth except what you ate and finished, or wore until it wore out, or gave away and so kept forever. Keep the question in the back of your mind, the Sheikh says, and prepare your answer now, while the answering still counts.

What this surah asks of you

- **The danger is not having, it is being pulled away.** Wealth is not the crime; wealth that drags the heart off the prayer and the remembrance is. Dawud and Sulayman held kingdoms and were not distracted. Measure yourself not by how much you own, but by whether it ever once pulled you out of the front row.

- **Allah left the blank for you to fill.** The rivalry distracted you, and the verse never says from what. The silence is the point. Sit with it and name your own answer: the night prayer, a page of Qur'an, the question of why you are here at all.
- **Visit the grave before they carry you to it.** The verse says visit, not buried, because the grave is a short stay you come out of. The more you walk through it now, the looser this world's grip. Go alone, and feel what waits.
- **Every blessing carries a question.** Even three things on a table moved the Prophet ﷺ to tears, because you will be asked about them. The more you reach for, the more you answer for, so take only what you need and prepare the answer now.

Why this surah stays with us

At-Takathur catches the whole of mankind mid-count, busy adding up a world it will set down, and in eight short ayat it pulls the heart up out of the ledger. It does it by moving you, step by step, from the rivalry you did not notice, to the graveyard that ends it, to the Fire you will see with your own eyes, to the question waiting on the far side of every blessing you ever enjoyed. The Sheikh keeps returning to one small mercy hidden in the second verse: the grave is called a visit, not a home, because you are not staying. The counting is short. What you plant with your tongue is what lasts.

O Allah, do not let the rivalry for more distract us from You. Let us hold our wealth and our years as a means that carries us toward You, not a weight that drags us away. Settle the certainty of that Day deep in our hearts, the way You meant it to settle, so that when we are asked about every blessing, we are found grateful, and our hands are found to have given. Make us people of the Qur'an, who hear its alarms and rise.

Retold faithfully from Sheikh Abu Bakr Zoud's tafsir of Juz Amma (parts 1 and 2). Qur'an: Sahih International, verified via quran.ai. The reflection is the Sheikh's, the phrasing is The Daily Wird's.

Al-Asr

The three short ayat that, ash-Shafi'i said, would have been enough on their own to guide mankind

Three ayat. That is the whole surah, shorter than most single verses you will read elsewhere in the Qur'an. And yet Imam ash-Shafi'i said that if people did nothing but sit and ponder this one surah, it would have been enough to guide them. Sheikh Abu Bakr opens here, on the strangeness of it: Allah takes an oath, delivers a verdict against the entire human race, and then leaves a narrow door open, and He does all of it before you have finished taking a breath.

An oath by time itself

وَالْعَصْرِ

By time,

AL-ASR 103:1

The surah opens with Allah swearing an oath, and the Sheikh has you pause on what He swears by: al-asr, time. When Allah swears by a thing in the Qur'an, He is lifting it up in front of you, telling you to look hard at something you walk past every day without a second glance. And what could be more taken for granted than time? It pours out of your life all day long, free and silent, and most people never feel a drop of it leave.

The word al-asr is rich, the Sheikh notes, the same root that names the Asr prayer in the heart of the afternoon, the hinge of the day when the light has begun to lean toward setting. Time as the age you live in, time as the hours running out beneath you: Allah swears by all of it. He sets the oath down like the strike of a gavel, and then, in the very next breath, He passes sentence.

The verdict against all of us

إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ

Indeed, mankind is in loss,

AL-ASR 103:2

Then comes the judgement, and the Sheikh wants you to feel how airtight it is made. It opens with *inna*, indeed, the particle that removes all doubt, so that what follows lands as certainty, not opinion. And notice who is sentenced. Not some people, not the wicked among them, but *al-insan*, the human being as such. The word is singular, the Sheikh points out, and that is deliberate: when Allah speaks of the people in the plural, your mind drifts to someone else, but the single *insan* turns the verdict back on you, so that the one human being you are made to think about is yourself.

The Sheikh draws out the name itself. *Al-insan*, he notes, carries the sense of *nisyan*, forgetting: the human being is the one who is reminded and forgets, reminded and forgets again, which is why this surah is recited so often and why he needs the reminder on a loop. And it carries the sense of *uns*, affection, the creature made to love and grow attached. Put the two together and you have the whole disease: he forgot his Lord because he poured his affection into other than his Lord, into the wealth and the children the surahs just before this one named. That forgetting and that misplaced love are exactly why he is in loss.

Then look at the phrasing of the loss, the Sheikh says. Allah does not say the human being is *khasir*, a loser standing on the surface. He says *la-fi khusr*, with the lam of emphasis and the preposition *fi*, in. The man is inside the loss, immersed, drowning, buried in it. Picture someone of whom you would say he is *fi al-masjid*, in the mosque: he looks up and sees its ceiling, down and sees its carpet, left and right and sees its walls, everywhere he turns is the mosque. So it is with this loss. He looks ahead, behind, above, beside him, and there is loss, wherever he goes in life. And the soft ending on *khusrin*, the Sheikh adds, makes it greater still: not a small loss but a vast one.

And the engine of the loss is the very thing He just swore by. Time is the capital you were handed at birth, and it is being spent whether you trade with it or not. The Sheikh ties the oath to the verdict like this: the surest proof that the human being is in loss is his own conduct with time, how much of it runs through his hands, how many things he never gets to because the hours are gone. Your life on earth is your one great capital, and the product Allah is selling in

exchange for it is the Garden itself. That is the trade. Every hour is a coin from the purse, and the only question is whether you bought anything with it. The Sheikh leaves you sitting inside the verdict for a moment, because the surah means for it to sting before it saves: yes, you, immersed in loss, right now, unless.

Why the salaf guarded their time before their gold

Before he reaches the way out, the Sheikh lingers on what the early Muslims understood about this capital that most of us squander. People, he says, are careful with their money. They count it, they protect it, they grieve when it slips away. But the salaf were far more careful with their time, because they knew which of the two could never be earned back. Lost wealth can return; a lost hour is gone into the ground forever.

He brings their habits close enough to smell. One of them rehung the door of his room so that it opened the other way, simply because the old swing made him take a few extra steps to reach his desk, and he would not surrender even those seconds. They kept a book or a task within reach of every spare moment, the way you might keep bread at hand during a meal. The Prophet ﷺ named the trap exactly, the Sheikh reminds you: there are two blessings in which many people are cheated, health and free time. You only notice their worth, usually, once they are already gone.

And the accounting is real. The feet of a servant, the Prophet ﷺ said, will not move on the Day of Resurrection until he is asked about his life and how he spent it. So the urgency is not borrowed drama; it is the simple arithmetic of a clock that does not stop. The Sheikh even reaches for the hadith of the seedling: if the Final Hour is breaking upon you and you have a sapling in your hand, plant it. Right up to the last instant, a good deed is worth doing. There is no moment so late that time has nothing left to buy.

Except for four kinds of people

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَتَوَّصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ وَتَوَّصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ

Except for those who have believed and done righteous deeds and advised each other to truth and advised each other to patience.

AL-ASR 103:3

Then the door. After sentencing all of mankind, Allah carves out one exception, and the Sheikh has you sit first on the word that opens it: illa, except. That single word, he says, carries hope and fear at once. Imagine a teacher standing before a class after a hard exam and announcing that everyone has failed, then pausing on except. The room floods with dread and longing in the same instant: am I among the few or not? That is the charge inside illa here. Everyone is in loss, except, and now you lean in to learn whether the description fits you.

Four things are stacked inside the exception, and together they are the whole religion in miniature. The Sheikh notes the order is exact and the first is first because nothing stands without it: those who believed. He has you weigh the word against its quieter cousin. Allah does not say those who submitted, those who became Muslim, because Islam can be a thing of the tongue alone. He uses iman, belief that has entered the heart. The surah of al-Hujurat draws the very line, the Sheikh recalls, when a desert tribe came claiming faith and Allah answered them:

قَالَتِ الْأَعْرَابُ آمَنَّا قُلْ لَمْ تُؤْمِنُوا وَلَكِنْ قُولُوا أَسْلَمْنَا وَلَمَّا يَدْخُلِ الْإِيمَانُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ

The bedouins say, "We have believed." Say, "You have not yet believed; but say instead, 'We have submitted,' for faith has not yet entered your hearts.

AL-HUJURAT 49:14

So the iman that saves, the Sheikh says, is the testimony spoken on the tongue, affirmed wholeheartedly in the chest, and followed up with action. And notice that Allah leaves the word open, alladhina amanu, those who believed, without naming what they believed in, so that it gathers everything: belief in Allah and His names and His oneness, in the angels, the books, the messengers, the Last Day, and the divine decree, the whole of what the Prophet ﷺ once listed when Jibril came asking what iman is. It is faith with no crack of doubt running through it.

Second, and did righteous deeds: the proof that the belief was real, the faith that did not stay a private feeling but walked out into the limbs. The Sheikh opens the word as-salihah from salaha, to mend, to repair what is broken. The human being comes broken and soiled on the inside, and the righteous deed is what rectifies him, cleans the heart, sets the soul right. Allah puts it in the plural, the deeds, because they are meant to be many: do whatever good you can and belittle none of it, the Sheikh urges, the way a woman was forgiven for the water she gave a thirsting dog, the way the Prophet ﷺ counted the mere removing of harm from the road among the deeds that admit a person to the Garden.

But a deed is only counted, the Sheikh warns, when it carries two conditions. The first is ikhlas, sincerity, that it be done purely for Allah, which is why the early Muslims hid their worship the way other people hide their sins, one praying through the night beside a sleeping wife who never knew, another carrying food to the doors of the poor under cover of darkness so that only after his death did the city learn who had been feeding them. The second is that it follow the way of the Prophet ﷺ, not invented, not added to. The Sheikh tells of Ibn Mas'ud finding men in the mosque counting their dhikr on pebbles in neat circles, certain they were doing good, and his stern words to them: how quickly you rush to your own destruction, you who think you have found a better path than the Companions. They wanted good, the Sheikh says, and did not attain it, because good that departs from the guidance is not good at all.

Holding one another to the truth

وتَوَاصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ

and advised each other to truth

AL-ASR 103:3

Here, the Sheikh says, the surah turns from you to everyone around you. The first two qualities save the one who has them; these last two are cast in the plural because they are how you save others. It is not enough to slip out of the loss alone, he reminds you, for the worst of the losers in the Qur'an are described as those who lost themselves and their families both, and Allah commands you to guard not only your own soul but your household from the Fire. So once a person believes and acts, the surah sends him outward, to take the people by the hand.

And this calling, the Sheikh insists, is no small deed but the highest of them. The one who guides another to good earns the reward of the one who does it: point a man to the mosque and every step he walks and every prayer he prays is written for you too, which is why the Prophet ﷺ carries the reward of the whole ummah, having guided all of it. Allah Himself asks who could possibly speak better:

وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ قَوْلًا مِمَّن دَعَا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا

And who is better in speech than one who invites to Allah and does righteousness

FUSSILAT 41:33

Then the Sheikh does something lovely with the word itself. Allah did not say tanasahu, the ordinary word for advising. He chose tawasaw, from wasiyyah, the bequest a dying person leaves behind, the last counsel spoken from the deathbed. And think how a dying man advises, the Sheikh says: with total sincerity, with gentleness and mercy, with urgency because there is no time left, and with nothing but the truth, for who lies on his way out of the world? That, he teaches, is the manner the believers owe one another every single day. Not truth forced down throats, not correction wrapped in insult and anger, but advice given the way a beloved father gives his last words. Often, the Sheikh notes, when advice is refused the fault lies not with the one who would not hear it but with the one who delivered it harshly.

He fills the lesson with the gentlest examples in the Qur'an. Luqman opening his counsel to his son with ya bunayya, O my dear son, forbidding him shirk in the softest possible voice. Nuh calling to his drowning boy, O my son, embark with us. And Ibrahim, whose father threatened to stone him and drive him away, answering only:

قَالَ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكَ سَأَسْتَغْفِرُ لَكَ رَبِّي

Abraham said, "Peace will be upon you. I will ask forgiveness for you of my Lord.

MARYAM 19:47

Ibrahim even chose his word for Allah with care, the Sheikh observes, reaching past the ninety nine names for ar-Rahman, the Most Merciful, when he warned his father, so that the warning came wrapped in mercy. And from all these the Sheikh draws a hard correction to how we measure success. We think a successful call is one the listener accepts. But every example Allah praises, Nuh, Ibrahim, the Prophet ﷺ with his uncle Abu Talib, ended with the listener refusing. You do not own the hearts, the Sheikh says; Allah turns them. Your task is only to deliver the truth, persistently and beautifully, and the present tense of tawasaw means you never stop: you advise today, and tomorrow, and until you die, and you do not give up because someone did not listen the first twenty times.

And what is the haqq they hold one another to? The scholars give several answers and the Sheikh lets them stack, because the word is wide enough for all of them: Allah Himself, and the Qur'an, and the whole of the deen, and the prayer, and tawhid, and the enjoining of good and the forbidding of evil. He notices that Luqman's counsel to his son is almost this surah in miniature, the same skeleton in the same order:

Holding one another to patience

يَا بُنَيَّ أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَانْهَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَأَصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا أَصَابَكَ

O my son, establish prayer, enjoin what is right, forbid what is wrong, and be patient over what befalls you.

LUQMAN 31:17

وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ

and advised each other to patience.

AL-ASR 103:3

Then the surah ends on patience, and the Sheikh has you notice that Allah repeats the whole verb, tawasaw, rather than simply joining patience to truth with an and. The repetition is a hand on your shoulder, an extra weight of emphasis, because what comes next is the thing people always forget. Sabr, he says, is the greatest of the deeds. When the people of Paradise are met at its gates, the angels greet them with it:

سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ بِمَا صَبَرْتُمْ فَنِعْمَ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ

Peace be upon you for what you patiently endured. And excellent is the final home.

AR-RA'D 13:24

Patience is named more than ninety times in the Qur'an, the Sheikh says, and here it comes last for a reason: the three qualities before it cannot survive without it. You cannot hold your faith, you cannot keep up the daily prayer and fasting and giving, you cannot keep advising people to the truth, without sabr underneath all of it, holding it up. He points especially at the link to the haqq just before. People do not love to be told the truth; the one who calls to it is insulted, abandoned, sometimes harmed. Try telling a friend to stop backbiting and watch how fast he turns cold. So the moment after Allah commands the truth, He commands patience, because spreading the truth always costs. Even falsehood only endures, the Sheikh notes, because its people are patient in pushing it, the way the chiefs of Quraysh told one another to walk away and hold fast to their idols.

The Sheikh opens sabr into three kinds, so you do not mistake it for merely swallowing your temper. There is patience upon obedience, the steadiness to keep worshipping when the warmth fades and the prayer starts to feel like a burden, the reason so many begin the Qur'an in Ramadan and quietly stop a month later. There is patience away from sin, the grip to hold yourself back when the desire calls and the opportunity is right there. And there is patience under decree, the endurance of what Allah sends of loss and grief and trial. In days of hardship, the Sheikh recalls, the Prophet ﷺ said the one who holds firm will have the reward of fifty.

And he lifts the word to the whole ummah. This, he says, is the message we owe our brothers and sisters wherever they are oppressed: tawasaw bis-sabr, hold one another to patience. It is the very word the Prophet ﷺ spoke over the family of Yasir as they were tortured before his eyes, patience, family of Yasir, your appointed place is the Garden, putting sabr and Jannah in a single breath. It is what Musa told the Children of Israel under Pharaoh, to seek help in Allah and be patient, and their patience paid out the day the sea split open before them. The surah that opened on time closes on patience, the Sheikh says, so that you see the seam between its first word and its last: your whole life, every hour of your asr, is meant to be filled with sabr, or else it drains away into khusr. Allah's own last word on the matter is His command to His Messenger:

فَاصْبِرْ كَمَا صَبَرَ أُولُو الْعَزْمِ مِنَ الرُّسُلِ

So be patient, O Muhammad, as were those of determination among the messengers

AL-AHQAF 46:35

What this surah asks of you

- **Time is the capital you are spending right now.** Allah swore by it and then named loss in the same breath. Every hour leaves your account whether you traded with it or not, so the only question is what you bought.
- **Loss is the default, not the exception.** Allah did not say the wicked are in loss. He said mankind is. You do not drift into profit by accident; you have to actively buy your way out of a sinking position.
- **Guard your hours more fiercely than your money.** Lost wealth can come back; a lost hour cannot. The salaf protected their time down to the seconds, because they knew which of the two they would be asked about.

- **Saving yourself is only half of it.** The exception is four things, not two. After faith and righteous deeds come holding one another to the truth and to patience. You do not make it out of the loss alone; you pull each other out.
- **Give advice the way a dying man gives it.** The word is *tawasaw*, from the bequest spoken on a deathbed: sincere, gentle, urgent, and true. The Sheikh's point is that when advice is rejected, the fault is often in the harshness of the one who gave it, not the one who heard it.
- **Patience is what holds the other three up.** It comes last because faith, deeds, and calling to truth all collapse without it. The Sheikh splits it three ways: patience to keep worshipping, patience to keep away from sin, and patience under what Allah decrees.

Why this surah stays with us

Ash-Shafi'i was right that these three ayat could have been enough. They hand you the whole human situation in a single glance: a clock running down, a verdict of loss hanging over everyone, and one narrow door marked faith, action, truth, and patience. The Sheikh's point is that you are standing in front of that door already, with the time to walk through it still draining as you read.

O Allah, You swore by time, and our time is slipping through our hands. Do not let us be counted among the losers. Make us of those who believe and act on it, who hold one another to the truth and to patience, and who reach the end of our hours having traded them for something that lasts. Let us not be asked about a life we wasted, but met with a life we spent for You.

Retold faithfully from Sheikh Abu Bakr Zoud's tafsir of Juz Amma (parts 1, 2 and 3). Qur'an: Sahih International, verified via quran.ai. The reflection is the Sheikh's, the phrasing is The Daily Wird's.

Al-Humazah

The surah that curses the man who crushed people with his tongue and hoarded his wealth, and shows you the Fire built to crush him back

Al-Humazah opens with a curse, not a story: woe to a certain kind of man. He spends his days tearing people down with his tongue and his looks, and his nights counting a pile of wealth he is sure will keep him alive forever. The surah lets him build his little kingdom of mockery and money, and then, in a single word, knocks the whole thing flat and shows him the Fire that was waiting the entire time, a Fire named for exactly what he used to do to others: crush them.

Woe to the one who tears people down

وَيْلٌ لِّكُلِّ هُمَزَةٍ لُّمَزَةٍ

Woe to every scorner and mocker

AL-HUMAZAH 104:1

الَّذِي جَمَعَ مَالًا وَعَدَّدَهُ

Who collects wealth and [continuously] counts it.

104:2

The surah opens by hurling a word of doom at a man before it says a thing about him: wail, woe. Sheikh Abu Bakr has you notice the shape of the whole surah right here. The first half names a man's crimes, and the second half hands him, almost word for word, the punishment those crimes earned, so closely matched that even the sounds rhyme, humazah against hutamah. So fix his two faces in your mind now, because everything that burns later is the answer to them. He is a humazah and he is a lumazah, and between those two words sits every way a person can tear another one down.

The Sheikh pulls the two apart. One of them mocks with the body, silently: he sticks out his tongue, winks, points, raises a finger, curls his lip, moves his hand or his eyes in a way

everyone in the room understands as contempt, all of it without a single word, by the senses alone. The other mocks with the tongue: he backbites, he curses, he abuses people with his speech, he picks at their honor, their character, their family, their work, dragging out the worst of them to humiliate them. The scholars differ over which of the two words carries the gestures and which carries the speech, but the Sheikh keeps your eye on the thing they share. Whether by a look or by a word, this man breaks people. He shatters their dignity from the inside, leaves them small and devastated in front of a crowd, and walks away pleased with himself. That is the first crime, and the surah curses him for it.

Then the second ayah names the second crime: he is the one who gathered wealth and counted it. The Sheikh weighs the verb jama'a, to gather, and it is not gentle. It is the act of scraping together every last coin, chasing the cent that rolled under the cabinet, piling it up, sealing it in the safe, stacking one account on top of another, and never letting any of it leave his hand. The word carries greed inside it, the clench of a fist that will not open, the love of holding on. He spent his whole life on earth collecting, and giving none of it away.

And then the word the Sheikh lingers on: addadah, and he counted it. The form is doubled, and that doubling means he did not count it once, he counted it over and over and over. He counts it in the morning, he counts it in the afternoon, he counts it before he sleeps, checking the totals again, making sure not a single coin has gone, though he never actually spends any of it. We only count what we love, the Sheikh points out. You count what you are anxious about, what you cannot bear to lose. So the counting is not bookkeeping, it is worship, the surest sign of how deep this wealth has sunk its hooks into his heart.

And now the Sheikh locks the two crimes together, because they are not separate sins, one feeds the other. The moment this man saw the pile under his arm, he saw himself above everyone else, and once he stood above them he felt entitled to look down, to sneer, to mock and curse and belittle. The money is why the tongue went to work. Set this beside the surah just before it, the Sheikh adds: al-Asr closed by naming the few things that pull a person out of loss, and al-Humazah opens by naming exactly what plunges him into it, the mockery and the hoarding, the two crimes laid side by side at the very top of the surah.

Keep these two crimes in front of you, because the rest of the surah is built on them. The Sheikh keeps returning to a single principle: watch how exactly the punishment Allah chooses will mirror the crime. The man who crushed people, who held his wealth in a fist that never opened, is about to meet a Day where every one of those acts is answered in kind.

He thought the money would keep him alive

يَحْسِبُ أَنْ مَالَهُ أَخْلَدَهُ

He thinks that his wealth will make him immortal.

AL-HUMAZAH 104:3

Now the surah reaches into the man's mind and pulls out the lie he lives by. He assumes his wealth has made him eternal. Sheikh Abu Bakr unfolds this on two levels. Some read it as the man imagining his money will literally stretch his days, buy him a long life of comfort and sin. Others read it as the man imagining his money will keep his name alive after he is gone, that his fortune will have people speaking of him for generations.

And the Sheikh answers the second the way the surah answers everything, by showing how foolish it is. It is not wealth that keeps a name alive. It is good deeds, character, manners, the trace of good a person leaves behind. We still speak of the righteous who came before us, still send mercy upon them, still benefit from what they built, because they planted something good in their lives and it kept growing after they died, a flowing reward in their graves. That is what makes a name immortal. The man counting his coins has it exactly backwards.

No. And he is thrown out like something worthless

كَلَّا لَيُنْبَذَنَّ فِي الْحُطَمَةِ

No! He will surely be thrown into the Crusher.

AL-HUMAZAH 104:4

Then the answer lands like a slammed door: kalla. The Sheikh calls it one of the harshest words in the language, a flat, hard refusal. He points out something striking: kalla appears in the Qur'an thirty-three times, and never once in the first half, only in the second, where the Makkan surahs sit. These were revealed to stubborn, arrogant, cruel people who heard the truth and went on insulting and torturing the believers, so the word that meets them is blunt and threatening. Kalla. Your assumption is wrong. Not your wealth, not your mockery, not your hoarding will buy you a single extra breath.

And then the verb the Sheikh slows down on: he will be thrown, layunbadhanna, from nabadh. This is not the word for setting something down. It is the word for flinging away something

worthless, the way you spit out a date stone and flick it off your fingers without a glance at where it lands. The same word is used when Pharaoh and his armies, two million strong, were hurled into the sea like refuse, and when the People of the Book threw the Scripture behind their backs, giving it no weight at all. So picture this man, who spent his life deciding who was worth his respect and who was not, being tossed into the Fire exactly that way, with no honor and no value. Allah honored the children of Adam. This man trampled that honor in everyone he mocked, so on that Day he is the one flung aside like nothing.

How quickly the dream collapsed

Sheikh Abu Bakr pauses on the speed of it. This man had a dream, and his dream was to live forever, a long life to keep sinning, keep hoarding, keep belittling, that is the eternity his wealth had promised him. Read the surah just before this one, the Sheikh reminds you, where life itself is shown as something squeezed out of the hand, gone before you grip it. That is how short his turn was.

One day he is living his dream, certain of his long beautiful future. The very next moment, almost the next breath in the surah, he is washed and buried, his dreams shattered, raised up, and standing at the gates of the Fire. Allah does not even narrate what filled the years between. He mentions the man's craving for a long life, and then, with nothing in between worth recording, the man is at the doors of Jahannam. His whole life was not even worth a sentence.

His own wealth turned against him

Before the surah opens up the Fire itself, the Sheikh brings in the closest mirror of it from this world: what becomes of hoarded wealth on the Day of Judgement. He relays the warning of the Prophet ﷺ that whoever Allah gives wealth and he does not pay its due, that very wealth will come to him on the Day of Judgement as a bald, venomous snake with two black marks above its eyes. It coils around his neck like a collar and seizes his cheeks in its jaws and says: I am your wealth, I am your treasure.

The coins he stacked and sealed and refused to spend do not stay behind in this world. They follow him, and they bite. The thing he loved most becomes the thing that tortures him, because love of it, and the refusal to let any of it go, is precisely what ruined him.

The Crusher, named for what he did to people

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الْحَطْمَةُ

And what can make you know what is the Crusher?

AL-HUMAZAH 104:5

He is thrown into al-hutamah, the Crusher. The Sheikh draws the name from hatama, to crush and pound something until it is broken and gone. And here the symmetry the surah has been building snaps into place. What was this man's crime? He was a humazah, a lumazah, one who crushed people, not with his hands but with his tongue and his glances, the boss who breaks his worker, the teacher who breaks his student, the father who breaks his child, leaving them devastated and small. So Allah does not throw him into a Fire that simply burns. He throws him into a Fire that crushes, that grinds him down the way he ground others down, that gives him no weight and no worth in return for the worth he stole from everyone he belittled.

Then the surah does something to make you stop: it asks you a question it knows you cannot answer. And what can make you know what the Crusher is? The Sheikh explains that this rhetorical turn is the language's way of saying that the thing is beyond your imagination entirely. Nothing in this life truly resembles the next, he notes; the only thing they share is a name. An apple here and an apple there are the same in name only, nothing else carries over. So whatever crushing you can picture, the real al-hutamah is nowhere near it. And there is a quiet answer folded into the question too: someone might ask how a single punishment can be enough for this man's two crimes, the mockery and the hoarding. The reply is, you have no idea how immense this one punishment is. Whatever you did, it is more than able to answer for it.

A Fire that Allah lit, and never let go out

نَارُ اللَّهِ الْمُوقَدَّةُ

It is the fire of Allāh, [eternally] fueled,

AL-HUMAZAH 104:6

Now Allah names whose Fire this is: it is the Fire of Allah. The Sheikh stops here, because Allah does not normally attach His own name to a created thing this way, and when He does it

is to lift it utterly beyond comparison. Just as the she-camel sent to the people of Thamud was called the she-camel of Allah, meaning no ordinary camel, this Fire is called the Fire of Allah, meaning no fire you have ever seen or felt sits anywhere near it. You cannot measure it against the worldly flame at all.

And He calls it al-muqadah, the kindled, the lit. The Sheikh draws two things from that word. First, it adds raw intensity, this is a Fire roaring at full blaze. Second, it shuts down any thought that the Fire might have cooled or died down over the ages, that it has burned so long it must be ash by now. No. It has been kindled and kept kindled, stoked across unimaginable spans until it turned from red to white to black, dark as the blackest night, and it is still burning at this very moment and will burn forever. The word is built as a noun, the Sheikh notes, and a noun carries permanence: this Fire does not flicker and fade like every fire you know. It never goes out.

It climbs until it reaches the heart

الَّتِي تَطَّلِعُ عَلَى الْأَفْئِدَةِ

Which mounts directed at the hearts.

AL-HUMAZAH 104:7

This Fire mounts up over the hearts. The Sheikh draws the verb tattali'u from the same root as the rising of the sun, and it sits in the present tense, which means it does not strike once and stop, it keeps climbing, continuously, the way the sun climbs the sky. Slowly and surely it rises over the people, eating through the skin, the flesh, the bone, the nerves, until it arrives where it was always headed: the heart, the af'idah.

Why the heart, the Sheikh asks, of all the organs Allah could have named? Two reasons. First, to make you feel the sheer intensity of it. The heart is among the most protected things in the body, walled behind the toughest cage of bone. So if this Fire has reached the heart, imagine what it has already done to everything guarding it. Second, and this is the surah's signature, so the punishment fits the crime. Trace his sins back and every one of them lives in the heart: the arrogance that made him look down on people, the love of wealth that made him hoard, the certainty in his mind that money had made him immortal. Arrogance, love, assumption, all of them seated in the heart. So the Fire is sent to the heart, to the exact place the crimes came from. And the Sheikh adds one more weight: a body can endure a moment of flame on the

skin, but the heart cannot bear even a single second of it. This Fire reaches the one place that can withstand nothing at all.

Sealed in, in stretched-out columns

إِنهَا عَلَيْهِمْ مُّؤَصَّدَةٌ

Indeed, it [i.e., Hellfire] will be closed down upon them

AL-HUMAZAH 104:8

فِي عَمَدٍ مُمَدَّدَاتٍ

In extended columns.

104:9

Then the Fire is closed down upon them, mu'sadah, shut and sealed. The Sheikh reaches for the kitchen to make you feel it: you seal a lid over the pot, you close the oven door, precisely so the heat has nowhere to escape and climbs higher. A sealed Fire burns hottest. And a sealed Fire means there is no way out. He draws a sharp contrast here: the fact that the Hellfire has doors at all is at once a mercy and a torment. A mercy, because the believers who slip into it for their sins will one day walk back out through those doors. A torment, because the disbeliever sees the door, hope rises in him, he scrambles toward it, and every single time he is driven back in. Each time they try to come out, they are returned. The Sheikh likens it to a prisoner who sees his cell door and tastes freedom that is never coming; the very word for prison shares its root with the shutting of this Fire. The door itself becomes part of the punishment.

And it is sealed in stretched-out columns, fi 'amadin mumaddadah. The Sheikh lays out several readings the scholars give of these pillars. They may be vast iron bolts, long as columns, driven across the sealed doors so nothing can ever lift them. The people may be impaled and burning upon them like meat on a skewer. Each one may sit over a single concentrated, straight pillar of flame. Or, most chillingly, each disbeliever may be sealed inside a hollow column of his own, which carries everything at once: crushing tightness and confinement, until they scream out for their own destruction; multiplied intensity, shut inside fire inside fire; and utter isolation, no one to speak to, unable even to lean against a wall that is itself ablaze. And once more the punishment answers the crime. He wanted his life stretched out, long and

endless, to keep hoarding and sinning. So he is given exactly that, an existence stretched out without end, in the columns of al-hutamah. He gets his wish for eternity, and it is handed to him inside the Fire.

The whole surah is one curse, unpacked

Step back, the Sheikh says, and see the surah as a single closed circle. It opened on one word, wayl, woe, a curse from Allah against this man. Everything that followed, the throwing, the Crusher, the kindled Fire, the climb to the heart, the sealed doors, the stretched columns, is nothing but the unfolding of that one word. The whole surah is the answer to the question: what does this curse actually contain? Now you know.

And the Sheikh lands it on us, because the surah was never only about one ancient man. Its real purpose is to warn every one of us off these exact crimes: the mockery, the backbiting, the slander, the looking down on people, even the kind dressed up as a joke. He cautions against the careless cruelty we now call entertainment, and against the tongue that races to belittle. The one who stays silent, he reminds us, is the one who stays safe. He warns too against the easy sin of condemning whole groups of people from ignorance, of generalising a curse onto those you do not understand. The man in this surah crushed people with his words and his wealth and was crushed in return. The surah is here so that we are not.

What this surah asks of you

- **The punishment is shaped like the crime.** He crushed people, so he meets the Crusher. He gave them no worth, so he is thrown aside like nothing. He sealed his wealth away, so the Fire is sealed upon him. Look at what the surah does to him, and you are looking at a mirror of what he did. Whatever you send out comes back in its own shape.
- **Wealth was never going to make you immortal.** The man's whole life rested on a lie: that his money would keep him, or his name, alive. What actually outlives you is the good you leave behind. The coins he refused to spend followed him to the Fire and bit him.
- **Guard the tongue, even when you are joking.** Humazah and lumazah are sins of the tongue and the glance. The Sheikh warns that mockery does not stop being mockery because it is dressed as fun. The one who stays silent is the one who stays safe.
- **Your sins are seated in the heart.** Arrogance, the love of hoarding, the certainty that you are untouchable: each one lives in the heart, which is why the Fire is sent climbing to the heart. Guard the place the crimes come from, and you guard everything.

Why this surah stays with us

Al-Humazah is nine short ayat that take one man's small, smug world, the sneer on his face and the pile under his arm, and answer it with a Fire named for what he did. It is a surah about the weight of a word and the cost of a closed hand, and it refuses to let either feel harmless. Every belittling glance and every hoarded coin, it tells you, has a shape it will come back in.

O Allah, guard our tongues from mocking Your servants and our hearts from looking down on a single one of them. Keep us from hoarding what You gave us to give, and do not let us imagine for one moment that anything but Your mercy will keep us. Save us from al-hutamah, and make the good we leave behind a trace that speaks well of us long after we are gone.

Retold faithfully from Sheikh Abu Bakr Zoud's tafsir of Juz Amma (parts 1 and 2). Qur'an: Sahih International, verified via quran.ai. The reflection is the Sheikh's, the phrasing is The Daily Wird's.

Al-Fil

The surah where an army big enough to flatten a city is undone by birds, and the proudest plan in Arabia is turned into chewed straw

An army marched on Makkah that was bigger than the city it came to destroy: sixty thousand men, and out in front, a creature the Arabs had never seen, an elephant tall enough to flatten the Kaaba by itself. Surat Al-Fil tells you how it ended, and it does not even bother to describe the battle. There was no battle. Allah turned to His Prophet ﷺ and asked, as if pointing at something astonishing, have you not seen what your Lord did with the people of the elephant? Then He answered His own question with birds.

What pride does to a man

Before the story, the Sheikh sets the surah in its place in the juz, and the placement is the whole lesson. The surah just before this one, Al-Humazah, was about a man ruined by his wealth, who gathered money and used it to mock and belittle people. Al-Fil is about a man ruined by his power. Abraha had armies and elephants and a throne, and he used all of it to look down on the Arabs and to try to drag their hearts away from the house of Allah. Two different men, the Sheikh says, one disease underneath: pride and arrogance.

And here is the jolt the Sheikh wants you to feel. Abraha was a Christian. The people he marched against, the Quraysh, were idol-worshippers with three hundred and sixty idols around the Kaaba. By religion, Abraha was the better of the two. So why does Allah destroy the Christian and save the idolaters? Because at that moment Abraha carried the one thing Allah will not tolerate, the thing the Prophet ﷺ said keeps a man out of Paradise even if it is the weight of an atom in his heart: arrogance. Reject the truth, look down on people, and your religion on paper will not save you. That is the warning Al-Fil opens with, before a single bird has flown.

The man who built a rival to the Kaaba

The Sheikh walks you back to how it began. Abraha was the Christian governor of Yemen, an Ethiopian, not even an Arab, and he was eaten up by a question he could not answer: why do

these people pour across the desert every single year, through fifty and sixty degrees of heat, to circle a plain house of brick and stone in the middle of nowhere? He could not stand that the Arabs were honored for it. So he built a magnificent cathedral, lavish and towering, and ordered the Arabs to come to it instead. He wanted their pilgrimage, their trade, their economy, their honor, all redirected to him.

And the Arabs ignored it. They kept going to the Kaaba. The Sheikh tells how one Arab, furious at the insult to the house of Allah, slipped into Abraha's grand church at night and defiled it, smearing filth across its walls, as if to say: this is all your building is worth. When Abraha learned of it, he swore an oath. He would not rest until he marched on Makkah and tore the Kaaba down to its foundations. He wrote to the Negus for support, and what came back was elephants, the great beast of Ethiopia, led by a giant named Mahmud. Camels and horses the Arabs knew. This they had never seen, and that was the point: terror, before the army even arrived.

Have you not seen what your Lord did?

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ فَعَلَ رَبُّكَ بِأَصْحَابِ الْفِيلِ

Have you not considered, [O Muhammad], how your Lord dealt with the companions of the elephant?

AL-FIL 105:1

The Prophet ﷺ was born about fifty-five days after this happened, so he did not see it with his own eyes. The seeing here, the Sheikh explains, is the seeing of the heart, the way you say to a friend on the phone, after he explains something, I see what you mean. It means: have you not heard, have you not realized, are you not amazed? Allah opens the surah inviting His Messenger, and all of Makkah listening behind him, to stand astonished at what happened.

And notice the verb is present tense, the Sheikh points out. Allah does not say did you see what He did, locking it in the past. He says have you not seen, a tense that keeps going. The warning of this surah is not a finished story about one tyrant long ago. It is alive, aimed at every arrogant tyrant in every age who thinks his military might lets him crush a people and trample what is sacred. The lesson never expired. It is still being delivered, to anyone today who would do what Abraha did.

Then notice He says how, not what. The Sheikh slows down here. When you ponder the elephant and the army, the first question that rises in you is not what happened to them, it is how. How is a man with that much strength and those beasts and sixty thousand soldiers defeated at all? How is it even possible? Allah meets you exactly at that question: have you not seen how your Lord dealt with them. And He says your Lord, rabbuka, a word of such tenderness toward the Prophet ﷺ. I am on your side. Your enemy is My enemy. I who did this to Abraha can do it to the ones mocking you. The whole surah is, underneath, Allah comforting His Messenger.

The plan they kept secret

أَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ كَيْدَهُمْ فِي تَضَلِيلٍ

Did He not make their plan into misguidance?

AL-FIL 105:2

Allah calls their scheme a kayd, and the Sheikh stops you on the word, because a kayd is specifically a plan plotted in secret. He expects you to be puzzled: but everyone knew Abraha was coming to destroy the Kaaba, the word had spread across Arabia before he arrived. So why call a public plan secret? Because, the Sheikh says, Abraha announced one motive and hid three. He told the world he was avenging his defiled church. What he buried was the politics, redirecting all of Arabia to bow toward Yemen; the economy, pulling every road of trade to himself; and the jealousy, the raw envy of the Arabs he could never admit. Nations still do this, the Sheikh notes: they declare the noble reason for a war and keep the real ones hidden.

And look at the word for what Allah did to it: tadleel, and He places it deep, fi tadleel, the way He once said the human being is deep in loss, fi khusr. Their plan was not merely stopped. It was sunk in failure, surrounded by failure from every direction. Worse, the Sheikh wants you to feel the cruelty of the timing. Allah could have ended them back in Yemen, before they ever set out. Instead He let the leash run its full length. He let them march for hundreds of miles, defeat tribe after tribe, pick up guides, reach the very edge of Makkah, let them see the Kaaba, and only then destroyed them. It is the difference, the Sheikh says, between a dog on a one-meter leash and a dog let loose on five hundred meters: the second one runs and runs thinking he is free, and the snap at the end is a thousand times more painful. That is fi tadleel: not just failure, but failure made to hurt.

He sent against them birds

وَأَرْسَلَ عَلَيْهِمْ طَيْرًا أَبَابِيلَ

And He sent against them birds in flocks,

AL-FIL 105:3

تَرْمِيهِمْ بِحِجَارَةٍ مِّن سِجِّيلٍ

Striking them with stones of hard clay,

105:4

Here is the answer to the surah's how, and the Sheikh savors how small it is. Birds. Not an army, not an earthquake, not a flood. The kind of harmless creatures that frighten no one. Allah sends His punishment on sixty thousand armored men and a herd of elephants, and the weapon is a flock of birds carrying pebbles. You had better take your Lord seriously, the Sheikh warns: a small stone from the sky is all it takes, if He wills it.

And do not underestimate what flies. The Sheikh draws a thread to Sulayman, peace be upon him, whose army was made of jinn, men, and birds, and asks which was the mightiest. The birds, and the proof is that when Sulayman stopped to inspect his ranks, he went straight to them and asked, where is the hoopoe? You check first on what matters most. Even today, the Sheikh notes, whoever owns the sky owns the war: the first thing destroyed in any battle is the enemy's aircraft. The one who dominates the air wins. Allah sent an air force the Arabs could never have imagined.

And it was not one kind of bird but many, ababil, flocks upon flocks pouring in from every direction, the Sheikh says, confusing Abraha's men as they waited helplessly. Each bird carried three stones, one in its beak and one in each claw, and the stones were hijaratin min sijjil, stones of baked, hardened clay. The word sijjil, the Sheikh notes, carries more than one meaning the scholars draw out: stones from the Fire, or clay baked rock-hard by the sun, or, as one narration holds, stones each inscribed with the name of the one it was meant to strike. The verb tarmi is present tense, continual: the stones rained down without stopping, and every single one had its target. A stone would enter a man's skull and pass clean out the other side, his flesh dropping off him piece by piece.

Turned into chewed straw

فَجَعَلَهُمْ كَعَصْفٍ مَّأْكُولٍ

And He made them like eaten straw.

AL-FIL 105:5

The verb is ja'ala, the Sheikh explains, to take a thing and transform it into something else entirely. They came as men with bodies intact, terrifying and proud, and Allah turned them into asf ma'kul, eaten straw. He unpacks the image: asf is the dry husk and chaff that one gust of wind scatters off the path, and ma'kul, eaten, is more precise still, something chewed up, ground through the gut, digested, and passed out the other end. Waste. Think of the skin of a peanut, the Sheikh says, the papery shell you flick off before you eat it: that is what these men became. The stones hollowed them out, everything inside gone, until they were husks light enough for the wind to carry off.

And feel the arc of the surah, the Sheikh urges. It opened on ashab al-fil, the people of the elephant, a name heavy with power, war beasts, an army of sixty thousand. It closes on asf ma'kul, chewed straw a breeze blows away. From the most fearsome thing in Arabia to the most worthless: that is the distance Allah moved them in five short ayat, and that is what arrogance buys in the end.

Abraha himself survived just long enough to make the lesson land. He limped back toward Yemen, the Sheikh recounts, his body falling apart on the road, shrinking as he went, and when he finally reached his people his chest split open and his heart spilled out, and he died in front of them. Allah let him return, the Sheikh notes, precisely so that the news would arrive: had no one come back, Yemen might have sent a second army. Instead they saw what was left of their king, and no one ever approached the house of Allah that way again.

The elephant knew better than they did

There is one more thing the Sheikh will not let you miss, and it sits inside the very name of the surah. Allah calls them ashab al-fil, the companions, the friends of the elephant. And the word for companion, sahib, the Sheikh explains, is the title given to one who befriends someone higher than himself in rank, the way the Prophet's ﷺ Companions are called the Sahaba because they kept the company of one above them. So to call sixty thousand men the companions of the elephant is to say the elephant outranked them all.

And it did, the Sheikh says, because the elephant obeyed Allah and they did not. When they pointed the great beast Mahmud toward the Kaaba, it knelt and refused to move an inch. Turn it toward Yemen, and it would rise and run. Turn it any direction but the house of Allah, and it went willingly. A dumb animal, with no intellect, lived out the hadith the men trampled: there is no obedience to any creature in disobedience to the Creator. The animal feared Allah more than they did, and knew Him better. So make sure, the Sheikh says, gently and seriously, that this elephant is never more obedient to Allah, never more fearful of Him, than you are. Whenever you are pushed to take part in tearing down the religion of Allah, with your hand or your tongue, your authority or even a post you type out, refuse, the way the elephant refused, even if it costs you your life.

What this surah asks of you

- **Pride is the disease that undoes you.** Allah saved idolaters and destroyed a Christian, because at that moment Abraha carried arrogance and they did not. Before you weigh anyone's religion, the Sheikh says, weigh this: rejecting the truth and looking down on people is the one quality Allah claims as His own and will not share.
- **He lets the leash run before He pulls it.** Allah could have stopped them in Yemen. He let them march to the very edge of Makkah and see the Kaaba first. A plan that fails at the finish line hurts a thousand times more than one stopped at the start. Do not read a delay as a reprieve.
- **The smallest thing in His hand is enough.** Sixty thousand men and a herd of elephants, undone by harmless birds and baked pebbles. Take your Lord seriously: He does not need an equal force to end you. A stone from the sky will do.
- **Be at least as obedient as the elephant.** A beast with no intellect refused to march on the house of Allah, and it outranked the army that named itself after it. Never let your share in tearing down His religion, by hand, tongue, or keyboard, make you lower than that animal.

Why this surah stays with us

Al-Fil is five ayat about the safety of a house, and yet, the Sheikh points out, it never once mentions the house. It does not name the Kaaba. It names your Lord, rabbuka, and shows Him defending His Messenger and His sanctuary by Himself, with nothing more than birds. He saves the mention of the house for the next surah, so that first you would feel the favor, and only then be asked to be grateful for it.

O Allah, strip the arrogance from our hearts before it strips us of everything, the way it stripped Abraha down to chewed straw. Make us people who bow to Your truth the moment we hear it, who never lend a hand or a word to tearing down Your religion, and who trust that the One who turned an army into husks with a flock of birds is enough for us. You are our Lord, and that is enough.

Retold faithfully from Sheikh Abu Bakr Zoud's tafsir of Juz Amma (parts 1 and 2). Qur'an: Sahih International, verified via quran.ai. The reflection is the Sheikh's, the phrasing is The Daily Wird's.

Quraysh

The only surah named after a tribe, naming the four favors that should have bought their worship, and asking for it back

Surat Quraysh is the only surah in the Qur'an named after a tribe, and it reads almost like a thank-you note Allah is writing on a people's behalf, except they never sent it. He lists what He did for them, one favor after another: He united them, He opened up their trade, He fed them when they were starving, He kept them safe when the world was dangerous. Then He arrives at the one line they should have written back, and writes it for them. The Sheikh begins by reminding you that this surah is so tightly bound to the one before it that some of the Companions did not even separate the two.

The surah that leans on the one before it

Sheikh Abu Bakr opens by tying Quraysh straight back to Al-Fil, the surah of the elephant just before it. The two are so closely related, he says, that in the mushaf of Ubayy ibn Ka'b they were written as a single surah, with no basmala drawn between them. It is narrated that Umar once led the maghrib prayer and recited Al-Fil and Quraysh together in one rak'ah, as though they were one passage. The seam between them, the Sheikh notes, is the whole point of where this surah sits.

He also gathers the honor Allah poured on this one tribe. There is a hadith listing seven things Quraysh were favored with, given to no people before and none after: that the Prophet ﷺ was from among them, that prophethood was placed in them, that they were the custodians of the Kaaba, that the care of Zamzam was theirs, that Allah gave them the victory over the elephant, that the first to worship Allah alone for ten years were from them, and that Allah revealed a surah carrying their very name. No other tribe, the Sheikh says, has a surah named after it. So before the surah asks anything of them, it has already told you who is being addressed: a people sitting at the center of every blessing.

The first word leans backward

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

For the accustomed security of the Quraysh -

QURAYSH 106:1

If you open a translation cold, the Sheikh warns, this surah is one of the hardest you will meet, because it begins mid-thought. It opens on a single letter, the laam of li-ilaf, and that one letter is doing the work. He lays out three readings of it. The first ties it to the surah before: the laam of reason, joining what just happened to what comes next. The second ties it forward, to the command in the third ayah. The third cuts it loose from both, a laam of sheer amazement. All three, he says, are sound, but the strongest in this place is the first, and that is exactly why Quraysh was set right after Al-Fil.

Read that way, the meaning runs like this: Allah destroyed Abraha and his army, He sent the birds and turned that vast force into chewed-up straw, and He made the whole event famous across the lands, all of this for Quraysh, so that Quraysh could stay united and travel in safety. And it mattered that Abraha was not merely turned back but destroyed. Quraysh traded toward Yemen in the winter; had that army survived and returned home, the Sheikh explains, Quraysh could never have sent their caravans that way again without fearing revenge. So every single ayah of Al-Fil, he says, hangs on this first line of Quraysh: did you not see what your Lord did to the people of the elephant? He did it so that this tribe could come together and move freely, with no one in their path. The third reading is the one that stings: be amazed. Allah united them, eased their whole livelihood, asked nothing but their worship, and they turned instead to idols and a few stones set around His House.

The name itself is carrying meaning. By lineage, the Sheikh notes, Quraysh traces back to a man, Fihri ibn Malik, an ancestor of the tribe, and the word is a shortened form of his name. But linguistically he draws out three roots feeding into it. The first is qirsh, a shark: when a man asked Ibn Abbas why they were called Quraysh, he answered that they were named after a great creature of the sea that devours and is not devoured, that overpowers and is not overpowered, which is Quraysh on land, the strongest of the tribes, dominating any who crossed them. The second is from the word for money, for they were people of trade with dealings reaching Yemen and Sham and beyond, and wealth, he says, tends to carry authority along with it. The third means to gather and unite, and this is the one the surah lands on: the people Allah gathered and made one after they had been scattered. That uniting was itself a

quiet miracle in the run-up to the Prophet ﷺ. You will not feel how great a blessing unity is, the Sheikh urges, until you look hard at a people who lost it: a nation Allah scattered across the earth as a punishment, broken into pieces, unable to live as one. Set that image beside Quraysh, he says, to measure what they were given.

Said twice, to press the favor in

إِيْلَافِهِمْ رِحْلَةَ الشِّتَاءِ وَالصَّيْفِ

Their accustomed security [in] the caravan of winter and summer -

QURAYSH 106:2

The word ilaf, the uniting, comes twice, once in the first ayah and again in the second, and the Sheikh says it means the same thing both times. It is repeated for emphasis: Allah is pressing the favor in, saying in effect, of My blessings on you is that I joined you together, and I joined you for one purpose, that you make these journeys as one and stop fighting one another. To feel the weight of it, he tells you how the journeys even began. Makkah was a poor, hungry place, and when famine struck a family they would walk out of the city, pitch a tent in some far spot, and sit there until they died of starvation. It was that hard.

Then a man named Hashim, an ancestor of the Prophet ﷺ, stood and gave the Makkans a speech. If we keep going out to die every time hunger hits, he warned, our numbers will fall while the nations around us grow, and one day they will come and finish us. So pool your wealth, he said, gather your caravans and camels and strength, and let us travel out in every direction in search of provision. They did, and that is how the winter and summer trips were born. So when Allah calls their uniting a blessing, the Sheikh says, remember the alternative they came from: people who would sooner watch each other starve than share a loaf.

And He does not call their travel safar, the ordinary word for a trip. He calls it rihla, and the Sheikh says the choice is deliberate. A rihla is travel with the camels loaded, heavy with goods piled high for all to see, and exposed cargo in those days was an open invitation: thieves on the road would spot a loaded caravan and ambush it at once. Yet here is the blessing hidden in the word. Quraysh moved with their caravans full and feared nothing, because the nations had learned to fear them. These are the people of Allah, they would say, the ones He defended against Abraha; do not touch them, or He will deal with you as He dealt with that army. The Sheikh reads this beside another ayah, where Allah asks whether He did not make for them a safe sanctuary while people were being snatched away all around them. Other tribes had to

travel light and quick; Quraysh traveled loaded and unafraid. A smaller touch he does not let pass: rihla comes in the singular, one journey, though there were plainly two, because the two trips were identical in setup, the same people and caravans leaving each time with only the direction changed, and because the trading was nearly continuous, out and back and out again all year, like a single unbroken journey that was really their whole life. The winter caravan went to Yemen, warmer in those months and the time its staple foods were harvested; the summer caravan went to Sham, pleasant in the heat and ripe with its fruits. Allah names only the two seasons, the Sheikh notes, and leaves out spring and autumn, because in the Arab lands those are barely felt: it is either hot or it is cold.

So worship, do not merely thank

فليعبدوا ربَّ هذا البيتِ

Let them worship the Lord of this House,

QURAYSH 106:3

Now comes the turn the whole surah was built toward: because of all of this, He says, let them worship the Lord of this House. The Sheikh draws your eye to the verb. After listing favor upon favor, you would expect the command fal-yashkuru, let them give thanks, because thanks is what a favor naturally calls for. But Allah says fal-ya'budu, let them worship. He is teaching, the Sheikh explains, that the only real way to thank Allah is to worship Him. Thanks with the tongue alone, day and night, that never reaches into worship, is not the thanks He is asking for. He brings the model: the Prophet ﷺ would stand in the night prayer until his feet swelled and cracked, and when asked why, when Allah had already forgiven him, he answered, shall I not be a grateful slave? His gratitude, the Sheikh says, was his prayer.

And notice that Allah does not say the Lord of the city; He says the Lord of this House. The spotlight falls on the House on purpose, because the House is the source of Quraysh's honor and standing, the reason for the ease they were living in. It carries a history: built and rebuilt across the ages, the House for which Abdul Muttalib answered Abraha, I am only the owner of the camels, but the House has a Lord who will defend it. The Prophet ﷺ himself, the Sheikh notes, would point toward the House when he reached this ayah in prayer. The line is almost shaking them awake: every blessing around you came by way of this House, so how are you worshipping the stones set around it instead of the Lord who owns it?

Fed from hunger, made safe from fear

الَّذِي أَطْعَمَهُمْ مِّنْ جُوعٍ وَآمَنَهُمْ مِّنْ خَوْفٍ

Who has fed them, [saving them] from hunger and made them safe, [saving them] from fear.

QURAYSH 106:4

The final ayah names the two things Quraysh actually lived in dread of: hunger and fear. Their city was struck by famine, and their city was not secure, as the march of Abraha proved. Allah answers both. He fed them, lifting the hunger by uniting them and easing their journeys; and He made them safe, lifting the fear by destroying Abraha so that every nation around them kept its distance. The Sheikh points out that Allah says He fed them, *ata'ama*, and not that He filled them to bursting, *ashba'a*. He gave them enough to push back hunger, not the heavy fullness of luxury, because a stomach stuffed to its limit, he says, is a stomach that has no appetite left for worship. And He says He fed them from hunger so they would feel the gift exactly where it landed, in a place where people used to die starving and fight one another over food.

The Sheikh also weighs the order, and finds it deliberate: feeding is named before security, hunger before fear. Picture a person who is both starving and afraid, he says, and ask what he reaches for first. He goes for food, because safety with an empty stomach still ends in death, so he will go out looking for provision whatever the danger. Provision is named first because it is the more pressing need. And yet the two blessings, he stresses, only stand together. A town full of food but torn by war is unlivable, and people flee it even when the food is good; a safe town with nothing to eat is no better. This, he adds, is the wisdom in Ibrahim's dua for this very place, when he asked Allah both to make the city safe and to provide its people with fruits: the two things that make any city fit to live in. Ibrahim asked it for the believers, and Allah added that He would grant the disbeliever a short enjoyment too, before driving him to his end.

The question the surah leaves open

From its first letter to its last word, the Sheikh says, this surah is a list of gifts laid out for one reason: so Quraysh would do the single thing asked of them, worship the Lord of the House. He united them, eased their loaded caravans through dangerous roads, fed them out of starvation, and made them safe in a fearful world, all for that one return. So did they answer it?

The Sheikh leaves the question hanging here, because the answer, he says, comes in the surah that follows, Al-Ma'un. There Allah describes the man who believes the Day, who does his deeds only to be seen and praised by people, who gives nothing away. He is the opposite of everything this surah was calling Quraysh toward. The seam reaches forward, the way it reached back to the elephant, and the lesson lands on you and not only on them: when the two great fears are lifted off your life, food on the table and safety over your head, the freed time was given to you for one thing.

What this surah asks of you

- **The favors were a down payment on your worship.** Allah did not list what He gave Quraysh and stop. He listed it and then said worship Me. Every ease in your life, the food and the safety, was extended as the reason to turn toward Him, not away.
- **Thanks that never becomes worship is not thanks.** He said let them worship, not let them say thank you. The Prophet ﷺ stood until his feet bled and called it being a grateful slave. Gratitude that stays on the tongue and never reaches the prayer mat is not the gratitude He asked for.
- **Comfort is a test with two doors.** When provision and safety are handled, you can pour the freed time into chasing more dunya, or into worship: more Qur'an, more standing at night, more given away. The Sheikh says the well-off should ask why their life is in good shape. The answer is so they can worship more.
- **He fed them, He did not stuff them.** Allah gave Quraysh enough to lift the hunger, not the heavy fullness that kills the appetite for worship. There is a mercy even in the limit of a blessing.

Why this surah stays with us

Quraysh is short enough to read in a breath, but it quietly indicts anyone who has ever counted his blessings and forgotten the One counting them out to him. Allah united a people, fed them, and made them safe, then asked for the one thing those gifts were always meant to buy: that they worship the Lord of the House standing in their midst. The surah ends on the favor and trusts you to supply the response.

O Allah, You who fed us from hunger and made us safe from fear, do not let Your gifts become the very thing that turns us from You. Let every ease You place in our lives drive us back to Your door, and make our gratitude into worship, not words alone. Lord of this House, accustom

our hearts to You the way You accustomed Quraysh to safety, and let us be among those who worship You for it while the worshipping still counts.

Retold faithfully from Sheikh Abu Bakr Zoud's tafsir of Juz Amma. Qur'an: Sahih International, verified via quran.ai. The reflection is the Sheikh's, the phrasing is The Daily Wird's.

Al-Ma'un

The surah that measures your faith not by what you say, but by how you treat the orphan, the poor, and the small thing your neighbor asks to borrow

Most of us, the Sheikh says, think our faith lives in the things we can be seen doing: the fasting, the prayer, the hajj, the salam we give at the door. Al-Ma'un walks up to that idea and quietly turns it over. Before it says one word about your prayer, it asks how you treat an orphan and whether you even bother to urge that a hungry man be fed. It is a short surah of seven ayat, and it lands like a hand on the shoulder: you say you believe, so show me your neighbor.

A surah with many names

Sheikh Abu Bakr opens, as he likes to, with the names this surah carries, because each name is a window into it. The most common is Surat al-Ma'un, after the very last word, and this is the only place in the whole Qur'an that word appears. Imam al-Bukhari, in his Sahih, called it Surat Ara'ayta, "have you seen," because it is the only surah that opens with that word. It is also called Surat al-Yateem, after the orphan it names, and Surat ad-Deen, after the Recompense the denier rejects, and Surat at-Takdheeb, after the lying-against-the-truth that runs through it. Different names, one surah, and every one of them is pointing you at the same small handful of people the surah is worried about.

Then a question of place and time. Most scholars hold the surah is Makki, revealed before the Hijrah, and the Sheikh says that is plainly true of its first half: this language of repelling the orphan and not feeding the poor is the language of Makkah, long before Madinah. But there is a sound narration that the second half is Madani, because it speaks of prayer, of showing off, of hypocrisy, and in Makkah, he reminds you, there was barely any congregational prayer and there were no hypocrites at all. People there hid their faith; no one was pretending to have it. Hypocrisy only began once the Prophet ﷺ reached Madinah. So the strongest reading is that this is one surah, half Makki and half Madani: the first three ayat revealed early, the rest revealed later.

Why it sits right after Quraysh

A surah, the Sheikh keeps teaching across the juz, is never dropped down at random next to its neighbors. Read Al-Ma'un against the surah just before it, Quraysh, and it lights up. In Quraysh, Allah reminded that tribe of His gifts: He made their trade caravans easy in summer and winter, He fed them against hunger, He gave them safety in a place of fear. That surah is a list of blessings. The word for feeding, it'am, appears in both: in Quraysh, Allah is the One who fed them; in Al-Ma'un, here are people who will not even encourage that others be fed.

So the two surahs read as gift and response. Allah filled their hands, and instead of passing the food along, they pushed the orphan away and could not be moved to feed a single poor man. That, the Sheikh says, is the lesson for you and me the moment we notice our own fridge is full and food is not even a worry on our minds: the way you thank Allah for being fed is to feed someone else. Quraysh said, in effect, thank you, and kept it all. The believer makes the alhamdulillah practical, and hands it on. There is a second thread too: Quraysh ended on "let them worship" the Lord of this House, and Al-Ma'un turns immediately to people whose worship is hollow, who deny the Deen and who pray only to be seen. The contrast is deliberate, blessing answered with ingratitude, and worship answered with show.

Have you seen the one who denies the Recompense?

أَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي يُكَذِّبُ بِالْإِيمَانِ

Have you seen the one who denies the Recompense?

AL-MA'UN 107:1

Allah turns to His Messenger ﷺ, and through him to every sane person who hears this Qur'an, and asks: have you seen him? It is not really asking whether you have laid eyes on someone. It is asking, the Sheikh explains, do you know his qualities, his traits, the shape of the man who lies against the Deen? Because if you do not, listen closely, the rest of the surah is going to draw him for you, line by line. Every ayah from here is a feature of his face.

Look at the exact words, the Sheikh says, because Allah chose them with care. He says yukadhdhibu, not yakfuru. To do kufr is a clean, flat rejection: I never accepted this in the first place. But takdheeb is heavier and uglier. It is to know a thing is true and then deliberately call it a lie. This is the man who recognizes the truth in his chest and stands up and denies it anyway, the way Allah records of one bitter enemy of the Prophet ﷺ whose heart softened

when he heard the Qur'an, who called it sweet and said it towers over all speech and nothing rises above it, and who then walked back to his people and called it magic, because to admit the truth would cost him too much. And the verb is in the present tense, which carries continuity: not a man who denied once, but a man who answered every single ayah, every time it was recited, with fresh denial.

And what is the Deen he denies? The Sheikh gathers the scholars' readings: it is the religion of Allah and all it contains, and it is the Day of Judgement, the Day of accounting, and it is reward and punishment, that good is met with Paradise and evil with the Fire. We do not pick one and throw out the rest; the man who lies against one of these tends to lie against them all. But the sharpest meaning here is accountability, the Day you stand before Allah and answer. Hold onto that, because it is the hinge of the whole surah. The reason this man is about to commit crime after crime is that he does not believe he will ever be asked about them.

Why the denial leads straight to the orphan

Before the surah names his first crime, the Sheikh stops to ask a question that unlocks everything: what is it that actually holds a person back from doing wrong? Not the law on its own. What holds you back, in the back of your mind, is that there will be a consequence, that you will pay for it later. There is a security camera in the building, so you behave. It is three in the morning, the road is empty, not a car or a soul in sight, and still you stop at the red light, because somewhere a camera might catch you and the fine will come. Strip that out, take away all sense of being answerable, and crime becomes comfortable.

That, he says, is exactly the man in ayah one. Because he has convinced himself there is no Day of accounting, no resurrection, no standing before Allah to be asked "why did you do that," he is free. He feels no consequence hovering over any of his actions. So the denial of the Recompense is not a private theological position he keeps to himself; it is the open door through which every cruelty walks. The surah is showing you the chain: lie against the Deen in your heart, and watch what your hands and tongue do next.

The one who drives away the orphan

فَذَلِكَ الَّذِي يَدْعُ الْيَتِيمَ

For that is the one who drives away the orphan

AL-MA'UN 107:2

Here is his first trait, and notice, the Sheikh says, that it comes before any mention of prayer. The word yadu'u means to shove, to push someone away with force and violence, the very word Allah uses for how the deniers are thrust into Hell. It is not a gentle turning-down. It is the orphan coming to ask, and being driven off. The classical occasion fits it exactly: a man would slaughter and give out meat, an orphan came begging a share, and he was shoved away with a stick. Driving the orphan away also means pushing him off his rights, devouring the wealth his dead father left him, and Allah says of those who swallow an orphan's wealth that they are swallowing fire into their bellies.

And who is the orphan? The one who lost his father before reaching the age of puberty. The Sheikh, who knows people who have spent their lives working among orphans, says you cannot hold your tears back when you live among them: they are broken, fragile, without the backbone a father is, and people take advantage of exactly that. This is why the Prophet ﷺ made it a sunnah to pass your hand over an orphan's head, from the front of the scalp to the back, the way you would gently pet a child or an animal, as a wordless act of mercy. There is a world of difference, he says, between that hand of mercy and the hand that shoves. Islam pours care into this child: the one who sponsors an orphan will be beside the Prophet ﷺ in Paradise like two fingers held together; the one who strives for the widow and the orphan is like the soldier in the path of Allah and like the worshipper who never sleeps. The Qur'an counts it a crime not merely to refuse to feed the orphan but to fail to honor him.

So why would anyone shove an orphan at all? The Sheikh gives a reason hidden inside the surah itself. Every person is made with a fitrah, an inner nature that calls him toward his Lord. When a man lies against the Deen, he is lying against his own fitrah, contradicting his own heart, and a heart at war with itself grows uncomfortable, then hard, until, in the Qur'an's image, it turns to stone. A rock does not melt no matter the heat. And once the heart is stone, mercy drains out of it, and a man with no mercy left will crush whoever is weakest in front of him. That is why, when you see what is done to orphans across the world, the bombing, the starving, the leaving them to die, you know it can only come from people emptied of Deen. The more Deen a heart holds, the more mercy it carries, and the Prophet of Mercy ﷺ is the living proof of it. Notice, too, the Sheikh says, the word fadhali, "that one" rather than "this one": Allah points at him from a distance, and the distancing itself carries rejection and disgrace.

And will not even urge that the poor be fed

وَلَا يُحِضُّ عَلَىٰ طَعَامِ الْمَسْكِينِ

And does not encourage the feeding of the poor.

AL-MA'UN 107:3

His second trait is somehow even colder, the Sheikh points out, and look how Allah words it. He does not say this man refuses to feed the poor. He says he will not even urge others to do it. Forget putting out food himself; he will not so much as encourage someone else to. And why would he? He denied the Deen, and one meaning of the Deen is reward and punishment, so in his mind there is no reward waiting behind feeding the hungry. Why lift a finger, or even a word, for something he is sure pays nothing?

And notice that Allah says al-miskeen, the poor man, in the singular, not the plural. He is not even being asked to feed the poor of the world; he will not be moved to feed one. The Sheikh turns this into a quiet challenge for you: looking after one poor person in your life is an achievement. If each of us truly took care of just one, that one needy relative, that one struggling neighbor, that one partner at work or at the masjid, the problem would be solved. He draws the line, as the scholars do, between the faqir and the miskeen: when miskeen comes alone, as here, it gathers both in, anyone whose means do not cover the essentials of life. Allah even calls the owners of a working boat masakeen, people who had a craft and still could not make ends meet. So this is not about some far-off stranger. It is the person near you who cannot quite close the gap, the school fees, the bills, the daily need, and the surah is asking whether your heart can be moved to help even one.

Step back, the Sheikh says, and see what the first three ayat have quietly assembled. The heart, the limbs, and the tongue. Lying against the Deen lives in the heart. Shoving the orphan is done with the limbs. Failing to urge that the poor be fed is a sin of the tongue. And those three, heart, limbs, tongue, are exactly how the scholars define faith itself: belief held in the heart, affirmed on the tongue, and acted out by the limbs. The opening of the surah has shown you a faith broken in all three places at once. Whoever is missing one of them is incomplete. And here, he says, is the grand lesson Al-Ma'un was sent to teach: most Muslims imagine the Deen is fasting and praying and hajj and a salam at the door, and miss its most vital organ, that you look after the poor and stand by the orphan. Allah ranked these crimes against people before He spoke a word about the crime against prayer. Hold that, because the prayer is coming next.

The second half: a worship gone hollow

فَوَيْلٌ لِلْمُصَلِّينَ

So woe to those who pray

AL-MA'UN 107:4

Here the surah turns from a man's broken dealings with people to his broken dealing with Allah. Having shown how he treats the orphan and the poor, it now shows his prayer, and the Sheikh notes the logic: if his relationship with the creation was that corrupt, what do you expect of his relationship with the Creator? Notice the word the surah uses for prayer, he says: salah is close to silah, the connection, the cord that ties you to your Lord. Cut it and you have no relationship with Allah left; tend it with care and you are a person who is actually connected to Him. The first half showed you this man with people. The second half shows you the same man with God.

And these two, the Sheikh points out, are exactly the two things the Prophet ﷺ built first when he reached Madinah. The first was the masjid, in Quba and then in the city, teaching the people their connection with Allah; the second was the brotherhood he tied between the Muhajirin and the Ansar, teaching them their dealings with one another. He even draws in the words a man named Abdullah ibn Salam heard the Prophet ﷺ say the very day he entered Madinah, before he had even unloaded his camel: spread the salam, feed people, keep the ties of kinship, and pray at night while the people sleep. Three of those are how you treat people, and the last, the night prayer no one sees, is pure sincerity with Allah. Al-Ma'un is built on the same two halves.

Then the word falls: fawaylun. The fa, the Sheikh says, means as a result, on the back of the first two crimes. Wayl is no mild word; it is a valley in the Fire so fierce in its heat that the mountains of this world, were they thrown in, would melt before they reached its floor, and the nunation on its end carries the sense of how immense it is. The lam that follows tells you these people earn it; do not ask how they deserve so total a destruction, because the next ayat are going to spell out exactly why. And look closely, he says, at musalleen: it is a noun, not a verb, and a noun is permanent where a verb is passing. The woe is pronounced over the one who prays, regularly, habitually. If this is the warning over a man committed to his prayer, what then of the one who does not pray at all?

Now stand where the first listeners stood. The Prophet ﷺ would stop at the end of each ayah, so the Companions heard fawaylun lil-musalleen, woe to those who pray, and then silence. It lands like a shock, the Sheikh says, and pulls a single word out of you: why? Every person regular in his prayer leans in, alarmed, needing to know why the woe is aimed at him and not at those who abandon prayer. And there is a second clue: musalleen is plural, while the whole surah until this point ran in the singular, the one who, that one, he. The sudden shift to the many is deliberate. These are people who pray where others can see, in the crowd, in public, and who in private, alone, with no eye on them, do not pray at all. The next ayat open them up.

Heedless of the very prayer they perform

الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ صَلَاتِهِمْ سَاهُونَ

[But] who are heedless of their prayer -

107:5

Everything, the Sheikh says, hangs on one small word. Allah does not say these people are heedless fi salaatihim, in their prayer; He says 'an salaatihim, about their prayer. That single letter is the difference between a believer and a hypocrite. Forgetfulness inside the prayer, losing your place, doubting whether you are in the third rakah or the fourth, happens to everyone; it happened to the Prophet ﷺ himself, who once prayed and forgot and then made the prostration of forgetfulness. No one is safe from that. But to be careless about the prayer itself, whether you pray it or do not, whether you catch its time or let it slide, all of it the same to you, that is the prayer of the hypocrite, and it must not come from a believer.

Then notice, he says, that Allah ties the prayer to them: salaatihim, their prayer. There is a quiet lesson buried in the pronoun. The hypocrite is careless precisely because he does not feel the prayer is his; he treats it as nothing he owns. Own it, and you tend it. You service the new car on time, keep it fueled, keep it clean front to back, because it is yours; the prayer is the same. And every benefit of it returns to you and to no one else, the Sheikh stacks them up: the prayer that washes away your sins the way a river at your door would wash away dirt, that becomes light in the grave and light on the bridge over the Fire, that is the very first thing you are asked about on the Day of Judgement, the deed on which all your other deeds stand or fall.

And what does the hypocrite's prayer actually look like? He rushes it, the Sheikh says, pecking like a bird at grain, waiting until the sun is almost gone to throw it down in the last two minutes. The difference between a good prayer and a bad one is often just those few minutes, the

unhurried wudu, the time you give it once the adhan calls. The heaviest prayers on the hypocrite are Fajr and Isha, and the Prophet ﷺ said if people knew the reward in them they would come to them even crawling. He once thought to burn down the houses of the men who stayed away from the congregation, and held back only because of the women and children inside. That is how serious a thing it is to be heedless of the prayer you still, somehow, perform.

The ones who pray to be seen

الَّذِينَ هُمْ يُرَاءُونَ

Those who make show [of their deeds]

107:6

Here is why they bother to pray at all, the Sheikh says: to be seen. They make a show of the prayer, of every good deed, wanting the eyes and the praise of people on it. And he hands you a clean test for your own heart. The sign that a deed was done sincerely for Allah is that you would be content for no one to have seen it. If, when you do something good, a part of you wishes it had a witness, that is the warning light; if you are just as happy that it passed unseen, that is the mark of sincerity.

This showing off, *riya*, the Prophet ﷺ called the hidden shirk, and he drew it smaller than you would ever guess: more concealed, he said, than a black ant crawling on a rock in the dark of night. You would not feel that ant beside you; *riya* in the heart is quieter still. And because it is so hidden, the Sheikh passes on the very dua the Prophet ﷺ taught for it, to be memorized and said: O Allah, I seek refuge in You from knowingly associating anything with You, and I seek Your forgiveness for what I do not know of it. Said sincerely and kept up, he says, it clears the heart of the shirk you can see and the shirk you cannot.

And the cure that guards you from the whole disease is simple: pray in your house. Keep some of your prayer, the voluntary prayers, behind your own door where no eye falls on it. The hypocrite never does this; his house has no prayer in it, it is dead. The Sheikh recounts a man who came to a teacher of his in Madinah complaining that his home had turned miserable, the children unsettled, nothing but friction with his wife, and was simply told to pray in his house, the sunnah prayers, the *witr*; weeks later he returned to say the friction had lifted and a *barakah* had settled over the home. Prayer no one watches both saves you from showing off and pours goodness into the place you live.

And they withhold al-ma'un

وَيَمْنَعُونَ الْمَاعُونَ

And withhold [simple] assistance.

107:7

And the last trait, the one that gives the surah its name. Al-ma'un, the Sheikh explains, gathers the scholars' readings into one: the small everyday kindnesses, the little household things a neighbor asks to borrow, a pot, a spoon, a fork, a handful of salt, some water, and on a fuller reading the zakat itself. See how low the bar is, and how cold these people are to clear even that. A neighbor knocks for a pinch of salt and is turned away; someone asks to borrow a tool and is refused over whether he will return it. This is the smallest good a person can pass to another, and still they keep their hands shut.

Step back to the whole second half and you see how twisted this man is, the Sheikh says, and it is the deepest point of the surah's close. What belonged to Allah, the sincerity of the prayer that is meant to be kept private, he dragged out into public to be admired. And what belonged to people, al-ma'un, the small help that is meant to be given openly, he hid away and kept for himself. He inverts everything: God's due he makes a show of, people's due he withholds. That inversion is the hypocrite, and it is why he sinks below the open disbeliever. The disbeliever stands plainly outside; the hypocrite moves inside the ranks of the believers, in the very masjid, quietly damaging the faith from within and dragging others down with him.

The Sheikh adds one honest caveat so the ayah is not misread. If a neighbor asks to borrow your lighter to light a cigarette, or asks for the cigarette itself, refusing him is not the blameworthy withholding of al-ma'un; to hand it over would be helping in sin, and that help is itself forbidden. The withholding the surah condemns is the shutting of your hand against a real and harmless need, not the refusal to oil someone's wrongdoing.

Six traits, and the scales that settle them

Pull back and the whole surah, the Sheikh says, has drawn six traits of the one who lies against the Deen: he denies the Recompense, he drives away the orphan, he will not urge that the poor be fed, he is heedless of his prayer, he prays to be seen, and he withholds the smallest kindness. Gather all six in one person and they carry him to the Fire, which is why the word sitting at the very center of the surah is wayl. And that hands you the portrait of the believer by

simple reversal: he affirms the Deen, honors the orphan, urges that the poor be fed, guards his prayer and keeps it sincere, and withholds no small good it is in his power to give.

And the surah's two halves, he closes, are weighed against each other on the Day of Judgement, in a scene the Prophet ﷺ described. A man comes with his dealings with Allah immaculate, his prayer accepted, sitting ready on the scale, and yet his dealings with people were ruin: he devoured this one's wealth, shed that one's blood, abused another, shortchanged his workers, was a torment to his own family. So his good deeds are handed across, one after another, to those he wronged, until his mountains of worship are spent and he still owes; then their sins are loaded onto him, and he is cast into the Fire, not for a failed prayer, but for how he treated people. Because your dealings with Allah rest on His forgiveness, a shortfall in prayer or fasting He may pardon, but the rights of people rest on settlement, and people will come for what they are owed. That, the Sheikh says, is the warning Al-Ma'un was built to carry: clear your account with the orphan, the poor, and the neighbor now, while the clearing still counts.

What this surah asks of you

- **Your faith is measured at your neighbor's door.** Before Al-Ma'un says a word about your prayer, it asks how you treat an orphan and whether you would even urge that a poor man be fed. The Deen is not only what you can be seen doing; it is whether mercy reaches the weakest person near you.
- **Deny the accounting, and cruelty walks right in.** What holds a person back from wrong is the sense that he will answer for it. The man who lies against the Day of Recompense feels no consequence, so he shoves the orphan and cannot be moved to feed the hungry. Keeping that Day before your eyes is what keeps your hands kind.
- **A hard heart is a heart at war with itself.** Lying against your own God-given nature makes the heart uncomfortable, then hard, until it is stone, and a heart of stone has no mercy to give. The more Deen you carry, the softer you are with Allah's creation. If you find hardness in your chest, the cure the Prophet ﷺ gave was simple: wipe the orphan's head and feed the poor.
- **Take care of just one.** Allah named the poor man in the singular. You are not asked to feed the world, only to be moved for one: one relative, one neighbor, one struggling soul near you. If each of us truly carried one, the need would be answered.

Why this surah stays with us

Al-Ma'un refuses to let you keep your religion in the places where people are watching. It drags faith out to the orphan at the door and the poor man you could feed and would not, and it ranks how you treat them ahead of the prayer you perform. The man it draws lied against the Day of accounting, and so felt free to be cruel; the surah hands you the opposite path, a heart kept soft by remembering you will answer, made practical in small kindnesses you do not withhold.

O Allah, make us people of the Qur'an, who hear its reminders and are moved by them. Soften our hearts before they harden to stone, and do not let us be of those who deny the accounting or pray only to be seen. Let our faith reach our hands and our tongues, move us toward the orphan and the poor, and let us never withhold the small good it is in our power to give, while the giving still counts.

Retold faithfully from Sheikh Abu Bakr Zoud's tafsir of Juz Amma. Qur'an: Sahih International, verified via quran.ai. The reflection is the Sheikh's, the phrasing is The Daily Wird's.

Al-Kawthar

The shortest surah in the Qur'an, handed to the Prophet ﷺ on the night they called him cut off, a river of abundance against a single insult

It is the shortest surah in the whole Qur'an, three short ayat you could read between two breaths, and Sheikh Abu Bakr wants you to feel the weight pressed into that small space. The Prophet ﷺ had just buried a son. A man in Makkah had turned to his friends and said, in effect, leave him, he is cut off now, no boys, no name to carry him, when he dies he is finished. And into that wound Allah sends, not a consolation about the child, but a flood: I have given you al-Kawthar, abundance without end. The one who is cut off, it turns out, is not the one they thought.

A gift before a single command

إِنَّا أَعْطَيْنَاكَ الْكَوْثَرَ

Indeed, We have granted you, [O Muḥammad], al-Kawthar.

AL-KAWTHAR 108:1

Notice the order, the Sheikh says. Before Allah asks the Prophet ﷺ to do anything, before a single command, He gives. "Indeed, We have granted you." The giving comes first, and only after it has landed does the instruction follow. That is how Allah deals with the one He loves: He fills his hands, and then He says, now pray, now sacrifice. The favour is the ground the command stands on.

And He does not say "I gave you a thing." He says "We have granted you al-Kawthar," and the very shape of the word is abundance. Al-Kawthar comes from kathra, the Arabic for plenty, much, more than you can count. So the name itself is a promise: not good, but good upon good upon good, an overflow that does not run dry.

What is al-Kawthar?

The Prophet ﷺ himself answered this, and the Sheikh leans on his words rather than guessing. One day he ﷺ told the Companions a surah had just been revealed to him, recited it, and then asked them: do you know what al-Kawthar is? They said Allah and His Messenger know best. He told them it is a river his Lord promised him, a river carrying abundant good, and that it is also a pool (al-Hawd) his Ummah will come to on the Day of Judgement.

Then he ﷺ described it until you can almost see it: its water whiter than milk and sweeter than honey, its banks of gold, flowing over pearls, and its drinking vessels as many as the stars in the night sky. The Sheikh dwells on that last image. Stand under an open desert sky and try to number the stars, and you cannot. That is how many cups wait at this water. Whoever drinks from it once is never thirsty again.

But the Sheikh is careful with the breadth of the word, the way the early scholars were. Ibn Abbas was told that people say al-Kawthar is a river in Paradise, and he answered that the river is part of it. Al-Kawthar is the abundant good Allah gave His Prophet ﷺ, and the river is one piece of that good, the most vivid piece, but not the whole. So when you read this ayah, read it wide: every good Allah poured on this man, the prophethood, the Qur'an, the open door of intercession, the Ummah that loves him, all of it is folded into one word.

The pool, and the ones turned away

The Sheikh does not leave the Hawd as a pretty picture. It is a place of meeting and a place of sorting. The Prophet ﷺ will stand at his pool, knowing his people by a mark this Ummah alone carries, the light on their faces and limbs from a lifetime of wudu, and he will welcome them to drink.

And then, he ﷺ said, some who look like they belong will be pulled away from him. He will say: my Lord, they are from me, from my Ummah. And he will be told: you do not know what they invented after you. The Sheikh lets that sit heavy. It is not enough to claim the Prophet ﷺ from a distance. The ones kept back are the ones who changed the religion after him, who walked away from his path while wearing his name. So the river is a mercy and a warning in the same breath: stay on what he left, exactly, if you want to be among the faces he knows.

So pray, and sacrifice

فَصَلِّ لِرَبِّكَ وَأَنْحِرْ

So pray to your Lord and offer sacrifice [to Him alone].

AL-KAWTHAR 108:2

Here is the turn, the Sheikh points out: the "so." Since I have given you all of this, since your hands are this full, then pray to your Lord and sacrifice. The command is the answer to the gift. When abundance like this comes to you, the only fitting response is to bend lower in worship, not to stand taller in yourself. Gratitude, in the Qur'an's logic, looks like prayer and looks like giving up something you love for the sake of the One who gave.

And of all the acts of worship, the Sheikh notes why these two are named. Prayer is the body and the heart bowed together, the whole self lowered before Allah and moved through every posture of servitude. And sacrifice (nahr) is reaching for the best you own, an animal, real wealth, the thing the soul is built to cling to and hoard, and letting it go for Allah. One worship humbles the self, the other opens the closed hand. Together they are the shape of a grateful life.

For your Lord, and no one else

فَصَلِّ لِرَبِّكَ وَأَنْحِرْ

So pray to your Lord and offer sacrifice [to Him alone].

AL-KAWTHAR 108:2

The Sheikh will not let you miss the two small words "to your Lord." Pray to your Lord. Sacrifice, and let His Name alone be over it. Around the Prophet ﷺ were people who prayed toward idols and slaughtered in the names of others, draining the act of worship of the only thing that gave it meaning. This ayah draws the line clean down the middle: the prayer is His, the sacrifice is His, the direction of your whole heart is His, and not a sliver of it goes to anyone beside Him.

That, the Sheikh says, is the heartbeat of the surah. The gift was pure, from Allah alone, so the gratitude must be pure too, to Allah alone. The moment you let any of it lean toward someone

else, a name you fear, a creature you hope from, you have broken the very thing this ayah was protecting.

The one who is really cut off

إِنَّ شَانِكَ هُوَ الْأَبْتَرُ

Indeed, your enemy is the one cut off.

AL-KAWTHAR 108:3

Now the surah turns to answer the insult that started it all. The Sheikh recalls the occasion: when the Prophet's ﷺ son died, his enemies in Makkah seized on it. Among the Arabs, a man with no surviving sons was called abtar, cut off, a stump, a line that ends with him and is forgotten. So they said it of the Prophet ﷺ, gleeful: he is finished, his name dies with him.

And Allah answers with a verdict that flips the whole thing over. The word shani means the one who hates you, the one who despises you and what you brought. And it is he, says Allah, hua, he himself and no one else, who is al-abtar, the one truly cut off. Cut off from good, cut off from any lasting deed, cut off from any name worth remembering. The Sheikh draws the contrast the scholars draw: the hater is the stump, and the Prophet ﷺ is the one Allah raised, his mention lifted over the whole earth, his followers beyond counting, his name said in every adhan and every prayer until the Day of Judgement. They thought a buried son would end him. Instead Allah made him the most remembered human who ever lived, and left the mockers as a footnote in someone else's surah.

And there is a mercy in it for you, the Sheikh adds, not only for the Prophet ﷺ. Whatever you give for Allah is never the thing that cuts you off. The world counts you by what you keep; Allah counts you by what you surrender to Him. The one who hoards and hates and turns from the truth is the one left with nothing that lasts, however full his hands looked at the time.

First, see the blessing

In his second sitting the Sheikh slows down on the "so" and asks the question the whole surah hangs on: Allah gave you al-Kawthar, so what should you and I do in return to thank Him for it? And he says you cannot even begin to answer that until you have done something prior. You have to first recognise the blessing. The more clearly you see what Allah has poured on you,

the more truly you come to know who Allah is. To be in denial of His favours is to be ignorant of Him; to keep noticing them is to keep growing in awareness of Him.

So be conscious, the Sheikh says, that every single blessing you enjoy came from Allah alone. People may be the means, the employer who hands you your pay, the friend who brings a gift, but the One who actually gave it is Allah. He points to how Allah describes Sulaiman receiving a mighty kingdom and Sulaiman answering, this is from the favour of my Lord, tracing the gift straight back to its source. Train your heart to do the same with the small things: the pen in your hand writes only because Allah lets your hand move, and the cup of coffee reached you only after He carried those beans across months and oceans and hands to set it down in front of you. Most people, the Sheikh admits, are simply heedless of all this.

And there is a warning folded inside the mercy. The same blessing, if it is not met with gratitude, can be turned into the very source of your punishment. He recalls the people of Saba, given gardens so abundant the fruit would fall into the basket as they walked, until they turned away ungrateful and Allah swapped that garden for one of bitter, thorny, inedible trees and scattered them out of the land. He recalls Bani Israil in the desert, shaded by a cloud and fed manna and quails sent down from the sky, who mocked and disobeyed, so Allah sent a punishment down from that same sky. The point lands clean: what Allah gave from above became, by their ingratitude, what struck them from above.

Only the one who loves Him truly thanks Him

The Sheikh makes a quiet, heavy claim here: the ability to thank Allah is itself a gift, given only to those Allah loves. Real gratitude does not come naturally to a heart; it is granted. That is why the Prophet ﷺ took Anas by the hand, told him I love you, and taught him not to leave off saying after every prayer: O Allah, help me to remember You, to thank You, and to worship You well. We are that much in need of asking for the very capacity to be grateful.

He sets a role model in front of you too. Allah called Nuh a thankful servant, and the scholars explain it simply: every time he ate, every time he drank, every time he clothed himself, he said alhamdulillah. So the more shukr a person makes, the surer a sign it is of Allah's love for him. Thank Him for the glasses on your face and the clothes on your back; none of it arrived by your entitlement, and others were left without it.

And the Sheikh draws the contrast we live inside. When a person does you a favour, pays off a debt for you, pulls you out of a hard spot, you feel it would be rude to answer with nothing but words; you want to do something for him, return the kindness with action. Then weigh that

against the One who gave you your health, your wealth, your guidance, your very breath, and keeps giving. How much more is owed than a sentence? This, he says, is exactly why Allah did not phrase the response as words. He points back to the ayah, to Him ascend the good words, He raises them; but greater than the good word that rises is the worship that stays, kept up until you meet Him.

Why prayer, and why sacrifice

فَصَلِّ لِرَبِّكَ وَأَنْحِرْ

So pray to your Lord and offer sacrifice [to Him alone].

AL-KAWTHAR 108:2

Because the giving was so great, the Sheikh says, Allah guided His Prophet ﷺ to the very highest forms of thanks, and named two. The first is the prayer. He notes that no particular prayer is specified, so following Ibn Abbas he reads it wide: the obligatory prayers, the sunnah, the witr, the night prayer, all of it is folded into "pray." And there is no doubt the prayer is the greatest expression of gratitude, because it gathers three worships into one act, the worship of the heart, the worship of the tongue, and the worship of the limbs, the whole self thanking at once. He recalls that the Prophet ﷺ would stand in the night until his feet cracked and swelled, and when asked why, when Allah had already forgiven him, he answered, should I not be a thankful servant? His night prayer was itself shukr.

Then he frames the pair another way: every act of worship falls into one of two kinds, the physical and the financial. The greatest of the physical is the prayer. The greatest of the financial is the sacrifice, the nahr, where real wealth is spent and the meat of a whole animal feeds many. So Allah named the summit of each category, the prayer and the sacrifice, as if to say, I gave you al-Kawthar, now give back the highest of both.

And the two are tied together for a reason, the Sheikh adds. The prayer is your dealing with Allah, a private bond no one else enters. The sacrifice is your dealing with the people, because you slaughter and the meat is distributed and they eat from it. He connects this to the surah just before, where Allah condemned the man who violates the rights of Allah by neglecting the prayer and violates the rights of the people by withholding food. Here al-Kawthar answers both at once: set right your bond with Allah through prayer, and set right your bond with the people through giving.

To your Lord, by every meaning of the word

The Sheikh stops on "to your Lord," li Rabbika, and notices Allah did not say li-llah, by His proper name. Throughout the Qur'an, he observes, when worship is commanded in this way it is paired with Rabb, and the reason is what the word Rabb opens up. The name Allah points to His right to be worshipped. But Rabb spreads out into the very reasons you should rush to worship Him. He lists what the scholars fold into the word: He is as-Sayyid, the Master of all things; al-Malik, the Owner of everything, so ask of the One who owns it; al-Murabbi, the One who nurtures, who took care of you before your own parents ever saw you and carries you on to the Garden; al-Mun'im, the Bestower of every blessing; and al-Qayyim, the Maintainer who holds creation up. Every one of those is a reason your prayer belongs to Him.

Then he asks why "to your Lord" is attached to the prayer but not repeated over the sacrifice, and the answer is exact. The prayer, in every circumstance, can only ever be worship of Allah; you cannot intend anything else by it. But sacrifice is not like that. Yes, it is offered for Allah's sake, yet a person can slaughter for other ends too, to eat the meat, to sell it in a business, for ordinary use. Because the act can carry more than one intention, Allah did not bind it with "to your Lord" the way He bound the prayer, which can carry no intention but Him. The line is drawn precisely where it needs to be.

Why "sacrifice," and not "give thanks"

The Sheikh lingers on the precise word, nahr, and asks why Allah did not simply say fashkur, give thanks, or tasaddaq, give charity, or pay your zakat. The answer is the same thread running through the whole surah: the gift was great, so the gratitude had to be great. Shukr and sadaqah have no floor; a whispered alhamdulillah counts as thanks, a single coin counts as charity. But because Allah gave al-Kawthar, He asked for the costly thing. Nahr is specifically the sacrifice of a camel, the most expensive offering, wealth the soul is built to cling to and let go of only with difficulty. He notes too that Allah did not say pay your zakat, because zakat falls only on certain wealth, only at a set threshold, only once a year; the Prophet ﷺ himself never paid it, for he never held that much for a full year. Sacrifice, by contrast, is open and generous, a giving that does not hide behind a minimum.

Then the Sheikh opens a second reading of "wanhar" that the scholars carry, one you may never have heard. The word nahr also names the upper chest and throat; Aisha said the Prophet ﷺ passed away between her neck and her chest, her nahr. So one meaning of the command is: stand upright in your prayer, your chest squared toward the qibla, still and serious, not swaying left and right or fidgeting through it. Take your prayer seriously. Learn it.

Learn what is said in it, even the most basic supplications, because there are people who have prayed for thirty years and still do not pray it well, and that is not normal, it is a problem to be fixed. The more seriously you stand before Allah, the Sheikh says, the more your standing itself becomes a thanksgiving for al-Kawthar.

The hater is the one cut off

إِنَّ شَانِيكَ هُوَ الْأَبْتَرُ

Indeed, your enemy is the one cut off.

AL-KAWTHAR 108:3

Now the Sheikh names the occasion in full. When the Prophet's ﷺ infant son died, his enemy heard the news through the shared wall of the houses, walked out, and ran the streets celebrating, calling out that Muhammad had been cut off, batira Muhammad, his line ended, his name finished. The Sheikh marks how low this was: even at war, when a commander's son died the fighting would pause for a few days and the other side would send condolences, or at least hold their tongue. Here a man took a father's grief and made it a parade. And the cruelty was so ugly Allah did not even repeat their word back into the Qur'an; He turned straight to the verdict.

The word shani, the Sheikh explains, means the one who hates you, and its form points to a settled, permanent quality, a person whose hatred is who he is. And al-abtar, taken literally, is the beast whose tail has been cut off, a mark of plain humiliation. So Allah is saying the ending of the one who hates His Messenger will be as disgraced as that. He leans on Ibn Taymiyyah, who unfolds just how total the cutting off is. The hater is severed from every good: cut off from barakah; cut off from his family, who flee from him on the Day of Judgement; cut off from any benefit in wealth and children, which Allah turns into a torment rather than a comfort; cut off even from good intentions, because a heart packed with hatred can no longer incline toward Allah or His Messenger or faith or a single good deed; and cut off, on that Day, from any helper, protector, or ally who might come to his aid. He hoarded and hated, and he is left with nothing that lasts.

And the Sheikh ends on the warning that makes this ayah press on us, not only on the man in Makkah. To be a shani, he says, does not require hating the Prophet's ﷺ person; it includes hating his Sunnah, or sneering at any aspect of the religion he brought. He gives uncomfortable examples: mocking the beard, speaking against the wisdom of what Allah

legislated, treating the modest dress as backward, dismissing the Prophet's ﷺ names for children as old-fashioned when they are among the most beloved names to Allah. He even traces how a chosen name can shadow a life. The lesson he leaves is steep and clear: when something reaches you from the religion of Allah and you cannot grasp its wisdom, blame your own understanding and submit, the way you recite the disjointed letters like alif lam mim and worship Allah through them without knowing their meaning. Do not let your tongue turn an unease in the heart into open scorn, lest you wander, even by one small aspect, onto the side of the one who is cut off.

What this surah asks of you

- **The gift comes before the command.** Allah fills the Prophet's ﷺ hands first, then says pray and sacrifice. Read your own life the same way: the favours arrived long before the duties did, and the duties are simply the grateful answer to them.
- **Read al-Kawthar wide.** It is a river in Paradise, yes, whiter than milk and sweeter than honey, with cups as many as the stars. But the word means abundant good, and the river is only one piece of it. Everything Allah poured on His Prophet ﷺ is in that single word.
- **Gratitude is prayer and an open hand.** Of all worship, Allah names these two: the prayer that lowers the whole self, and the sacrifice that pries loose the wealth the soul loves to keep. Thankfulness that costs you nothing is not yet thankfulness.
- **Keep it for Him alone.** Pray to your Lord, sacrifice in His Name only. The gift was pure, so the worship must be pure, with not a sliver leaning toward anyone beside Allah.
- **What you give never cuts you off.** They called the Prophet ﷺ cut off and Allah made him the most remembered man alive. The one truly cut off is the hater, left with nothing lasting. The world counts what you keep; Allah counts what you surrender to Him.

Why this surah stays with us

Three ayat, and they answer a man's cruelty with a river. The deniers measured the Prophet ﷺ by a grave and thought they had the last word. Al-Kawthar hands him abundance instead, asks him only to pray and to give, and tells him the one who hates him is the stump that ends in the sand. The Sheikh wants you to walk away knowing which side of that line you would rather stand on, and what it costs to stand there: a lowered head and an open hand, kept for Allah alone.

O Allah, You who gave Your Prophet ﷺ al-Kawthar, let us be among the faces he knows at his pool, drinking the water that ends thirst forever. Make our prayer Yours and our giving Yours, with nothing of it turned to any other. Raise our remembrance with obedience to You, and never let us be among the cut off. Amin.

Retold faithfully from Sheikh Abu Bakr Zoud's tafsir of Juz Amma. Qur'an: Sahih International, verified via quran.ai. The reflection is the Sheikh's, the phrasing is The Daily Wird's.

Al-Kafirun

The surah of clean break, where a man with nothing left to fear and nothing left to gain says no to a deal, six times over

Some surahs argue with you. This one draws a line. Quraysh had run out of insults and reached for a bargain: worship our gods for a year, they said, and we will worship yours the next, and everyone goes home happy. Al-Kafirun is the answer Allah put in the Prophet's mouth, six short ayat that refuse the deal so completely there is nothing left to negotiate. The Sheikh wants you to feel why a man would turn down everything Makkah could offer and not even blink.

The surah of clean break

Sheikh Abu Bakr opens by gathering the names the scholars gave this surah, because each one is a window into it. The plain name is Al-Kafirun, after the word in its first ayah. But it is also called Surat al-Bara, the surah of disassociation, because from beginning to end it is the Prophet ﷺ announcing that he washes his hands of the disbelievers, of what they worship, and of their whole religion. It carries the name Surat al-Ibada, the surah of worship, because that is the one matter it is about: who he worships, and who he will not.

And the Sheikh lingers on a name you may not have heard: Surat al-Muqashqisha, the surah that heals. The word comes from the moment a sick person rises cured, the fever broken, the body well again. Shirk, the Sheikh says, is a sickness, and this surah is its medicine. He pairs it with Al-Ikhlās, Qul huwa Allahu ahad: one surah tears down the false worship, the other affirms the true. Read together, they cure the heart of the disease of associating anything with Allah.

What the surah before it set up

To feel the force of this surah, the Sheikh says, you have to remember the one just before it, Al-Kawthar. That surah was about two things: the immense giving of Allah to His Prophet ﷺ, and the gratitude that giving demands, sealed in the command to pray and sacrifice for your Lord alone. The highest form of that gratitude is tawheed, devoting your worship to Allah and no other. So if the peak of thankfulness is to worship Allah alone, then the peak of ingratitude

is to worship something else. Al-Kafirun comes next to deal with exactly that, with kufr and shirk, the very opposite of the gratitude Al-Kawthar called for.

There is a second thread between the two. In Al-Kawthar the disbelievers had mocked the Prophet ﷺ as abtar, cut off, sneering that his sons had died and his name would die with him. Allah answered them there: it is your haters who are the cut-off ones. Now, the Sheikh points out, Allah gives His Messenger ﷺ the right to call them something back, and the name is al-kafirun. But notice the difference. Abtar was a lie, and it stung nothing real in him, his manners and his legacy were beyond reproach, and they themselves had called him the trustworthy one. The name Allah hands him fits perfectly and names a real crime: these are people who heard the truth and rejected it. One insult was empty. The other is exact.

The deal they came to make

The Sheikh sets the scene that brought this surah down. In Makkah, Quraysh outnumbered and outpowered the believers, and they were certain the Prophet ﷺ would never abandon his call. So they tried, first, to buy him. They sent a man with an offer: if it is wealth you want, we will make you the richest in Makkah; if it is marriage, we will marry you to the most beautiful; if it is leadership, we will make you our ruler and obey you. And if it is a sickness troubling you, we will bring you the best doctors. Just stop calling us away from our idols. His only answer was to recite to them the opening of Surah Fussilat, page after page, until the man went back to his people shaken and stammering, telling them this Qur'an was something powerful, though his own pride kept him from belief.

When that failed, they came with what they thought was cleverer. Worship our gods for one year, they said, and we will worship your Lord the next. The Prophet ﷺ said only, I will wait for what my Lord sends down. And down came Al-Kafirun. The Sheikh draws out the trap inside the offer: it was never really about a year of worship. It was about getting him to give, just a little, so the whole thing could be loosened. He compares it to a full water tank. You do not need to smash it to empty it; one small hole, and the water finds its way out until the tank is dry. Let one piece of your religion be poked, and the rest begins to drain. That, the Sheikh says, is the oldest strategy of shaytan, and it did not retire with Quraysh. It is still the pressure to normalize one small thing, then another, until a whole faith has quietly leaked away.

Say it. Out loud. To their faces.

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْكَافِرُونَ

Say, "O disbelievers,

AL-KAFIRUN 109:1

It begins with a command: Qul, say. The Sheikh notes that of the surahs that open this way, this is one of the two whose qul is an order to go and proclaim the words to other people, not merely to recite them to yourself. The Prophet ﷺ is being told to walk to Quraysh and deliver this to their faces. And there is a beauty in why, the Sheikh says. In the surah before, when the Prophet ﷺ was insulted, Allah Himself rose to his defense. Now Allah is the one being spoken of without honor, worship our gods and we will worship yours, and so the believer is told: stand, and speak. When you are wronged, be patient and let Allah defend you. When Allah is dishonored, you do not get to sit in silence.

Then the call, ya ayyuha. The Sheikh explains that this form is used to summon someone far off or someone heedless and not paying attention, you stretch the word until your voice reaches them. So it reaches every disbeliever at once, the furthest and the nearest, even the one standing right in front of you, even the one asleep to the truth: every one of you, O disbelievers. And remember, the Sheikh says, this is Quraysh, whom he had always addressed with dignity, O sons of Abd Manaf, O Bani Hashim. Not anymore. Once they declared their open enmity and set out to drive him from the city he was born in, the time for soft titles was over. Now it is given to them straight.

What a disbeliever actually covered

Before he moves on, the Sheikh opens the word itself. Kafir comes from a root that means to cover. A farmer, in Arabic, is called a kafir, because he buries the seed and covers it over with soil. So what did the disbeliever cover? Here the Sheikh reaches back to the very beginning. Before you were a body, you were a soul, and Allah took a covenant from every soul: Am I not your Lord? And every one of us answered, Yes, we bear witness. That knowledge, la ilaha illa Allah, was set deep in the soul. It is your fitra, a light placed inside you.

Then Allah sent down another light from the sky, the light of revelation, the Qur'an. The believer lets the light inside him meet the light from above, and the two together become faith, guidance, steadfastness, light upon light. The disbeliever does the opposite. He takes the

revelation and refuses to let it reach the truth already buried in him. He covers his own inner light from the outer light of Allah's words. That, the Sheikh says, is why the kafir is the worst kind of enemy: not someone who never heard, but someone who heard, knew, and deliberately pulled the soil back over it. A person who genuinely never received the message is not in this category at all; his account is with Allah on a different reckoning. This surah speaks to those who saw the light and chose the dark.

I do not worship what you worship

لَا أَعْبُدُ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ

I do not worship what you worship.

AL-KAFIRUN 109:2

وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ

Nor are you worshippers of what I worship.

109:3

Then the disavowal itself: I do not worship what you worship. The Sheikh has you weigh the small word ma, what. It is the word for non-living things, and Allah uses it deliberately for the gods of Quraysh, to expose how senseless their worship was. You bow to stone, to carved idols, to things that were made for you, that cannot hear you, cannot answer you, cannot harm or help you. The word itself holds up their foolishness: how do you worship a thing that has no life in it?

And understand who Quraysh were, the Sheikh adds. They were not atheists. They believed in Allah, called Him Creator and Provider, and worshipped Him, but alongside Him they worshipped idols, claiming the idols were pure and sinless and would carry their prayers nearer to Allah than their own dirty hands could. That, the Sheikh says, is exactly what wrecks the worship. It is like praying without wudu: you have prayed, but it is not accepted, because a condition was broken. Their worship of Allah was real, but mixed, and the mixing voided it. So the line is drawn cleanly: I will not share my worship with anything, and the worship you offer, as you offer it, is not the worship of what I worship at all.

Why he says his "no" first

The Sheikh stops on a small ordering that carries a lesson. The surah leads with the Prophet's own refusal, I do not worship what you worship, before it turns to them, nor do you worship what I worship. Why does his disavowal come first? Because to the believer, the Sheikh says, his own faith is more precious than the disbeliever's faith is to him. The believer's concern for his religion runs deeper, so it is spoken first.

And history proves it, the Sheikh says. The disbelievers of old, when one of them grew hungry and his god was made of dates, he would eat his god. When they traveled and the stone they worshipped grew heavy, they would toss it aside and move on. Allah describes how, when the waves rise over them like mountains, they suddenly call on Him alone with full sincerity, and He saves them, because in that moment it was true worship; then the moment they reach dry land, they go back to their idols. To them, religion was something to drop the instant it cost them. The believer is the opposite: he holds his faith through hardship and will not trade away a single piece of it. That is why the surah opens with his line, not theirs.

And it will not change tomorrow

وَلَا أَنَا عَابِدٌ مَّا عَبَدْتُمْ

Nor will I be a worshipper of what you worship.

AL-KAFIRUN 109:4

وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَّا أَعْبُدُ

Nor will you be worshippers of what I worship.

109:5

Now the lines seem to repeat, and the Sheikh insists this is not mere repetition; it adds a second meaning. The first pair spoke of the present: I do not worship what you worship now. This pair turns to the future: nor will I ever worship it, and nor will you. It answers the offer precisely. They had said, worship our gods this year and we will worship yours the next, so the reply covers both the now and the next: not today, and not tomorrow.

How can he say with certainty that they will never worship what he worships, the Sheikh asks, when disbelievers do accept Islam? Two answers. One, this surah came addressing a specific

group of Quraysh whom Allah already knew, in His knowledge, would die upon their disbelief, and they did, falling at Badr and dying as they had lived. Two, taken generally, it states a permanent truth: so long as you worship anything besides Allah, you are not truly worshipping what I worship, not now and not in any future where the shirk remains. The door to Islam stays open to anyone who walks through it; but worship mixed with idols will never be the worship of the One.

The Sheikh also has you notice the singular running through the whole surah. It is not framed as a crowd of believers speaking; it is one voice, qul, say, you, alone. Partly because the Prophet ﷺ is the leader whose words we simply follow. And partly to answer a slander, that he only achieved what he achieved because of the followers around him. The singular says otherwise. At Hunayn, when most of the army fled and the arrows poured down, he stood almost alone and called out who he was, and the victory was already Allah's, with them or without them. His stand never depended on the crowd.

To you yours, to me mine

لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ

For you is your religion, and for me is my religion."

AL-KAFIRUN 109:6

The surah closes the way it lived, with a clean line: for you is your religion, and for me is mine. The Sheikh gives two readings. The plain one: you have your worship of idols and shirk, and I have mine, the worship of Allah alone. The deeper one: to you your accounting on the Day of Judgement, and to me mine; each of us will be judged apart, on what we actually did. This second reading matters, the Sheikh says, because Allah elsewhere declares that the only religion accepted with Him is Islam, so He is not honoring their shirk by calling it a din; He is telling them they will answer for it alone.

And the Sheikh catches one last thing in the wording. The word for my religion, dini, is left clipped: the final letter you would expect is dropped, lined up instead to the bare di. Even that, he says, carries Allah's displeasure with them, as if to say: these people are not worth one extra letter spoken in their direction. Cut it short and move on. The whole surah is summed up in this closing line, a detailed disavowal folded into one sentence, and then the verse after it, in the next surah, the help and the victory of Allah, which the Sheikh says will not arrive until the

believer has done exactly what this surah commands: cleanly, completely, broken with the disbelief of the disbelievers.

What this surah asks of you

- **There is a line you do not blur.** Worldly dealings with anyone are fine; the Sheikh says the one matter never up for compromise is worship. The deal Quraysh offered was a small hole in the tank, and a small hole empties the whole thing. Some things are not negotiable, and worship is the first of them.
- **Be patient for yourself, fierce for Allah.** When you are insulted, swallow it and let Allah defend you, as He defended His Prophet ﷺ. When Allah Himself is spoken of without honor, you do not stay seated. You stand and you say it.
- **Hold your faith tighter than they hold theirs.** They drop their religion the moment it costs them, and pick it back up when the danger passes. The believer carries his through the hardship and will not trade away a single piece. That is why the Prophet's "I do not worship" is spoken first.
- **This surah is medicine.** Shirk is a sickness, and the Sheikh says Al-Kafirun is its cure, paired with Al-Ikhlâs: one tears down the false worship, the other affirms the true. That is why the Prophet ﷺ would recite it before sleep, to be freed of shirk in all its forms.

Why this surah stays with us

Al-Kafirun is what it sounds like when a man has nothing left to fear and nothing left to gain. Allah had already taken care of his enemies and given him more than Makkah could ever put on the table, so when the offer came, there was simply nothing in him to bargain with. Six ayat, and the line is drawn so cleanly that the deal dies on the spot: I do not worship what you worship, I never will, and you will not worship what I worship. To you yours, to me mine.

O Allah, make us people who know where the line is and do not step over it to please anyone. Cure our hearts of every hidden share we give to other than You, and let our worship be Yours alone, whole and undivided. When the pressure comes to give just a little, hold our feet firm, and let us meet You on the Day with a religion we never once traded away.

An-Nasr

The surah that arrived as a triumph and carried, folded inside the congratulation, the gentlest notice that a life's work was done

Surat An-Nasr reads like a banner raised over a victory, and almost no one in the gathering heard the second thing it was saying. Allah hands His Messenger ﷺ the greatest triumph of his life, the city of Makkah returned, whole tribes pouring into Islam, and then, instead of telling him to celebrate, He tells him to glorify and to seek forgiveness. Sheikh Abu Bakr opens this surah by showing you why a command that sounds like a crown was really, for the few who understood it, a farewell.

The last surah, and its many names

Before a single word is explained, the Sheikh sets the surah in its place. By the agreement of the scholars, An-Nasr is the last complete surah of the Qur'an to be revealed, from its first letter to its last. Single ayat came down after it, and the very last ayah revealed was a verse of Surat al-Baqarah about a Day you return to Allah, but as a whole surah, beginning to end, this was the final one to arrive.

It carries more than one name. The famous one, written in most copies of the Qur'an, is An-Nasr, the help. It is also called Surat al-Fath, the opening, after the conquest of Makkah it speaks of (not to be confused with Surat al-Fath that opens elsewhere, which is about the treaty of Hudaibiyah). And it is called At-Tawdi, the farewell, from a root meaning to bid goodbye, because folded inside it, the Sheikh says, is the quiet message that the Messenger's ﷺ departure had drawn near. Four names, and already the surah is telling you it is about both an arrival and a leaving.

Why a Madani surah was revealed at Mina

The Sheikh pauses on a label that confuses people. An-Nasr is a Madani surah, but Madani never meant revealed in Madinah. It means revealed after the Hijra, wherever the Messenger ﷺ happened to be. And this surah is the clearest proof of the rule: by the strongest opinion it came down during the farewell Hajj, in the days of tashreeq, the days the pilgrims linger at

Mina. Revealed in Makkah, during Hajj, and still counted Madani, because what makes a surah Madani is the timing, not the ground beneath it.

Hold the timeline the Sheikh gives you, because the whole surah turns on it. After this surah was revealed, the Prophet ﷺ lived only about two more months and twenty days, and then he was gone. The triumph and the parting were that close together.

When the help of Allah comes

إِذَا جَاءَ نَصْرُ اللَّهِ وَالْفَتْحُ

When the victory of Allah has come and the conquest,

AN-NASR 110:1

Look at the very first word, the Sheikh says: idha, when. Arabic has another word for it, in, which means if. Allah uses in for the things that will never be ("if the Most Merciful had a child"). He uses idha for the things that are certain, the only open question being their timing. So He does not say if the help comes. He says when it comes. The doubt is cut before the sentence has properly begun. The victory and the conquest are coming; only the date is unknown.

And He does not say the help has ata, arrived, though that verb is everywhere in the Qur'an. He says ja'a, came. The Sheikh draws the difference: ata is used for something that arrives lightly, simply, almost unannounced, while ja'a is used for something huge rolling in, an event of weight. So the grammar itself tells you the scale of what is approaching. This is not a small mercy slipping in the door. This is the greatest victory in the history of Islam arriving in full.

Then notice that Allah ties the help to His own name: nasr-ullah, the help of Allah. Whenever His name is attached to a thing, the Sheikh reminds you, it lifts that thing into honor, the way "the she-camel of Allah" or "the house of Allah" sets a creature or a building apart. So this was no ordinary win. This was Allah's own help, and the help He gave here, casting terror into the enemy's hearts across a full month's distance, was a unique gift granted to this Messenger ﷺ and to no prophet before him.

The victory, and the conquest that follows it

The Sheikh separates two words people blur together. Nasr is victory: when Allah hands the believers power and authority over the enemy. Fath is conquest: when a land or a possession

comes into your hands, often without a fight, as the natural fruit of the victory. That is why fath is named after nasr in the verse, and not before it. First the help, then, as its outcome, the opening of the land.

He shows you they did not always arrive together. At Badr there was nasr with no fath, a victory with no land taken. When the Jews were expelled from Madinah there was a kind of fath with no battle. But at Makkah, Allah gave both at once: He defeated Quraysh and He returned the city itself to the hands of the believers. The word al-fath here points first to the conquest of Makkah, but the Sheikh widens it to every conquest after, the lands opened under Abu Bakr and Umar, Persia and Egypt and the Levant. The opening that began with Makkah never really stopped.

And why did Makkah matter above every other victory? Because this city is the birthplace of Islam and the home of the Kaba, and the Messenger's ﷺ entire mission, from the day he was sent, was to clear that House of its idols and restore it to the worship of Allah alone. Once that was done, the Sheikh notes, the mission was, in a sense, complete, which is exactly why the surah turns next to a departure.

People entering in crowds

وَرَأَيْتَ النَّاسَ يَدْخُلُونَ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ أَفْوَاجًا

And you see the people entering into the religion of Allah in multitudes,

AN-NASR 110:2

Allah says wa ra'ayta, and you saw it with your own eyes, and the Sheikh stops on the seeing. A blessing you witness moves the heart more than a blessing you merely possess. You carry your own health and forget to thank Allah for it, until you see sickness in someone else and remember. It is why Allah let Bani Israil cross to safety and then watch Pharaoh drown behind them: the seen mercy lands harder than the unseen one. So the Messenger ﷺ was not just told the people would come; he was made to see them come, and the sight was meant to deepen his gratitude.

He says yadkhuluna, are entering, in the present tense, and the present tense carries continuity: this did not happen on one day and end. From the conquest of Makkah until the day he ﷺ died, the people kept coming. The Sheikh lays the numbers beside each other. The Prophet ﷺ entered Makkah with ten thousand. The battle of Hunayn, right after, he fought with

thirty thousand. Two years later, at the farewell Hajj, he stood with around a hundred and twenty thousand. The ninth year was even named the Year of Delegations, the year tribes arrived to take their shahada group after group.

And the verb yadkhuluna, the Sheikh says, is the verb for entering a house, a fortress, a place of refuge, somewhere you go to find safety and peace. Allah compares His religion to a home you step into. No one enters Islam and weighs it against the life he had before, he adds, except that he testifies he found a freedom and a peace in it he never knew outside. The word afwaja seals it: not one by one in secret as the early believers came, but crowd upon crowd, and nas, people, was already a word for the many. The trickle had become a flood.

Then glorify and seek forgiveness

فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَاسْتَغْفِرْهُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ تَوَّابًا

Then exalt [Him] with praise of your Lord and ask forgiveness of Him. Indeed, He is ever Accepting of Repentance.

AN-NASR 110:3

Here is the turn, the Sheikh says. After the greatest blessing, the command is not to celebrate but to glorify and to ask forgiveness, because that is what gratitude actually looks like. Tasbih, declaring Allah free of every flaw, is a worship the whole creation shares: nothing exists in the heavens or the earth that does not glorify Him. And notice the exact phrasing, sabbih bi hamdi rabbik and not sabbih isma rabbik: this is glorifying Allah while joined to His praise, disassociating His very self, His names and His attributes, from any imperfection at all.

Then the strange part: why is a sinless Prophet ﷺ told to seek forgiveness, when the surah just listed his victories and not a single fault? The Sheikh gives the scholars' answer. Istighfar is of two kinds. There is the forgiveness-seeking of the sinner, for what he did wrong, and there is the forgiveness-seeking of the obedient, for the worship itself, because no one, not even the angels who have bowed since they were created, can claim they worshipped Allah as He truly deserves. The Messenger ﷺ is being taught to close even his good deeds with humility.

And the surah ends on a name, tawwab, rather than ghafur. Both forgive, but tawwab, the Sheikh explains, carries more: Allah turns to His servant again and again, more than the servant ever turns to Him. He grants you the repentance before He accepts it, as He did with

Adam, gifting him the very words of turning back and then receiving them. So the last note of the last surah is not the victory at all. It is the open door of a Lord who keeps turning toward you.

The farewell only a few could hear

There was a second message in this surah, the Sheikh says, and only a handful of Companions caught it. He tells the famous scene. Umar would bring the young Ibn Abbas into the gatherings of the senior Companions, the veterans of Badr, and some of them quietly resented it: why this boy when our own sons are kept out? So one day Umar tested them. How do you read this surah, he asked the elders. Some gave the plain meaning, that when victory comes we are told to glorify and seek forgiveness. Others stayed silent.

Then Umar turned to the boy: what do you say, Ibn Abbas? And Ibn Abbas answered that the surah was about the death of the Messenger ﷺ. When the victory of Allah comes, and Makkah is opened, and you see the people entering in crowds, then it is a sign your time has drawn near, so spend what remains glorifying and seeking forgiveness. Umar said: I know of no interpretation of it but the one you have just given. The Messenger ﷺ had once made a dua for this boy, that Allah grant him understanding of the religion and teach him the interpretation of the Qur'an, and here was that dua answered in front of the giants of the Companions.

The Sheikh lands the principle the elders missed: good things are meant to be sealed with istighfar. We do it after every prayer, after zakat, at the close of Hajj, in the last nights of Ramadan, and over a brother once he is laid in his grave. The Messenger ﷺ was the best of all who ever walked the earth, so his own life had to be concluded the same way, with praise and the seeking of forgiveness. And he understood it. Aisha tells us that once this surah came down, he was constantly heard saying subhanaka Allahumma rabbana wa bi hamdik, Allahumma-ghfir li, more than a hundred times in a single sitting. He was, the Sheikh says, the living example of a man closing his life exactly as his Lord had told him to.

What this surah asks of you

- **Answer a blessing with worship, not just relief.** After the greatest victory of his life, the Prophet ﷺ was told to glorify and seek forgiveness, because that is what thanking Allah actually is. When something good lands in your lap, the response it asks for is tasbih and istighfar, not only celebration.

- **Victory follows the worship that earns it.** The surah opens on nasr and closes on tasbih and istighfar, and the Sheikh ties the two ends together: the help came because the deen was being lived. When an ummah lets its worship slip, the help slips with it. Restore the first and the second returns.
- **Seal every good deed with istighfar.** Even the obedient seek forgiveness, not for sin but for the worship itself, because no one worships Allah as He deserves. So close your prayer, your charity, your fasting, and your gatherings the way the Prophet ﷺ closed his life: asking forgiveness.
- **A seen mercy is a louder reminder.** Allah made His Messenger ﷺ watch the crowds enter so the sight would deepen his gratitude. When you see someone find guidance, or simply see another's hardship beside your own ease, let the seeing move you back toward thanking the One who gave it.

Why this surah stays with us

An-Nasr arrived dressed as a triumph and carried a goodbye inside it, and that is its quiet genius. The same three ayat that announce a city won and a religion overflowing also teach the Messenger ﷺ, at the height of his success, to bow lower: to glorify, to seek forgiveness, and to meet the end of his work with humility rather than a victory lap. The Sheikh's point is that the believer hears both notes, the help and the humbling, and lets them land together.

O Allah, make us people who answer Your blessings the way You taught Your Messenger ﷺ to answer them, with tasbih on our tongues and istighfar in our hearts. Send Your help to this ummah and let us be worthy of it, and when our own time draws near, let us be found glorifying You and seeking Your forgiveness, turning to You while You, the Tawwab, are still turning toward us.

Retold faithfully from Sheikh Abu Bakr Zoud's tafsir of Juz Amma. Qur'an: Sahih International, verified via quran.ai. The reflection is the Sheikh's, the phrasing is The Daily Wird's.

Al-Masad

The surah where Allah Himself answers an uncle who raised his hands against His Messenger, and names him, and his wife, into the Fire

Al-Masad is the one surah where a living man is named, condemned, and answered by Allah directly. No story is told to you from a distance. An uncle stands up in front of all of Makkah, dusts the dirt off his hands at his own nephew, and curses him. And before the sun is high, the answer comes down from above the seven heavens: not from the Prophet ﷺ, who said nothing back, but from the Lord who defends His Messenger. Those very hands, the surah begins, may they perish.

Where this surah sits, and why

Sheikh Abu Bakr opens, as he loves to, with placement: where a surah lands in the Qur'an is never an accident. Just before Al-Masad come Al-Kafirun and An-Nasr. An-Nasr was all light, the victory of Allah, the conquest of Makkah, people entering the religion in crowds, and a quiet recipe for that victory tucked into its end, glorify your Lord and seek His forgiveness. Then Al-Masad arrives and turns every color to its opposite. There is nothing good in it. From the first word it is a curse, then wealth that does not help, then a fire, then a wife who carries firewood, then a rope around a neck. Every meaning in it is heavy and dark.

So why set the brightest surah beside the darkest? Because they are two faces of one truth. An-Nasr showed the victory Allah gives the believers; Al-Masad shows the ruin of the enemy of that religion, and the ruin of the enemy is itself a victory for the believers. And there is a warning folded inside the seam, the Sheikh says: An-Nasr handed you the recipe, worship and tasbih and istighfar, and Al-Masad is what happens to the life that refuses it. The one who keeps Allah out of his days ends the way this man ended. The surah is here to show you that ending with a name attached to it.

The morning he climbed the mountain

To feel the surah you have to stand in the morning it answers. For three years the call to Islam had been whispered, secret, kept among a few. Then the command came: warn your closest relatives. So the Prophet ﷺ went out at Fajr, while the valley of Makkah was still and quiet, and

climbed the hill of Safa, the way an Arab climbed a height when he had urgent news for the whole town. He called out at the top of his voice, tribe by tribe, Bani Hashim, Bani Abd al-Muttalib, Bani Abd Manaf, his own blood first. In that mountainous, echoing place his voice carried into the houses, and people came pouring out, confused, until the ground between the Kaaba and Safa was packed with thousands waiting for the announcement.

He gave them a test first. If I told you an army was massing behind this mountain to attack you this very morning, would you believe me? And they answered as one: of course, we have known you forty years and never caught you in a single lie. Notice that, the Sheikh says: the one who calls to Allah must be so honest that no one can ever throw the word liar at him. Then the Prophet ﷺ said, since you trust me, I am a warner to you before a severe punishment. Say there is no god but Allah, and you will succeed; with this one word you will rule the Arabs and the non-Arabs. The crowd stood stunned, silent. Except one man.

May the hands of Abu Lahab perish

تَبَّتْ يَدَا أَبِي لَهَبٍ وَتَبَّ

May the hands of Abu Lahab be ruined, and ruined is he.

AL-MASAD 111:1

His uncle stood, dusted his hands as if shaking off something filthy, and said, may you perish, is this what you gathered us for? The first man in history to insult the Messenger ﷺ in public. And the Prophet ﷺ, the Sheikh stresses, did nothing. He did not curse back, did not insult, did not send anyone to deal with him. The same man Allah described as being upon a magnificent character did not answer his own uncle, and an uncle, in their world, stood in the place of a lost father. He stayed silent, because the One who defends the believers had already taken it up Himself.

And here is the detail the Sheikh will not let you miss. The three surahs that come right after this one all begin with Qul, say: say He is Allah, say I seek refuge. This one does not. Allah did not tell the Prophet ﷺ to say it. He answered Abu Lahab directly, in His own words, because He wanted the response to come from no one but Himself. The hands the man had just dusted at the Prophet ﷺ, may they perish. The word tabba, the Sheikh explains, means total loss, ruin, destruction, and yad, the hand, stands for a man's whole work, since we do most of what we do with our hands. So may his hands perish is also: may every scheme of his against this religion collapse, and every one of them did. Then the ayah ends by doubling it, and ruined is

he, the whole man from head to foot. The scholars read the repetition three ways: as sheer emphasis, the ultimate curse; or the first half for his hands and deeds, the second for his entire body; or, most strikingly, the first half a curse called down on him, and the second a report that it has already landed, he has been ruined.

The name that was a sentence

Why does this man get his own surah, when Makkah was full of enemies? And why call him Abu Lahab, the father of flame, instead of his real name? Sheikh Abu Bakr lingers here, because the choice of name is the whole point. His real name was Abd al-Uzza, slave of the idol al-Uzza, and he was the Prophet's ﷺ paternal uncle, one of the handsome, glittering men of Quraysh: a glowing face, the finest clothes, the best mounts, among the four richest men in the city. Lahab means a flame, red and bright, and it suited his looks and his vanity. He was proud to be called that.

So Allah turned that pride into a verdict. He names him by the flame so the name itself foreshadows the fire he is heading into. He uses the nickname, not the real name, partly because a person's true name is the more honoring thing, the way the prophets are all called by their real names in the Qur'an, Ibrahim, Ishaq, Yaqub, so withholding it is a humiliation. And He avoids Abd al-Uzza for a reason that runs deeper than the man: to say slave of al-Uzza in the Qur'an would be to let an idol be called a lord, and the Book of Allah will not record that even once. The vanity he wore as a name became the label of his punishment.

The one who cut the family rope

But the deepest reason for the surah, the Sheikh says, is what Abu Lahab broke. In that society the supreme value was loyalty to your blood: a man's life, honor, property and children were only safe because his tribe stood around him. To abandon your own kin was the gravest of sins. And so when every clan of Quraysh turned on the Prophet ﷺ, his own people, Bani Hashim and Bani Abd al-Muttalib, kept defending him, openly, even those of them who had not accepted Islam, simply because he was one of them. The other tribes expected it and respected it; it was how Arabia worked.

Abu Lahab was the first man ever to shatter that. He stood up and said, in effect, I am not one of them, and sided with the enemies of his own clan. During the long boycott in the valley, when Bani Hashim were starving, eating leaves and animal hide while children cried from hunger, he alone walked out and supported the siege against his family. He was the Prophet's ﷺ next-door neighbor, a wall between their houses, and he would throw filth over it onto the

Prophet ﷺ at prayer, foul the food cooking in his yard. The Arabs had a saying, the Sheikh recalls: the wrong of a relative cuts deeper than the sword of a stranger, because the relative was the one meant to protect you. Abu Lahab trampled the holiest tradition of his people under his foot, and that is why his curse in the Qur'an is so uniquely severe.

When wealth stops helping, that is the punishment

مَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُ مَالُهُ وَمَا كَسَبَ

His wealth will not avail him or that which he gained.

AL-MASAD 111:2

What made him so arrogant? His money, the next ayah answers, the thing a man transgresses over the moment he feels rich enough not to need anyone. His own brother in disbelief once boasted that if Muhammad ﷺ turned out to be right, he had enough wealth and children to ransom himself out of the Fire. So Allah answers the whole mindset: his wealth did not avail him, nor what he earned. The Sheikh notes the ma can be read two ways, as a question, what did his money ever do for him?, or as a flat negation, it did nothing and never will, and both are true. It could not crush Islam, his children deserted him the day he died, and it will not buy him a thing on the Day he is thrown into the Fire.

And being stripped of your wealth's benefit, the Sheikh points out, is itself a punishment, because money exists to help: it ransoms the captive, treats the sick, feeds the hungry. When it can no longer do any of that for you, it has become a curse in your hands. As for what he gained, one reading is his earnings, another is his children, since the Prophet ﷺ said a child is from a man's earnings. Which opens the lesson Allah hides in the ruin: wealth and children are a double-edged blade. For Abu Lahab they did nothing. But ongoing charity and a righteous child who prays for you are exactly what keep benefiting a person after death. The same two things that destroyed him can carry someone else to the highest gardens.

A fire of flame, and a death with no honor in it

سَيَصَلِّي نَارًا ذَاتَ لَهَبٍ

He will burn in a Fire of blazing flame

AL-MASAD 111:3

He will burn, the surah says, in a Fire of flame, and the Sheikh draws out the verb: sayasla is to be roasted, scorched like meat over a spit, the heat reaching him until it cooks him, and dhata lahab is a fire of rage that never goes out. His flame, the one he was so proud to be named for, becomes the flame he is given. And inside this ayah, the Sheikh says, sits one of the clearest proofs that this is truly the word of Allah. Abu Lahab was sentenced to the Fire here, yet he lived years longer. He had only to say, once, there is no god but Allah, and Quraysh could have paraded it as a contradiction that broke the whole Qur'an. He never did. He died on disbelief, exactly as the Book had foretold while he still drew breath. What clearer miracle could Makkah have asked for?

Even his death was stripped of honor, the Sheikh recounts from the seerah, because Allah closed off every exit that disbelief might have called noble. He died days after Badr, a battle he did not fight in, having paid a man to go in his place; for had he died fighting, or survived it, the mushrikun would have counted either an honor. He got neither. When the news of Quraysh's defeat reached him he struck a slave boy, and the boy's mistress struck him back and tore his skin, and the wound festered into a spreading, contagious sore the Arabs dreaded. His own family fled him. He died, and his body lay three days where no one would touch it, until his sons, shamed by the town, shoved it along with a length of wood into a pit and walled it off from a distance. The man who had been the handsomest of Quraysh ended as something no one would come near. As with Pharaoh and his rivers, the Sheikh says, arrogance against Allah ends one way, and the way a person lives is the way he dies.

His wife, the carrier of firewood

وَأَمْرَاتِهِ حَمَالَةَ الْحَطَبِ

And his wife, the carrier of firewood.

AL-MASAD 111:4

فِي جِيدِهَا حَبْلٌ مِّن مَّسَدٍ

Around her neck is a rope of twisted fiber.

AL-MASAD 111:5

Then the surah turns to his partner in it, his wife Umm Jamil, sister of Abu Sufyan, a noble, well-known woman of Quraysh. Allah names her the carrier of firewood, and the Sheikh unfolds the layers. Literally, she would go to the desert, bundle thorny branches, and scatter them in the dark before the Prophet's ﷺ door so that he and his family would step on them at Fajr and be cut. But carrying firewood is also a picture: she carried fuel for the fire of war, kindling enmity against the Prophet ﷺ wherever she went. And it points to namima, tale-carrying, the spreading of lies and stitched-up words to set people at each other's throats, the work of shaytan that turns brothers into enemies. He pauses on it as a warning to us, because the carriers of firewood are everywhere now, in the media, in the group chats, manufacturing a story out of nothing to light a blaze between people. Do not, he says, be hammalat al-hatab.

And around her neck, the last ayah, a rope of masad, twisted palm fiber, the strongest kind of rope. The Sheikh hears the humiliation in every word of it. The neck is where a woman of her standing would hang her finest necklace, her qilada of gold and pearls; Allah does not say necklace, He says rope, and a rope is what you put on an animal or a captive. There is a narration that she had a precious necklace she swore she would sell to fund the war on Islam, so it was exchanged for this. And He says in her neck, not upon it, as if it has sunk in and become part of her, something she can never lift off. In the Fire, some of the scholars add, she will keep gathering and heaping firewood onto her husband, fueling the very flames that consume them both. A noblewoman who chose this, brought down to dragging sticks on a rope. The whole surah, the Sheikh closes, runs from a curse called down in the first ayah to the proof, across every part of this man's life and death and household, that the curse came fully true.

What this surah asks of you

- **Allah Himself stands between you and the harm.** The Prophet ﷺ answered his uncle's insult with silence, and the reply came down from above the heavens. When you are wronged for Allah's sake and you hold your tongue, you are not undefended. The One who answered Abu Lahab directly is the One who takes up your case.

- **Wealth and children are a double-edged blade.** They did nothing for Abu Lahab; his money could not save him and his children fled. Yet ongoing charity and a child who prays for you are exactly what keep helping a soul after death. The same two gifts that ruin one person can carry another to the highest gardens. It depends entirely on what you do with them.
- **Do not be a carrier of firewood.** His wife's crime was kindling enmity, scattering thorns and carrying tales to set people against each other. The Sheikh names its modern shapes: the manufactured story, the group-chat rumor, the gossip that lights a fire between brothers. Refuse to carry the wood.
- **Loyalty is not measured by blood alone.** Abu Lahab shared the Prophet's ﷺ lineage and it saved him from nothing, because he cut himself off from the truth his family carried. Nearness that is not paired with faith is no nearness at all. What ties you to good is whether you stand with it, not who your relatives are.

Why this surah stays with us

Al-Masad is short and it is merciless, and that is the point. A man with everything, beauty, wealth, the noblest family on earth, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ for a nephew, threw it all away with hands he dusted in contempt, and Allah let his name stand in the Qur'an forever as what that costs. The surah does not let you watch from a safe distance. It asks, quietly, which hands you are raising, and toward what.

O Allah, do not let our hands be raised against Your truth or Your people, and do not let our wealth or our children become a ruin for us. Make them instead a charity that outlives us and a prayer that follows us. Keep us from carrying the firewood of enmity, and let us stand with Your religion, not on lineage, but on love of it, until we meet You. Make us people of the Qur'an, who hear its warnings and are moved while the moving still counts.

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Al-Ikhlās

The surah that answers one question, who is your Lord, and the Prophet ﷺ said its four lines weigh a third of the whole Qur'an

Surat Al-Ikhlās is four short lines a child memorizes before he can tie his shoes, and the Prophet ﷺ said it weighs a third of the entire Qur'an. Sheikh Abu Bakr opens not with the surah but with a question you have probably never been asked out loud: do you actually know the One you stand before five times a day? The whole surah, he says, is the answer, and it spends no words on stories, laws, or the Hereafter. It speaks about Allah, and only Allah.

The one knowledge you cannot live without

Before he reads a single ayah, Sheikh Abu Bakr wants to fix the size of the subject in your mind, and he reaches for the one moment in human history when a man actually spoke with Allah. Musa (ﷺ) had left his people, his family, the whole world behind, and worshipped for forty days to prepare for it. Standing on the mountain, hearing the King of all kings, the longing overflowed and he asked the thing the righteous always ache for: my Lord, show Yourself to me, let me see You. The answer came, you will not see Me, but look to the mountain. And when the smallest sliver of Allah's light fell upon it (the Prophet ﷺ showed the amount with the tip of his thumb against his little finger), that solid, ancient mountain was crushed to dust, and Musa (ﷺ) dropped unconscious.

Then notice the first words on his lips when he woke: glory be to You, I have repented to You. Repented from what, the Sheikh asks. From having asked to see Allah before he had truly grasped who Allah is. It is a sin, he says plainly, to worship a Lord you have not bothered to know. And that, in five words, is where the Qur'an locates the whole disease of mankind: they did not give Allah the honor He is due. Every worry, every misguidance, every cold prayer traces back to it. So the cure is not complicated. Learn your Lord. Surat Al-Ikhlās, he says, is Allah teaching you how.

A surah that is nothing but Allah

What makes this surah unlike any other, the Sheikh points out, is what it leaves out. No prophet's story, no ruling about what is lawful, no scene from the Day of Judgement, not even a command to do or avoid a thing. It is the only surah that speaks exclusively about Allah, from its first letter to its last. It even carries words found nowhere else in the Qur'an: the name As-Samad appears in this surah and in no other.

He also lingers on a quieter sign of its rank: its names. The scholars count more than twenty for this short surah, and there is a principle, the Sheikh says, that the more names a thing carries, the more honor it holds (the same way Allah's own many names point to His glory). It is called Al-Ikhlās, sincerity, because whoever lives by it worships Allah purely; and because the root means to free a thing, it pulls a doubting heart free of its doubt. It is called At-Tawhīd, for it gathers the oneness of Allah in every category at once: that He alone is worshipped, that He alone is Lord, and that His names and attributes are His alone. It is called Al-Asās, the foundation, because these meanings are the ground the whole religion stands on. And it is called Al-Muqāshshah, the one that scrubs away disease, because it scours the sicknesses of disbelief and shirk out of the heart.

Four lines worth a third of the Qur'an

The most famous thing said about this surah came from the Prophet ﷺ himself. One day, the Sheikh recounts, he told his companions to gather, quickly, the way you call people for something serious. They hurried to the masjid, he came out, recited Qul huwa Allahu ahad, and went back inside. They sat confused: he promised a third of the Qur'an, then read four short lines and left. He came back out and told them plainly, I told you it equals a third of the Qur'an, and it does.

What does that mean, the Sheikh asks. One view is reward: reciting it once carries the reward of reciting a third. Another, which he leans toward, is by subject. The Qur'an's themes divide roughly into three, stories, rulings, and belief, and the greatest of the three is belief in Allah, since the other two rest on it. This little surah holds the whole of that third: everything you need to know about your Lord is packed into its four lines. It is no accident, he notes, that the Prophet ﷺ spent thirteen years in Makkah teaching almost nothing else.

And the love of it carries weight too. The Sheikh tells of a companion who led prayer in Quba and recited this surah in every single rak'ah alongside another. When the Prophet ﷺ asked why, the man said he simply loved it. The answer he received: your love for this surah has

admitted you into Paradise. Another companion closed every recitation with it; the Prophet ﷺ said, tell him that Allah loves him too. And Abu Hurayrah heard a man reciting it one night, and the Prophet ﷺ said, it has become obligatory, meaning Paradise has become his.

The question that brought the surah down

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ

Say, "He is Allāh, [who is] One,

AL-IKHLAS 112:1

This surah, the Sheikh explains, is an answer, which is why it opens with say. The people of Quraysh sent a man to the Prophet ﷺ with a complaint and an offer: you have split our community and insulted our gods; if it is wealth you want, we will make you the richest man in Arabia; if women, we will marry you to the finest; if a jinn has touched you, we will find you a doctor. The Prophet ﷺ gave him nothing. So they came back, baffled, and asked a different question: this Lord you call us to, describe Him to us, what is His lineage, is He made of gold, of silver, of metal, of wood?

It sounds crude, and it is, but the Sheikh draws a sharp point out of it. The Arabs prized lineage and ancestry, yet to ask for a Lord's lineage is to ask for His weakness. To have a father and mother and offspring is to have a beginning, to need a partner, to be incomplete. All of creation begets and is begotten, and Allah set it up that way precisely so that our neediness, and His freedom from it, would be unmistakable. Into that question came this surah: the most complete description of Allah ever given, in the fewest words.

Say, He is Allah, the One

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ

Say, "He is Allāh, [who is] One,

AL-IKHLAS 112:1

The Sheikh walks the first ayah word by word. Say, qul, is a command, and Allah could have revealed the ayah without it. That He addresses the Prophet ﷺ directly, telling him to carry this, is an honor, and because He does not say say to the idolaters or say to the Jews but only

say, the message is aimed at everyone alive until the Day of Judgement. This, the Sheikh notes, is exactly why calling others to Allah is a duty: the command qul is handed to each of us, in our own measure.

Then He, huwa. In ordinary speech a pronoun needs a noun before it, or no one knows who he is. Here Allah opens with the pronoun and lets the name follow, and that inversion, the Sheikh says, signals greatness: the One being spoken of is so great He needs no introduction, everyone already knows whom you mean. Then the name itself, Allah, His proper name, mentioned in the Qur'an over two thousand six hundred times. Say it over something small and it multiplies (bismillah over a little food and the barakah spreads); say it in fear and the fear turns to calm; the disbeliever's own heart trembles at it. The Sheikh even traces its roots: a name for the One the hearts cry out for and cannot live without, the One the minds are stunned and lost before, the One the limbs bow to in worship, and the One who stays unseen to the eye while a filter He placed inside us still recognizes His greatness.

And then ahad, One, unique. The Sheikh is careful here: Allah is wahid, one in number, but ahad is more, unique in His being, His names, His attributes, and His actions, with nothing like Him at all. We may share the words: a man can be hearing, seeing, knowing. But our hearing began and will end and cannot catch what is behind a wall, while His hearing has no beginning, no end, and misses nothing. He gives the image Allah gives in the Qur'an of a slave owned by many quarrelling masters against a slave who belongs wholly to one: only the second knows peace. That is what it means for the heart to have one Lord.

As-Samad: the One everything leans on

اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ

Allāh, the Eternal Refuge.

AL-IKHLAS 112:2

The name returns, Allah, the Sheikh notes, repeated for emphasis because of the weight of what follows: As-Samad, a word found nowhere else in the Qur'an. The scholars give it more than eighteen meanings, and he gathers them into three that lock together. The first: As-Samad is the One every created thing turns to with its every need. That is the half you are living, he says: you need Him. The second completes it: As-Samad is Al-Ghani, the self-sufficient, the One who needs no one. Even a man who calls himself self-sufficient borrowed it from Allah, and it will end; Allah's has no beginning and no end.

The third meaning is Al-Kamil, the perfect, complete in every attribute He has: perfect in sovereignty, in knowledge, in wisdom, in patience, in might, lacking in nothing. The Sheikh slips in a quiet aside that this name was an answer to the surah just before. Abu Lahab had behaved as though he needed no one and people needed him; As-Samad turns the title over, it is Allah who needs no one, and all of us who need Him. So when you raise your hands, he urges, call on Him by this name: ya Samad. To say it is to confess, I need You and You do not need me, and there is none complete but You. It is because He is As-Samad that He descends each night to the lowest heaven and asks, is anyone asking, so I may give him.

He does not beget, and was not begotten

لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ

He neither begets nor is born,

AL-IKHLAS 112:3

If the first half of the surah affirms who Allah is, the Sheikh explains, this half clears away everything He is not, and that is the second pillar of tawhid: to deny of Allah what does not benefit Him. He neither begets nor is born. He has no child of His own, and (the Sheikh closes the side door) He never adopted one either, for Allah says elsewhere that He has taken no son, sealing off every claim of a son of God to anyone. And He was not born: He has no father, no mother, no beginning, for everything born once was not and then came to be, while Allah is the First, with nothing before Him.

The Sheikh asks why begetting is denied before being born, when the natural order is the reverse. Because, he says, that was the more common lie: the Jews claimed Uzayr, the Christians claimed the Messiah, the idolaters of Quraysh claimed the angels were Allah's daughters, so the more widespread falsehood is answered first. And he lands the absurdity of it with a story: Al-Baqillani, sent to debate Christian clergy, greeted their celibate priest by repeatedly asking after his wife and children until the man protested that he was above such things. Exactly, said Al-Baqillani, this man is a human like me and you place him above marriage and offspring, yet you ascribe a son to the Lord of the worlds. They emptied the room rather than let him finish.

And nothing is His equal

وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ

Nor is there to Him any equivalent."

AL-IKHLAS 112:4

The surah closes by sealing the point: since He has no child and no parent, no one can be His equal. The Sheikh notes the word order, for to Him, lahu, is placed first, meaning especially for Allah there is no equal. Others may have their likenesses, a child who resembles a parent, but not Him. And he weighs the word kufuwan against two near-words to show how total the denial is: there is the one that resembles you in little, the one that resembles you in much, and the one that is an exact copy, and Allah negates all three at once. Nothing is like Him in any degree, not slightly, not greatly, not at all.

Then the Sheikh turns it on you, because the surah was never meant only to settle a debate with Quraysh. If Allah has no equal, then nothing should be loved as He is loved, and nothing feared as He is feared. He warns of those the Qur'an describes who take rivals besides Allah and love them as they should love Allah, and notes the scholars widen it: anything that pulls you from Him, if you love it the way you love Allah, has become a rival in your heart. He even recalls how the Prophet ﷺ grew angry when a man said whatever Allah wills and you will, over a single letter, and corrected him to whatever Allah wills, then you will, guarding the oneness down to a word. So the real test, the Sheikh says, comes every single day: when the prayer is called and the bed or the game is in front of you, which one wins? That is the surah, weighed in your own life.

What this surah asks of you

- **Know the One you stand before.** Musa (ﷺ) repented for asking to see Allah before he had grasped who Allah is, and the Qur'an blames every human wound on the same failure: they did not honor Allah as He is due. The cure is to learn your Lord, and Al-Ikhlās is the lesson.
- **You need Him; He needs no one.** As-Samad means both at once: the One every creature turns to, and the One who is sufficient without any of us. Call on Him by it, ya Samad, and the posture of the whole surah falls into place.
- **Strip the lie before you carry the truth.** Half the surah affirms Allah, half denies what does not befit Him: no child, no parent, no equal. Sincerity needs both hands, building the right

belief and clearing away the false.

- **Is He really the One in your life?** It is easy to say Allahu ahad. The proof is in what you drop and run for. Measure your tawhid by how fast you leave the bed, or the screen, when He calls you to stand before Him.

Why this surah stays with us

Quraysh asked for a lineage and got something they could not answer: a Lord who is One, who everything leans on while He leans on nothing, who was never born and never gave birth, and who has no equal in the smallest degree. Four lines, and the Prophet ﷺ weighed them at a third of the Qur'an, because to truly know this is to know the ground the whole religion stands on. And the Sheikh's promise is gentle: live by these meanings and you will find a strange peace, the calm of a heart that serves one Master and runs after no rival.

O Allah, You are Ahad, You are As-Samad, the One we all turn to and the One who needs none of us. Make Yourself the One in our lives, so that nothing is loved as You are loved and nothing feared as You are feared. Teach us who You are, honor us with Your love the way You loved those who loved this surah, and let these four lines admit us, as You admitted them, into Your Paradise.

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Al-Falaq

The first of the two surahs of refuge, where you cling to the Lord who splits the dawn and ask Him to tear through every darkness in your life

Al-Falaq is one of the two surahs of refuge, the Muawwidhatayn, and the Sheikh wants you to feel where it sits before you read a word of it. Just behind it is Al-Ikhlās, your whole creed about who Allah is, and your creed is the most precious thing you own, which means it is the thing most worth attacking. So Al-Falaq arrives like a wall thrown up around it: a short, almost childhood-simple surah that teaches you to grab hold of the Lord who splits the dawn and refuse to let go, until every evil that could harm you, seen and unseen, has been handed over to Him.

The surah that guards your faith

Sheikh Abu Bakr opens by placing this surah inside the last three of the Qur'an, because they were arranged to be read together. The surah before this, Al-Ikhlās, was pure belief: who Allah is, His oneness, His perfection. But your faith, the Sheikh reminds you, is not a thing you secure once and forget. It can be damaged. It can even be destroyed, by evils that come at you from outside and by evils that rise up from inside. So after Al-Ikhlās, Allah gave you Al-Falaq to seek His protection from the external evils that could wound your faith, and then An-Nās to seek His protection from the internal evil, the whisper inside the chest. Belief first, then the guard around the belief.

These two surahs together are called the Muawwidhatayn, the two surahs of refuge, and the Sheikh gathers the hadiths on them. Uqba ibn Amir was walking beside the Prophet ﷺ when the Prophet ﷺ told him there was no protection from evil better than these two. When the Prophet ﷺ fell ill he would recite the last surahs over himself and blow over his own body, and Aisha, when his pain grew severe, would recite them and wipe his blessed hand across him. So this is a surah for the days you are sick, for the nights you are afraid, for any harm that reaches you. It is not a small thing memorized in childhood and left there. It is a treatment.

Why the surah was sent down

The Sheikh tells the story behind the revelation, because it explains everything that follows. After the treaty of Hudaibiyyah the people of Makkah were no longer a threat, and a Jewish faction in Madinah began to fear that the Prophet ﷺ would now turn toward them. So they went to a man known as Labid ibn al-A'sam, a skilled magician, and asked him to do what their own magic had failed to do: to stop the Messenger ﷺ and break him.

Labid paid a young servant boy to bring him strands of hair from the Prophet's comb. He tied them into eleven knots, blew into them, wrapped the bundle, and dropped it down a well, weighted under a rock. The magic took hold. The Prophet ﷺ began to feel a heavy illness, a sense of being squeezed from within, until he would imagine he had done a thing he had not done. The Sheikh is careful here: the magic touched his body, never his message. The revelation and his role as Messenger were untouched and protected. Then, after much dua, the cure came. In a dream two angels stood at his head and his feet and named the magician, the materials, and the well, in exact detail. The bundle was drawn up, and as each of the eleven knots was undone with the recitation of these surahs, the eleven ayat of the two surahs of refuge, the Prophet ﷺ felt his strength return, knot by knot, like a man stepping out of darkness into light.

Say it out loud: I take refuge

قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ الْفَلَقِ

Say, "I seek refuge in the Lord of daybreak

AL-FALAQ 113:1

Allah does not begin by describing refuge, He commands it: say. And the Sheikh draws the lesson from that single word. If the most beloved of all creation, the Prophet ﷺ himself, is told to enter Allah's protection and announce it on his tongue, then how much more do you and I need it. The command to speak is also a command to humble yourself. Some people are too proud to ask anyone for anything, so Allah tells you to say it aloud: I am weak, I need You. The word qul pulls the arrogance out of the heart, atom by atom, and the more you repeat this surah through your day, the more you are confessing to Allah how truly you depend on Him.

Then look at the word the Sheikh lingers on: a'udh, I seek refuge. It is not astaghfir, where you ask for something and stand back waiting. A'udh means you give yourself up, you submit, you

step bodily into the protection of Allah. You are not merely requesting His shelter, you are ready to drop everything and live inside it. And the verb is present-tense, the tense of what keeps happening, because as long as evil is out there you are in continuous need of His shelter. You do not seek refuge once. You seek it again, and again, for as long as you live.

The Lord who splits the dawn

قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ الْفَلَقِ

Say, "I seek refuge in the Lord of daybreak

AL-FALAQ 113:1

Notice which name of Allah is used here, the Sheikh says. In Al-Ikhlās it was the name Allah, because that surah was about His oneness. Here it is Rabb, the Lord, the One who nurtures and raises and takes care of His servant with love and provides for him. That is the most fitting name to call upon when you are seeking protection, and it teaches you how to make dua: reach for the name of Allah that suits what you are asking. Rabb also names the relationship itself. If He is the Master, then you are the servant, and a servant is never anything but utterly in need of his Master to shield him.

And falaq, the daybreak. The word comes from falaqa, to tear and split apart, so anything that bursts open is falaq. The first meaning is the line of dawn-light that rips across the dark sky at fajr. The second is everything that splits: the seed cracking open in the soil for the plant to climb out, the womb opening for the child, the egg hatching, the cloud splitting for the rain. The whole creation, one scholar said, is falaq. Everything is split open so that something can be brought out of it, and the Sheikh ties this back to Al-Ikhlās, the surah that said Allah was never born and never gave birth: the only One who is not Himself split open, who brings out and is never brought out, is the Lord of the daybreak. And there is hope folded into the choice of word. The whole surah is about to list darkneses, magic and envy and the night, but it opens on light, on a Lord who can tear straight through the darkness of your life and bring the morning back into it.

From the evil of everything He made

مِنْ شَرِّ مَا خَلَقَ

From the evil of that which He created

113:2

Now the surah names what you are sheltering from, and the Sheikh shows you the design: it moves from the widest evil to the narrowest, from everything down to one person. It starts here at the broadest: the evil of whatever He created. Sharr is evil that brings harm, the spark that flies off a fire and burns you. So you are asking the Lord of all that splits to shield you from the harm inside anything He made: the natural disaster, the sting of the insect, the sickness, the fire, even the harm that can come through the sun or the water that otherwise give you life.

Two things, the Sheikh says, are hidden in this short ayah. First, since Allah is the One who created these evils, He alone has authority over them, which means He alone can protect you from them, so you turn to no one but Him: the amulet on the newborn's wrist, the charm hung for protection, all of it betrays a crack in the very tawhid the surah before this one taught. And on top of that whole list of created harms sits the evil closest to home, the evil of your own self, the pride and the ego and the jealousy and the appetite that drag you toward sin. The Prophet ﷺ used to seek refuge from the evil of his own soul before the evil of anything outside it.

The dark, and the blowers in the knots

وَمِنْ شَرِّ غَاسِقٍ إِذَا وَقَبَ

And from the evil of darkness when it settles

113:3

وَمِنْ شَرِّ النَّفَّاثَاتِ فِي الْعُقَدِ

And from the evil of the blowers in knots

113:4

From the whole of creation the surah narrows to the night: the evil of the darkness when it settles in. And the Sheikh asks why the night is singled out. Because when the dark comes down, evil comes up. The crimes climb at night, the theft and the harm and the things done in the open dark. The magician gets to work at night. The biting creatures come out at night. The plots are laid at night. So the Prophet ﷺ told us to bring the children inside when night falls and warned against travelling alone in the dark, because harm spreads then more than by day. The cure for all of it is the same: read this surah, and the Lord of the daybreak guards you through the night.

Then narrower still: the blowers in the knots. The word naffathat is from blowing breath with a touch of saliva, and the Sheikh notes that mim sharri is repeated before each evil so you understand each one is its own distinct danger. This is the magic of the story itself, the knots Labid tied and blew into. And see the precision of the language: Allah does not say seek refuge from the magic, He says from the blowers, the people who do it, because the magic itself may or may not reach you, but it is the doer you are guarded from. Of all the evils in the surah, only this one carries the definite article, an-naffathat, the spotlight falling on it, because the whole surah came down on account of this very act, and because there is no good at all in those who work magic. They are, the Sheikh stresses, only more of Allah's creation, with no power of their own to harm anyone except by His permission.

And the envier, when the envy comes out

وَمِنْ شَرِّ حَاسِدٍ إِذَا حَسَدَ

And from the evil of an envier when he envies."

113:5

The surah ends on the narrowest evil of all, and the Sheikh says it is placed last because it is the root of the others and the one we are all capable of. Why would anyone send magic against another person? Underneath it sits hasad, envy. The envier, he explains, does not even want what you have. He simply cannot bear that you have it. He wants your house burned, your business broken, your good gone, and he gains nothing from your loss but the sight of your suffering. This is the trait the Prophet ﷺ named when he said no one is left out: anyone amazed by what he sees should say tabarakallah, because the evil eye is real, and every one of us carries the capacity to envy.

But look at when you seek refuge: from the envier when he envies. If a person feels a flash of envy in his heart and keeps it shut inside, the Sheikh says, no one is harmed, that stays between him and Allah. The danger is when the envy comes out, into backbiting, into criticism, into reaching for someone's livelihood. That is what you are shielded from. The first sin in the heavens was envy, Iblis envying Adam, and the first crime on earth was envy, one son of Adam against his brother. And there is a mercy in the grammar: *hasid*, the Sheikh notes, is the form for one who envied a single time, not the one who does it endlessly, and even that one act is grave enough that Allah tells you to seek His protection from it. As for the cure, when you feel envy rising toward your brother, say *a'udhu billah*, and then make secret dua for him, ask Allah to bless and increase him, and praise him among the people. You starve the envy until it dies.

What this surah asks of you

- **Say your weakness out loud.** Allah commands 'say' before He grants refuge. The tongue admitting 'I need You' is the cure for the pride in the heart. If the Prophet ﷺ was told to announce his need, you have no excuse to be too proud to ask.
- **Refuge is somewhere you live, not something you request.** *A'udh* is not *astaghfir*. You do not ask for the shelter and wait, you step inside it and stay. And the verb is present-tense, so you do it again and again, for as long as the evil is out there, which is as long as you live.
- **Turn to the One who made the evil, and to no one else.** Since Allah created these harms, He alone has authority over them, so He alone is asked. The amulet and the charm betray a crack in your tawhid. The Lord who splits the dawn can split through any darkness you bring Him.
- **Starve your envy before it leaves the heart.** *Hasad* is the root the surah ends on, and the one we all carry. A flash kept inside harms no one, but the moment it comes out it is the evil you seek refuge from. When you feel it rising, make secret dua for the person and praise him aloud, until it dies.

Why this surah stays with us

The Sheikh's point holds the whole surah together: once you have handed every evil over to the Lord of the daybreak, the seen and the unseen, the night and the magic and the envier, you can stop carrying them. Do not lie awake over the plots and the people. Seek His protection,

then move on in your faith, move on toward Allah until you meet Him, certain that His power overrides every power that exists.

O Allah, Lord of the daybreak, we take refuge in You from the evil of all that You created, from the dark when it settles, from the blowers in the knots, and from the envier when he envies. Tear through every darkness in our lives the way You tear the dawn across the night, guard our faith from all that would damage it, and let us live inside Your protection until the day we stand before You.

Retold faithfully from Sheikh Abu Bakr Zoud's tafsir of Juz Amma. Qur'an: Sahih International, verified via quran.ai. The reflection is the Sheikh's, the phrasing is The Daily Wird's.

An-Nas

The last surah of the Qur'an, where the Book that named every enemy turns at last to the one inside you, and hands you the only door out

You have reached the last page of the Qur'an. The Book that showed you Allah toppling tyrants and lifting the weak, drowning some nations and guiding others, has walked you all the way to its final wall. And the Sheikh wants you to notice where it chooses to leave you: not with a grand scene of the Day, but with a quiet, desperate plea against a voice. After every external enemy the Qur'an named, the very last threat it turns to is the one whispering inside your own chest.

The conclusion is built like the opening

Sheikh Abu Bakr begins by reminding you that the people who wrote the tafsir of the Qur'an slowed right down when they reached this surah, the way they had slowed down at al-Fatiha. That is not a coincidence. When Allah concluded the Qur'an, He concluded it in the same spirit He opened it. Al-Fatiha and an-Nas are the two book-ends, and everything in between is the explanation of what they hold.

Read the whole Qur'an from the start, the Sheikh says, and one thing keeps surfacing: the oneness of Allah, and His power over all things. He is the One who ruined the rebelling nations and gave victory to the believers, who guided some and let others wander, who gave and withheld, healed and afflicted. You reach Surat an-Nasr near the very end and you see Him hand victory to a Prophet ﷺ who, at the start, stood utterly alone. You read the surah after it and watch Him crush his own uncle, Abu Lahab, who had set himself against the message. The lesson the Qur'an had been teaching all along lands: Allah raises the believers however few and weak, and breaks the deniers however many and strong.

So once those two enormous truths settle in you, that He is One and that you are desperately in need of Him, you remember what kind of world you have to cross. A world full of harms and evils you cannot get through safely without His protection. That, the Sheikh says, is exactly why the Qur'an ends here: al-Falaq, then an-Nas, two surahs of refuge, al-Muawwidhatayn, placed at the door on your way out.

Why the last three surahs are a summary of the whole

We are told to recite the last three surahs three times each in the morning and the evening, and once after every prayer. The Sheikh asks the obvious question: why these, why so often? Because, he says, these three together are a summary of the entire Qur'an. Surat al-Ikhlās gives you Allah the One (al-Ahad) and the One every creature leans on while He needs none (as-Samad), and once that settles, you turn to Him in your need. Then al-Falaq teaches you to seek refuge in the Lord of the daybreak from the external evils: the dark of night, the magicians, the envier when he envies.

But those harms, the Sheikh points out, are all outside you, and even at their worst they can only wreck this life. So the Qur'an saves the gravest threat for last. An-Nas turns inward, to an evil each of us carries, the whisper of the shaytan. This one can reach past your dunya and into your akhira. That is why it earned a surah of its own, and why the Book of Allah closes on it.

Why this surah asks so much more than the one before it

قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ النَّاسِ

Say, "I seek refuge in the Lord of mankind,

AN-NAS 114:1

Set the two surahs side by side, the Sheikh says, and a pattern jumps out. In al-Falaq, you seek refuge through one name of Allah (Lord of the daybreak) from many evils. In an-Nas, you seek refuge through three of His names from a single evil. Just from that, you learn how heavy this one evil is, and how much more your faith and your Hereafter weigh against the passing harms of this world. When the danger is to your deen, you do not knock once; you knock and knock again.

And before you even ask for protection, He has you say a word: Qul, say it. The Sheikh draws a quiet lesson out of that. You enter Allah's obedience first, by speaking the word He commanded, and only then do you make your request. Obedience comes before asking. He recalls the Prophet's ﷺ description of a man whose every outward sign is perfect for a prayer to be answered, dishevelled, dusty, hands raised to the sky, crying out Ya Rabb, Ya Rabb, and yet his food is haram, his drink is haram, his clothing is haram, so how could such a plea be

answered? Saying it aloud does something else too: it forces the proud tongue to confess weakness, and strips the pride out of the heart.

He could have said a thousand names, and He chose these three

مَلِكِ النَّاسِ

The Sovereign of mankind,

114:2

إِلٰهِ النَّاسِ

The God of mankind,

114:3

The Sheikh lingers on the word Rabb, because we shrink it when we translate it simply as Lord. He explains that the name carries a whole cluster of meanings: the Owner of everything (al-Malik), the One in complete authority over what He owns (as-Sayyid), the One who guides each created thing to its way (al-Murshid), the One who raises and nurtures with mercy and care (al-Murabbi), the Giver of gifts (al-Mun'im), and the Sustainer without whom existence would collapse in a blink (al-Qayyim). This, he notes, is the name Allah introduced Himself by first, to Musa, in the first revelation, Iqra bismi Rabbika. Rabb is His relationship to His creation: He made you, feeds you, guides you, holds you up. So the surah opens on the very name that matches your desperate need.

Then why say the Lord of mankind, when He is Lord of everything? To honour you, the Sheikh says. He set His name right beside the mention of mankind because, of all He created, the human being who accepts Him is the most honoured, lifted in rank even above the angels. And watch the order: Rabb, then Malik, then Ilah. As names they climb, because many things can be called a master, fewer a king, and none but Allah can be called Ilah, the one God who alone deserves worship. Once you know He is your Lord and the King who owns everything (including the shaytan you are about to flee), peace settles in you: the One you are running to owns the very thing you are running from. And that knowledge leads you, by its own logic, to take Him as your Ilah, the only One worthy of your worship.

There is a second pattern hidden underneath, and it is striking. As the names of Allah rise, the word an-Nas quietly narrows. Nearly all of mankind will admit He is Rabb, their Creator. Fewer truly hold Him as Malik, the King who owns it all, the ones who stay patient and say inna lillah when something is taken from them. Fewer still accept Him as Ilah, the ones who mean la ilaha illa Allah. The same arrangement, the Sheikh adds, teaches us how to teach: ground people in His lordship first, then His might, then call them to worship Him alone.

The threat is real, and it is the worst one you face

مِنْ شَرِّ الْوَسْوَاسِ الْخَنَّاسِ

From the evil of the retreating whisperer -

114:4

Now comes the core of the surah, the evil you are taking refuge from. Min sharr, the Sheikh notes, carries the image of a spark flying off a fire: small, but it burns whatever it lands on. And of all the harms a person meets, this one, al-waswas, is the greatest. It could even be the hidden cause behind every evil al-Falaq listed, for it is the whisper that talks a person into the magic, the envy, the crime in the dark. The whole first half of the surah was just the introduction; here is its heart.

Before any cure, the Sheikh insists you feel how serious this is. The shaytan is not an occasional nuisance; he is a sworn, patient, experienced enemy. The Qur'an records his oaths against you again and again, each worded differently, the Sheikh says, the way an enraged man keeps restating his threat: he begged to be left alive only so he could mislead the children of Adam, and he swore by Allah's might to come at us from the front and the back, the right and the left. He sits, the Prophet ﷺ said, on every path of good and tries to turn you off it: the path of Islam, the path of migration, the path of struggle, and the believer who pushes past him on each is promised the Garden. He flows in you like blood in your veins. The Qur'an's command, then, is blunt: take him as an enemy. So show that enmity even in the smallest daily things, eat and drink with your right hand because he eats with his left, cool your anger with water because anger is from his fire, slow down because haste is his and deliberateness is from Allah.

The name that hides his weak spot: al-khannas

Right beside the word for his greatest strength, Allah places the word that exposes his weakness: al-khannas, the retreator. The Sheikh explains that khaana means to slip back, to withdraw, to vanish after showing yourself. It is the word the Qur'an uses for the stars that hide after they appear (al-khannas), the ones that flicker on and off. And when do the stars come out? At night. So the shaytan, like a star, shows himself when the heart has fallen into the darkness of heedlessness, when the light of remembrance has gone out. The doubling in the word (al-khannas) means he does this constantly: comes, retreats, comes again.

Which hands you the whole cure in one word. He retreats at dhikr. The Prophet ﷺ taught that when the son of Adam remembers Allah, the shaytan shrinks back, and when he forgets, the shaytan returns. He flees the adhan. Do not curse him, the Sheikh warns, for then he swells up proud; say Bismillah instead, and he shrinks until he is small as a fly. On the Day of Arafah, with the whole ummah deep in remembrance, he is at his most humiliated and small. No wonder, the Sheikh says, that dhikr is the one act of worship the Qur'an commands us to do in abundance. You will never be rid of him completely, that is not the goal; he flows in your blood. The goal is to keep him stepping back, and to repent and make up the good the instant you slip, so whatever he was building against you comes down.

Why the chest, and not the heart

الَّذِي يُوَسْوِسُ فِي صُدُورِ النَّاسِ

Who whispers [evil] into the breasts of mankind -

114:5

The verb is yuwaswisu, present tense, which the Sheikh reads as ongoing and unending: he whispered to Adam, to the prophets, and he never stops, right down to a person's dying breath. The word fi means deep inside, not from a distance but within. And the chest here is plural over the plural of mankind, sudur an-nas: this reaches everyone, the righteous and the corrupt alike. To the devoted he whispers, no one has ever worshipped like you, until pride ruins him; to the sinner he whispers, this is nothing, others have done far worse, until the sin sits easy.

But notice the mercy, the Sheikh says, in the word chest rather than heart. He reaches for Ibn al-Qayyim's picture: your heart is a fortified castle, and your chest is the open field around it.

The shaytan prowls that field in circles, hunting for a way in, but as long as you keep watch with remembrance, the castle stays sealed and he is pushed back to the outer wall, khannas. Let the remembrance lapse, and he creeps closer; let it lapse long enough with no repentance, and he slips inside, and a heart he enters goes hard. Had the verse said heart instead of chest, the Sheikh notes, we would be finished, struck where we live. Instead Allah set the battle out in the field and left you the chance to hold the line. How do you know which way it is going? A believer finds beauty in faith and a real disgust for sin; when that flips, when sin starts to look sweet and goodness feels heavy, that is the sign he has crossed into the castle.

The whisper has two sources, and the surah ends where it began

مِنَ الْجِنَّةِ وَالنَّاسِ

From among the jinn and mankind."

114:6

The last ayah names where the whisper comes from: the jinn and mankind. The jinn are the hidden ones (the word itself means concealed, the Sheikh notes, like the unborn child hidden in the womb, or the shield that hides the soldier); the worst and most rebellious of them are the shayateen. A jinn can whisper into the chest, and even into the ear; a human whispers to another human, casting doubt about Allah or His Messenger ﷺ and then walking away. The jinn are named first because whispering is fundamentally their work, the very first waswasa was Iblis to Adam, and the human's whisper traces back to the shaytan in the end anyway.

And then the Sheikh closes on the most beautiful detail. When the Prophet ﷺ finished reciting an-Nas, he turned straight back and began al-Fatiha. The end of the Qur'an reaches for its beginning. Recite an-Nas, then open al-Fatiha and a little of al-Baqarah, and keep the circle turning, because your need for the end of the Book is no less than your need for its start. The study of the Qur'an, he says, never finishes.

What this surah asks of you

- **You knock three times for a reason.** Al-Falaq sought refuge through one name from many evils; an-Nas seeks refuge through three names from one. When the danger reaches your faith and not just your dunya, the asking gets more urgent, not less.

- **Run to the One who owns what you fear.** He is Rabb, Malik, and Ilah of mankind. The King who owns everything owns the shaytan too, so the refuge you take is in the only hand that holds the very thing chasing you.
- **The cure for the whisper is remembrance.** He is al-khannas, the one who retreats. He shows up when the light of dhikr goes out and slips back the moment it returns. You will not be rid of him; you keep him stepping back, every day, with the remembrance of Allah.
- **Guard the field and the castle holds.** The whisper lands in the chest, not yet the heart. While you keep watch, he circles the outer wall; let your guard drop and he creeps in. Watch what you love: when sin looks sweet and good feels heavy, he is closer than you think.

Why this surah stays with us

The Qur'an spends itself naming every great enemy and every great sign, and then, at the very last, it lowers its voice and points at the one threat you carry everywhere you go. It does not leave you afraid. It leaves you with three names of your Lord to hold onto, and a single word of remembrance that makes the whisperer step back. Then it sends you straight to al-Fatiha to begin again, because you are never done needing this.

O Allah, Lord of mankind, King of mankind, God of mankind, guard our chests from the evil that creeps into them. Keep our tongues busy with Your remembrance so the whisperer finds no opening, and make us people who, the moment we slip, turn back to You at once. Make us of the people of the Qur'an, who hear its reminders and are moved by them, and let us leave this world with our faith intact and our hearts still soft toward You.

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