The Quran (English translation)



Contents

The Quran

Sura 1, The Opening (Al-Fatiha)

Sura 2, The Cow (Al-Baqara)

Sura 3, The Family of ʿImran (Al ʿImran)

Sura 4, Women (Al-Nisa)

Sura 5, The Table Spread (Al-Maʾida)

Sura 6, Cattle (Al-Anʿam)

Sura 7, The Heights (Al-Aʿraf)

Sura 8, The Spoils of War (Al-Anfal)

Sura 9, Repentance (Al-Tawba)

Sura 10, Jonah (Yunus)

Sura 11, Hud (Hud)

Sura 12, Joseph (Yusuf)

Sura 13, Thunder (Al-Raʿd)

Sura 14, Abraham (Ibrahim)

Sura 15, The Rocky Plain (Al-Hijr)

Sura 16, The Bee (Al-Nahl)

Sura 17, The Night Journey (Al-Israʾ)

Sura 18, The Cave (Al-Kahf)

Sura 19, Mary (Maryam)

Sura 20, Ta Ha (Ta Ha)

Sura 21, The Prophets (Al-Anbiyaʾ)

Sura 22, The Pilgrimage (Al-Hajj)

Sura 23, The Believers (Al-Muʾminun)

Sura 24, Light (Al-Nur)

Sura 25, The Criterion (Al-Furqan)

Sura 26, The Poets (Al-Shuʿara)

Sura 27, The Ants (Al-Naml)

Sura 28, The Story (Al-Qasas)

Sura 29, The Spider (Al-ʿAnkabut)

Sura 30, The Byzantines (Al-Rum)

Sura 31, Luqman (Luqman)

Sura 32, Prostration (Al-Sajda)

Sura 33, The Allied Forces (Al-Ahzab)

Sura 34, Sheba (Sabaʾ)

Sura 35, The Originator (Fatir)

Sura 36, Ya Sin (Ya Sin)

Sura 37, Arrayed in Ranks (Al-Saffat)

Sura 38, Sad (Sad)

Sura 39, The Crowds (Al-Zumar)

Sura 40, The Forgiving (Al-Ghafir)

Sura 41, Explained in Full (Fussilat)

Sura 42, Consultation (Al-Shura)

Sura 43, Gold Adornments (Al-Zukhruf)

Sura 44, Smoke (Al-Dukhan)

Sura 45, Kneeling (Al-Jathiya)

Sura 46, Sand Dunes (Al-Ahqaf)

Sura 47, Muhammad (Muhammad)

Sura 48, Victory (Al-Fath)

Sura 49, The Private Apartments (Al-Hujurat)

Sura 50, Qaf (Qaf)

Sura 51, Scattering Winds (Al-Dhariyat)

Sura 52, Mount Sinai (Al-Tur)

Sura 53, The Star (Al-Najm)

Sura 54, The Moon (Al-Qamar)

Sura 55, The All Merciful (Al-Rahman)

Sura 56, The Inexorable Event (Al-Waqiʿa)

Sura 57, Iron (Al-Hadid)

Sura 58, The Woman Who Pleads (Al-Mujadila)

Sura 59, The Gathering (Al-Hashr)

Sura 60, The Woman Tested (Al-Mumtahana)

Sura 61, In Ranks (Al-Saff)

Sura 62, The Friday Prayer (Al-Jumuʿa)

Sura 63, The Hypocrites (Al-Munafiqun)

Sura 64, Mutual Fraud (Al-Taghabun)

Sura 65, Divorce (Al-Talaq)

Sura 66, Prohibition (Al-Tahrim)

Sura 67, Dominion (Al-Mulk)

Sura 68, The Pen (Al-Qalam)

Sura 69, Reality (Al-Haqqa)

Sura 70, The Paths of Ascent (Al-Maʿarij)

Sura 71, Noah (Nuh)

Sura 72, The Jinn (Al-Jinn)

Sura 73, The One Enwrapped (Al-Muzzammil)

Sura 74, The One Enfolded (Al-Muddaththir)

Sura 75, Resurrection (Al-Qiyama)

Sura 76, Humankind (Al-Insan)

Sura 77, Those Sent Out (Al-Mursalat)

Sura 78, The Announcement (Al-Nabaʾ)

Sura 79, Those Who Force Out (Al-Naziʿat)

Sura 80, He Frowned (ʿAbasa)

Sura 81, The Folding Up (Al-Takwir)

Sura 82, The Cleaving Asunder (Al-Infitar)

Sura 83, Those Who Defraud (Al-Mutaffifin)

Sura 84, The Splitting Asunder (Al-Inshiqaq)

Sura 85, The Constellations (Al-Buruj)

Sura 86, The Night Traveler (Al-Tariq)

Sura 87, The Most High (Al-Aʿla)

Sura 88, The Overshadowing Event (Al-Ghashiya)

Sura 89, The Breaking Dawn (Al-Fajr)

Sura 90, The City (Al-Balad)

Sura 91, The Sun (Al-Shams)

Sura 92, Night (Al-Layl)

Sura 93, Morning Light (Al-Duha)

Sura 94, The Broadening (Al-Sharh)

Sura 95, The Fig (Al-Tin)

Sura 96, Clot of Blood (Al-ʿAlaq)

Sura 97, The Night of Decree (Al-Qadr)

Sura 98, Clear Proof (Al-Bayyina)

Sura 99, The Earthquake (Al-Zalzala)

Sura 100, Racing Steeds (Al-ʿAdiyat)

Sura 101, The Thundering Calamity (Al-Qariʿa)

Sura 102, Competing for Worldly Gain (Al-Takathur)

Sura 103, Time (Al-ʿAsr)

Sura 104, The Backbiter (Al-Humaza)

Sura 105, The Elephant (Al-Fil)

Sura 106, Quraysh (Quraysh)

Sura 107, Small Kindnesses (Al-Maʿun)

Sura 108, Abundance (Al-Kawthar)

Sura 109, Those Who Disbelieve (Al-Kafirun)

Sura 110, Help (Al-Nasr)

Sura 111, The Palm Fiber (Al-Masad)

Sura 112, Unity/Sincerity (Al-Ikhlas)

Sura 113, The Dawn (Al-Falaq)

Sura 114, Humankind (Al-Nas)

Acknowledgments

Glossary

The Beautiful Names of God

Notes

Introduction

The Quran A Verse Translation M. A. R. Habib and Bruce B. Lawrence

The Quran

SURA 1

The Opening (Al-Fatiha)

Some scholars suggest that the opening sura is also known as umm al-kitab, the Mother of the Book, and sabʿan min al-mathani, the often repeated seven (verses). One of the earliest revelations, it accents the divine attributes of mercy and might, guidance and judgment in succinct, lyrical form.

1In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful°

2All praise° be to God,

Lord of the universe;°

3The All Merciful,

Ever Merciful;

4Ruler of the day

of reckoning.°

5You alone we worship;°

and You alone

we implore for help.

6Guide us to the straight path,

7the path of those

whom You have favored,

not of those

who have incurred Your° wrath,

nor of those

who have gone astray.

SURA 2

The Cow (Al-Baqara)

The longest sura, it numbers 286 verses and is named “The Cow,” designated by God as a sacrificial offering (vv. 67–73). Revealed in Medina, it relates to several prophets, Adam, Moses, and Abraham, with Abraham’s home in Mecca depicted as God’s house. Detailed instructions cover food, fasting, almsgiving, and prayer but also address fighting, retaliation, writing wills, marriage, divorce, and usury. It has several breaks, allowing the reader to absorb its component parts, especially v. 255, the Verse of the Throne, perhaps the most famous and frequently invoked verse in the entire Quran.

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1Alif. Lam. Mim.°

2This is the Book,

free of doubt—

a guide for those

mindful of the Divine;

3those who

believe in the unseen

are steadfast in prayer

and give in charity

from what We have given them;

4those who believe

in what was revealed to you,°

and revealed before you,

those assured

of the hereafter;

5they are the ones

guided by their Lord

and they are the ones

who will flourish.

6As for those

who don’t believe,

it is the same

whether you warn them or not—

they won’t believe.

7God has set a seal

over their hearts

and their hearing,

and over their sight is a veil—

and they shall face

great torment.

8Some of the people say,

“We believe in God and

in the last day”—but they do not°—

9they would deceive God

and those who believe

but they deceive only themselves

though they don’t perceive it;

10their hearts are filled with disease

that God increases, and they

shall face painful torment

for their lying ways.

11When told, “Don’t sow corruption

through the earth,” they reply,

“We are just reformers.”

12Wrong—they do spread corruption,

though they don’t perceive it.

13When told, “Believe,

like the others do,” they retort,

“What, shall we believe,

like the fools?”

Wrong—they are the fools,

though they don’t know it.

14When they meet believers

they say, “We believe,” but

when alone with their demons,°

they say, “Really, we’re with you—

we were merely mocking them.”

15It is God Who mocks them,

and prolongs their transgression,

leaving them to wander blindly;

16it is they who have exchanged

guidance for error,

but their trading is profitless,

for they are not guided.

17They’re like people who kindle a fire—

as it lights up their surroundings,

God banishes their light, leaving them

in darkness, unseeing—

18deaf, dumb, blind—

they shall never return [to the path]

19or, like people hunched beneath

a rainstorm bursting from the sky,

with darkness, thunder, lightning—

at the thunderclaps, they cover

their ears with their hands,

in dread of death—

God besieges the unbelievers

from all sides;

20the lightning all but blinds their sight;

whenever it flashes around them,

they walk on,

but when darkness falls upon them,

they stand, transfixed.

Had God willed,

He could have seized

their hearing

and their sight.

He has Power over all things.

SECTION 2

21Humankind, worship your Lord

Who created you and those before you,

that you might be mindful of God,

22Who made the earth

a couch for you,°

and the sky a canopy,

Who sent down rain from the sky,

and brought out from the earth

fruits to sustain you—

so don’t set up rivals with God,

when you know [the truth].

23And if you doubt

what We have revealed

to Our servant, then produce

a sura like this; and call

whatever witnesses you have

besides God,

if you are being truthful;

24but if you are unable—and

you will never be able—to do this,

then fear the fire, to be fueled

by humans and stones, prepared

for the unbelievers.

25And give joyous news

to those who believe

and do good deeds,

that they shall have gardens

with flowing rivers beneath;

whenever they are fed with its fruits,

they will say, “This

is what we were fed before,”

for they were given the same;

and there they shall have

pure spouses,

and live there forever.

26God does not recoil

from coining similes

using a lowly mosquito

or higher creatures.

Those who believe

know it is the truth from their Lord.

Those who disbelieve say,

“What does God mean

by this simile?”

We lead many astray by it

and many We guide by it

but We lead astray by it

only the stoutly disobedient.

27Those who break God’s covenant

after it was ratified,

and sever the bonds ordained by God

and spread corruption on the earth—

they will be the ones in loss.

28How can you deny God,

when you were dead

and He gave you life?

Then He will bring you death,

and life again, and to Him

you shall be brought back.

29It is He who created for you

all that is on the earth;

then, turning to the heavens

He fashioned them

as seven heavens°

for He Knows all things.

SECTION 3

30When your Lord said to the angels,

“I will place a regent on the earth,”°

they said, “Will you place there

one who will sow corruption

and shed blood

while we glorify You with praise

and sanctify you?” He responded,

“I know what you

do not know.”

31And He taught Adam

the names of all things,°

and He brought these things

before the angels, saying,

“Inform Me of their names

if you are right.”°

32They replied, “Glory be to You;

we have no knowledge beyond

what You taught us. You

are the Knowing, the Wise.”

33He said to Adam,

“Inform the angels

of the names of things.”

When Adam had done so,

God said, “Did I not tell you

that I know what is unseen

in the heavens and the earth,

that I know what you reveal

and what you conceal?”

34And when We said to the angels,

“Bow down before Adam,”

they bowed down—all

but Iblis;° he refused, proud—

he became a disbeliever.

35We said, “Adam,

you and your wife may live

in the garden, and eat from it

wherever you will;

but do not approach this tree

or you will both do wrong.”

36Then Satan caused them

to fall from the garden,

and dislodged them

from their state in it. And We said,

“Go down, all of you,

as enemies of one another;

on earth you shall have a place to live

and livelihood for a while.”°

37Yet Adam was taught words

[to beg repentance from his Lord],

Who turned to him, relenting—

He is the Ever Relenting,

Ever Merciful.

38We said, “Go down from here,

all of you. But when My guidance

comes, as it will, those who

follow it shall have no fear,

nor shall they grieve.

39“But those who disbelieve

and deny Our signs

shall be inmates of the fire,

abiding there forever.”

SECTION 4

40Children of Israel, remember

the blessing I bestowed upon you,

and fulfill your covenant to Me

as I fulfill My covenant to you

and fear Me, alone,

41and believe in what

I have revealed,

confirming the scripture

already with you;°

don’t be the first to deny it,

nor sell My signs for a paltry price

and be mindful of Me, alone;

42and don’t confound truth

with falsehood, nor conceal

the truth, when you know it.

43Be steadfast in prayer,

practice charity,

and bow down

with those who bow in worship.

44Do you command people

to righteousness—and

forget it yourselves—

while reciting the Book?

Will you not use reason?

45Seek God’s help, through

patience and prayer—though

this is hard, except for

those who are humble,

46those assured that they

will meet their Lord, and that

to Him they shall return.

SECTION 5

47Children of Israel, remember

the blessing I bestowed upon you,

and that I favored you

over all peoples°—

48so be fearful of a day

when no soul can help another

nor shall any intercession

from it be accepted

nor any compensation—

none shall be helped.

49And remember when We saved you

from the forces of Pharaoh, who

scourged you with terrible torments,

slaughtering your sons,

sparing only your women.

This was a tremendous trial

from your Lord,

50and We parted the sea for you,

saving you, and drowning

the forces of Pharaoh

as you looked on.

51We arranged for Moses to stay

for forty nights [on Mount Sinai];

then, [while he was gone], you took

the calf as an idol°—you did wrong.

52Even after this, We pardoned you

that you might be thankful,

53and We gave Moses the Book

and the criterion of right and wrong°

that you might be guided;

54and Moses said to his people,

“My people,

You have wronged yourselves,

worshipping the calf. So turn,

in repentance, to your Maker,

and kill [the evil in] yourselves.°

That will be better for you

in the sight of your Maker.”

Then God relented to you—

He is Relenting, Ever Merciful.

55And you said, “Moses,

we’ll never believe in you

until we see God, appearing.”

Then the thunderbolt

struck you, as you looked on.

56Then We raised you up, after death,

that you might be thankful,

57and [We brought down]

clouds to shade you,

and We sent down

to you manna and quail, saying,

“Eat of the good things

We have given you,”

for they did not wrong Us

but wronged themselves.

58And We said, “Enter this town

and eat freely there, wherever

you will, but enter the gate

bowing low, voicing repentance.

We will forgive your mistakes

and increase the reward

of those who do good.”

59But the wrongdoers distorted

the word they had been given,

so We sent down upon them

a plague from the sky

for they were disobedient.

SECTION 6

60And remember when

Moses prayed for water

for his people. We said,

“Strike the rock with your staff.”

Twelve springs gushed out from it,

and each tribe° knew

its drinking place.

“Eat and drink from what God gives,

and refrain from wicked action, sowing

corruption in the land.”

61And you° said, “Moses,

we can’t abide just one kind

of food, so entreat your Lord,

for us, to bring out what

the earth grows—its herbs,

cucumbers, garlic, lentils,

and onions.” He replied,

“Would you exchange

what is better for what is worse?

Go down to any town,

and you shall get what you ask for.”

They were struck

with humiliation and misery,

drawing upon themselves

the wrath of God.

They always denied God’s signs

and killed the prophets unjustly:

they were always disobedient,

always transgressing.

SECTION 7

62Those who believe, including

the Jews, Christians, and Sabians°–

all who believe in God

and the last day

and do good works—

they shall have

a reward from their Lord,

and they shall have no fear,

nor shall they grieve.

63And We took a pledge from you,

and raised the Mount [of Sinai],

towering above you,

[saying], “Hold fast to what

We gave you, and remember

what it contains, that you might

remain mindful of God.”

64But you turned back,

even after that, and

were it not for God’s grace

upon you, and His mercy,

you would be in loss.

65You knew those among you

who broke the Sabbath;

We said to them,

“Become apes, despised.”°

66We made this a deterrent

to those present, as well as those

who came after them—a warning

for those mindful of God.

67And when Moses told his people,

“God commands you

to sacrifice a cow,”

they retorted,

“Are you making fun of us?”

He responded, “God forbid

that I should be so ignorant.”°

68They said, “Pray to your Lord

to make clear to us what cow it is.”

He replied, “He says it should be

neither old nor young

but of middle years;

so do as you’re commanded.”

69They said, “Pray to your Lord

to tell us what color it should be.”

He replied, “He says it should be

bright yellow, pleasing

to those who see it.”

70They said, “Pray to your Lord°

to tell us exactly which cow—

to us all cows are alike.

We will be guided, if God wills.”

71Moses answered, “He says

it should be a cow not trained

to till the soil, nor

to water the fields;

perfect, without blemish.”

They exclaimed, “Now you’ve provided

the facts!”°

Then, still vacillating,

they offered her in sacrifice.

SECTION 8

72And when you Israelites

killed someone and argued

about who was to blame,

God revealed what

you had concealed.

73So We said, “Strike

the dead body with a piece

of the cow.” This is how

God brings the dead to life

and shows you His signs,

that you might use reason.

74Yet, even after that, your hearts

were hardened—like rocks,

or harder—for there are rocks

from which rivers gush forth,

and some which split to yield

streams running out,

and others that fall down

in fear of God;

for God is not heedless

of what you do.

75So, can you believers really hope

that they will believe you,

when a group of them

used to hear the words of God

and distort them willfully,

though they understood them?

76When they meet the believers,

they say, “We believe.” But when

they are with one another in private,

they say, “Why would you tell them

what God has revealed to you—

just so that they could argue it

against you before your Lord?

Do you not understand?”

77Do they not know that God

knows well what they conceal

and what they reveal?

78Among them are unlettered people

who don’t know the Book;

they take from it notions

to please themselves,

and merely conjecture.

79And woe to those who write

the Book with their own hands,

claiming, “This is from God”—

selling it for a paltry price.

Woe to them for what

their hands have written,

and what they earn by this.

80And they say, “The fire will

touch us only for some days.”

Say, “Has God promised you this?

—for God never breaks his promise—

Or, are you imputing to God

what you do not know?”

81No, those who reap evil,

engulfed by their sins,

shall be inmates of the fire,

where they shall stay forever.

82But those who believe

and do good works

shall live in the garden,

where they shall stay forever.

SECTION 9

83We made a covenant

with the children of Israel,

“Worship none but the One God,

and treat kindly your parents

and family, as well as orphans

and the poor. Speak kindly to people,

be steadfast in prayer,

and give what is due in charity.”

But then, all but a few of you

turned back—

and still you turn away.

84We made a covenant

with you: do not shed

one another’s blood, nor

drive one another from your homes;

you pledged this,

as you yourselves bore witness.

85Yet now, you are the ones

killing one another, driving

some from their homes,

helping one another in sin

and wronging them;

and if they come to you as captives,

you ransom them, though you were

forbidden to expel them.

Do you, then, believe in part

of the Book but deny another part?

What is the reward for those of you

who act like this except

disgrace in this life, and to be

sent back [to your Creator]

for the harshest torment

on the day of resurrection?

God is not heedless of what you do.

86These are the people who

trade the hereafter

for the life of this world;

their torment shall not be lightened,

nor shall they be helped.

SECTION 10

87We gave Moses the Book,

and We sent after him a series

of messengers. We gave clear signs

to Jesus, son of Mary, whom We

strengthened with the holy spirit.°

Whenever a messenger

came to you, bringing what you

did not desire, did you not grow proud,

denying some and killing others?

88They say, “Our hearts are closed

[against what you say.]” No—

God curses them for their disbelief;

and little do they believe.

89When there came to them

a Book from God, confirming what

they had before—and though they

had been praying for victory

against those who disbelieved—

even when they knew the truth

had come to them, they denied it;

and God curses the disbelievers.

90They have sold their souls

for a wicked price, by denying

what God has revealed, grudging

that God bestows His grace upon

whom He chooses of His servants.

So they have brought upon

themselves wrath upon wrath;

and the disbelievers will face

disgraceful torment.

91When they are told, “Believe

in what God has revealed,”

they say, “We believe

in what was revealed to us,”

but they deny what came after it,

even though it is the truth

confirming [the message]

they already had.

Say, “If you are believers, why

did you kill God’s prophets before?

92“Moses came to you

with clear signs; then,

while he was gone, you took

the calf as an idol—you did wrong.”

93And We took a pledge from you,

and raised Mount [Sinai],

towering above you,

[saying], “Hold fast to what

We have given you, and hear Us,”

they said, “We hear and disobey.”

And, through their disbelief,

their hearts were made to drink

devotion to the calf.

Say, “If you are believers,

what your faith commands

you to do is wicked.”

94Say, “If the final home with God

is for you alone, of all peoples,

you should hope for death—if

you are being truthful.”

95But they will never hope

for death—on account of

the deeds they have accrued;°

and God Knows all

that the wrongdoers do.

96You will find that they

are the people most attached to life—

even more than the polytheists.

Every one of them would love

to be granted life for a thousand years.

But that life-span would not drag them

away from the punishment,

for God Sees all that they do.

SECTION 11

97Say, “As for those who declare

themselves enemies of Gabriel—

know that it is he

who brought down [this message]

to your heart, by God’s leave,

confirming the previous scriptures

you already have, with guidance

and joyous news for the believers—

98“As for the disbelievers who are

enemies of God, His angels,

and His messengers

—as well as Gabriel and Michael°—

God is their enemy.”

99We have revealed to you

clear signs, and only

the disobedient deny them.

100Whenever they make a covenant,

why does a group of them throw it

aside? Most of them don’t believe.

101And when a messenger came

to them from God, confirming

the scripture they already had,

a group of those among

the people of the Book

ignored the Book of God,°

as if they had not known of it.

102They followed what

the demons recited about the reign

of Solomon;° it was not Solomon

who disbelieved, but the demons—

they taught people magic and what

was revealed to the two angels

in Babylon, Harut and Marut.°

Yet before they taught anyone,

these two always warned,

“We are only testing you.

So don’t disbelieve.”

From these two, [the disbelievers]

learned only to sow discord

between husband and wife,

though they could not harm anyone

by it except with God’s leave.

And they learned only things

that could harm them, not profit them—

knowing that whoever bought

this magic would have no share

in the hereafter.

They sold their souls at

a wicked price—if only they knew.

103Had they believed and been

mindful of God, they would have had

a better reward from their Lord—

if only they knew.

SECTION 12

104You who believe, don’t say,

“See us,” but “Look at us”—and

listen to him.° For the unbelievers

shall face painful torment.

105The disbelievers among

the people of the Book and

the polytheists don’t ever wish

anything good to be sent down

to you from your Lord. But God

chooses for His mercy whom He will;

for God’s grace is great.

106Whenever We abrogate a verse,°

or let it be forgotten, We bring

one better than it or similar.

Do you not know that God

has Power over all things?

107Do you not know

that God holds dominion

over the heavens and the earth,

and that beyond Him you will find

no protector or helper?

108Would you question

your messenger, as Moses

was questioned earlier?

Whoever exchanges belief

for disbelief undoubtedly

strays from the even path.

109Among the people of the Book

many wish they could turn you

back from belief to disbelief—

out of envy in themselves—even after

receiving the clear truth.

But forgive them and forbear

until God’s command comes,

for God has Power over all things.

110Be steadfast in prayer,

and practice due charity,

for whatever good you do

for yourselves, you will find it

laid up with God°—

God Sees all that you do.

111And they say, “No one

shall ever enter paradise unless

they are Jews or Christians.” This

is nothing but their fancy. Say,

“Bring your proof, if

what you say is true.”

112Rather, it is those who

submit their entire self° to God,

and do good, who shall have

their reward with their Lord;

they shall have no fear,

nor shall they grieve.

SECTION 13

113The Jews say, “Christians

have no basis [for their beliefs],”°

while the Christians say, “Jews

have no basis [for their beliefs].”

Yet they both read the Book,

and those with no knowledge

say the same thing.

But God will judge between them

on the day of resurrection,

about the issues they dispute.

114And who is more unjust

than someone who prevents

the remembrance of God’s name

in houses of worship,

and strives to desolate them?

Such people should enter

these houses only with awe;

they will face disgrace

in this world, and great torment

and in the hereafter.

115To God belong the East

and the West. Wherever you turn—

there is His Face—God,

the All Embracing, All Knowing.

116They say,

“God has begotten a child.”

Wrong—Glory be to Him—

to Him belongs all

that is in the heavens and the earth.

All things devoutly obey Him.

117He is the Originator

of the heavens and the earth.

When He decrees something,

He says to it, “Be!”—and it is.

118And those with no knowledge say,

“Why does God not speak to us?”

or “Why does no sign come to us?”

Those before them said the same—

their hearts are alike.

We have indeed made the signs

clear to people of firm faith.

119Yes, We have sent you,

[Prophet,] with the truth,

to give joyous news and

to give warning. But it’s not you

who must answer for

the inmates of the blazing fire.

120The Jews and Christians will

never be content until you adopt

their creed. Say, “The only guidance

is God’s guidance.”

If you were to comply with their desires

after the knowledge that has come to you,

you would have neither protector

nor helper against God.

121Those to whom We gave the Book,

those who recite it rightly—

they are the ones who believe in it;

but those who deny it—

they will be the ones who lose.

SECTION 14

122Children of Israel, remember

the favor I showed you,

choosing you over all peoples—

123so be fearful of a Day

when no soul can help another,

nor shall any compensation

from it be accepted,

nor shall any intercession

be of benefit to it—

none shall be helped.

124When Abraham was tried

by his Lord with certain commands,

which he fulfilled, God said,

“I will make you a leader of nations.”

Abraham asked,

“And my descendants also?”

God responded,

“My promise does not extend

to those who do wrong.”

125And We made the House [in Mecca]

a place of assembly for people,

and of sanctuary, saying,

“Take the station of Abraham°

as your place of prayer,” and

We made a covenant

with Abraham and Ishmael

that they should purify My House

for those who walk around it,

or stand there in devotion,

or bow and prostrate

themselves in prayer.

126And when Abraham said,

“My Lord, make this town

a sanctuary, and sustain its people

with fruits—those of them

who believe in God

and the last day,” God responded,

“As for those who disbelieve,

I will grant them enjoyment

for a short while, and then

drive them to the torment

of the fire—an evil end.”

127So Abraham and Ishmael

erected the foundations

of the House, saying, “Our Lord,

accept this from us, for You

are the All Hearing, All Knowing.”

128“Our Lord, make us both,

and our descendants,

a community that submits

to Your will.° Show us

the due rites of pilgrimage,

and relent to us.

You are the Ever Relenting,

Ever Merciful.”

129“Our Lord, raise among them

a messenger of their own, reciting

to them Your verses, teaching

them the Book and wisdom,

purifying them. You—

You alone are Almighty, All Wise.”°

SECTION 15

130And who would turn away

from the creed of Abraham

but those who fool themselves?

We chose him in this world,

and in the hereafter he will be

among the righteous.

131When his Lord said to him,

“Submit to My will,” he complied:

“I submit to the Lord

of the universe.”

132And Abraham urged his sons,

as did Jacob, “My sons,

God has chosen this religion for you,°

so be sure that you die

submitting [to His will].”

133Did you witness Jacob’s death?°

In fact, when he asked his sons,

“What will you worship after me?”

They said, “We will worship

your God, and the God

of your fathers, of Abraham,

Ishmael, and Isaac—the One God—

and to Him we submit our will.”

134That community° is gone;

what they earned was for them,

and what you earn is for you;

you shall not be questioned

about their deeds.

135They say, “Become Jews

or Christians—to be rightly guided.”

Say, “No—ours is the creed

of Abraham, the upright, who

never ascribed partners to God.”

136Say, “We believe in God,

in what has been revealed to us,

and what was revealed to Abraham,

Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the tribes,

and in the Books given to Moses,

Jesus, and the prophets,

from their Lord;

we make no distinction between

any among them,

and to God we submit our will.”

137If they believe as you believe,

they will be rightly guided; but if

they turn back, they will quarrel.

God is enough to guard you

against them, for He is

All Hearing, All Knowing.

138[Our religion takes its] color

from God—and who better

to imbue color than God?°

So we worship Him alone.

139Say [to the Jews and Christians],

“Do you dispute with us about God

when He is our Lord and your Lord?

Your deeds are yours,

and our deeds are ours,

and we are true to Him alone.

140“Or do you say that Abraham,

Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and

the tribes were Jews or Christians?”

Say, “Do you know better

than God? Who is more unjust

than someone who hides

the testimony he has from God?

For God is not unmindful

of what you do.”

141That community is gone—

what they earned was for them,

and what you earn is for you;

you shall not be asked

about their deeds.

SECTION 16

142The fools among the people

will say, “What has turned them

from the direction of prayer

they used to face?”°

Say, “To God belong the East

and the West; He guides

whom He will to a straight path.”

143And so We made you

a community of moderation°—

to witness the truth

against humankind,

and the messenger a witness

against you.

And We set the direction

you used to face in prayer

that We might set apart°

those who followed the messenger

from those who turned on their heels;

that test was hard except for those

whom God guided;

God would never let your faith

go to waste—

God is Most Kind, Ever Merciful,

toward humankind.

144We see you [Prophet] turning

your face for guidance toward

the heavens. We will turn you toward

a direction that will please you—

turn your face

toward the sacred mosque [in Mecca];

wherever you are,

turn your faces toward it.

And those granted the Book

know it is the truth from their Lord.

Nor is God heedless of what they do.

145Even if you brought all the signs

to those granted the Book,

they would not follow

your direction,

nor shall you follow

their direction,

nor will they follow

one another’s direction.

Were you to follow their desires,

after the knowledge

that has come to you,

you would be among

those who do wrong.

146Those to whom

We granted the Book

know the Prophet

as well as they know

their own sons; but a group

of them conceal the truth

even though they know it.

147The truth is from your Lord,

so don’t be one of those who doubt.

SECTION 17

148Each community° has

a direction toward which it turns;

so compete in good works.

Wherever you are, God shall

finally bring you all together—

God has Power over all things.

149Wherever you start from,

turn your face toward

the sacred mosque—

this is the truth from your Lord,

nor is God heedless

of what you do.

150Wherever you start from,

turn your face toward

the sacred mosque; wherever you are,

turn your faces toward it, so that

people have no dispute with you,

except the wrongdoers among them;

and do not fear them, but fear Me,

that I might perfect My favor to you,

and that you might be rightly guided,

151just as We have sent you

a messenger, from among you,

reciting Our signs, purifying you,

teaching you

the Book and wisdom,

and teaching you

what you did not know.

152So, remember Me—

and I will remember you.

Show thanks to Me, and

do not be ungrateful.

SECTION 18

153You who believe, seek help

through patience and prayer;

God is with those who show patience.

154And do not say of those

killed in the cause of God

that they are dead. No—

they are living, though

you don’t perceive it.

155We will try you

with fear and hunger, with loss

of wealth and life and crops;

but give joyous news to

those who show patience,

156who say, when struck

by calamity, “To God we belong,

and to God we shall return.”°

157They are the ones on whom

their Lord sends blessings and mercy;°

they are the rightly guided ones.

158The hills of Safa and Marwa

are among the symbols of God,°

so for those performing

the major or minor pilgrimage,°

there is no fault in walking

between them; and if anyone

does good of his own accord,

God is Appreciative, All Knowing.

159As for those who conceal

the clear signs and guidance

We have revealed

—after We made them clear

in the Book for humankind—

they are the ones whom

God curses and others curse,

160except those who repent,

reform themselves, and openly

declare [the truth]. To those I relent,

for I am Relenting, Ever Merciful.

161The curse of God, the angels,

and all humankind shall fall

upon those who disbelieve,

and die as disbelievers.

162They shall endure this state

forever, without any lightening

of their torment or respite.

163Your God is One God—

there is no god but He,

the Most Merciful, Ever Merciful.

SECTION 19

164In the creation

of the heavens and earth,

in the revolving

of night and day,

in the ships that sail upon the sea

for the gain of humankind,

in the rain that

God sends from the sky,

bringing life to the earth

after its death,

in the spreading of every

kind of beast through it,

in the directing of the winds

and clouds, floating

between heaven and earth—

in all these are signs for

people who use reason.

165Yet some people take others

as equal to God, loving them

as they should love God.

But those who believe

are stronger in their love for God.

If only the wrongdoers could see—

as when they will see

their punishment—that all power

belongs to God, and that God

is Severe in Punishment.

166When those who were followed

disown their followers, and they

see the punishment, and all bonds

among them are severed,

167the followers will say,

“If only we could go back,

we would disown them

as they now disown us.”

So God will make them

see their deeds with deep regret,

they will never escape the fire.

SECTION 20

168“People, eat from what is lawful

and good upon the earth, and

don’t follow in the footsteps

of Satan; for he

is your open enemy.

169“For he commands you

to evil and indecency,

and to say of God

what you do not know.”

170When told, “Follow what

God has revealed,” they say,

“No. We follow the ways

of our fathers.” What?

Even though their fathers

understood nothing

nor were rightly guided?

171Those who disbelieve

can be compared to one who

shouts like a shepherd to flocks

who hear nothing

but a cry and a call—

deaf, dumb, blind,

they are bereft of reason.

172You who believe,

eat of the good things

We have given you,

and be thankful to God,

if it is Him you worship.

173He has forbidden for you

only carrion, blood, the flesh

of swine, and anything on which

some name other than God’s

was invoked. But whoever

is constrained—without wanting

to disobey or transgress—

shall remain blameless.

God is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

174Those who conceal what

God has revealed in the Book

and trade it for a paltry price—

they shall swallow into their bellies

nothing but fire—

God shall not speak to them

on the day of resurrection, nor

purify them; theirs shall be

a painful punishment.

175They are the ones who trade

guidance for error, forgiveness

for punishment; how shall they

endure the fire?

176That is because God revealed

the Book, with truth,

and those who dispute the Book

have gone far astray, in discord.

SECTION 21

177Righteousness

does not reside

in turning your faces

toward East or West;

rather, it resides in those—

who believe in God

and the last day,

in the angels, the Book,

and the prophets;

who give their wealth

—despite their love of it—

for kin, for orphans, the needy,

the traveler, for those who ask,

and for freeing slaves;

who are steadfast in prayer,

who give in charity,

keeping their covenants;

who suffer in patience

hardship, pain, and

times of conflict—

they are the ones

who are truthful, and

they are the ones

mindful of God.

178You who believe, you are

commanded to be fair in requital

for murder—free man for free man,

slave for slave, woman for woman.

But if the culprit is pardoned

by his injured brother, he should

seek suitable recompense,

given graciously. This is a mitigation

and a mercy from your Lord.

Whoever transgresses after this

shall face painful torment.

179The rule of retaliation

preserves life for you—

you people with insight,

so that you might be righteous.

180When death approaches any of you

who leaves wealth behind—

you are commanded

to make a suitable bequest

to parents and close relatives;

this is a duty imposed on those

who are mindful of God.

181Anyone who alters the bequest

after hearing it commits a sin—

God is All Hearing, All Knowing.

182But if anyone suspects that

the testator is mistaken or biased,

it is no sin for him

if he reconciles the two parties.

God is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

SECTION 22

183You who believe,

fasting is ordained for you,

as it was ordained for those

before you, so that you might

be mindful of God—

184fasting for a fixed number

of days. But if any of you is ill,

or traveling, then for a fixed number

of other days.

Those who find it difficult

may compensate by feeding

a needy person. But if anyone

does good of his own accord,

it will be better for him.

And fasting is better for you,

if only you knew.

185It was in the month of Ramadan

that the Quran was sent down,

as a guide for humankind,

with clear signs of guidance and

criteria of right and wrong.

So whoever among you

is present during the month

should fast in it.

And whoever is ill, or on a journey,

should make up a fixed number

of other days. God intends ease,

not hardship, for you—and that

you complete the ordained period,

so that you might magnify Him

for His guidance, and be thankful.°

186Prophet, when My servants

ask you about Me, I am indeed Near;

I answer the prayer of those

who pray to me. So let them

respond to Me, and believe in Me,

that they might be rightly guided.

187You are allowed, on the night

of fasting, to approach your wives;

they are your garment and

you are their garment.

God knows that you used to betray

yourselves,° but He turned to you

and pardoned you; so now,

be intimate with them and seek what

God has ordained for you.

Eat and drink until you can

distinguish the white thread of dawn

from the black thread. Then

complete your fast until nightfall,

and don’t be intimate with your wives

while you are secluded in devotion

in the mosques.

These are the limits set by God,

so do not venture near them.

This is how God makes clear

His signs to humankind,

so that they might be mindful of Him.

188Do not wrongfully consume

one another’s property,

and do not use it to bribe judges

in order to consume a portion

of other people’s property,

sinfully—and knowingly.

SECTION 23

189They ask you, Prophet,

about the new moons. Say,

“They signify fixed periods

for people, and for the pilgrimage.

Also, it is not righteous for you

to enter houses by the back door;°

righteousness resides in being

mindful of God.

Enter houses by their main doors.

And be mindful of God

that you might flourish.”

190Fight in the cause of God

against those who fight you,

but do not transgress due limits;

for God dislikes transgressors.

191And kill them where you

find them, and drive them out

from where they drove you out—

for persecution is worse

than killing.° But do not

fight them at the sacred mosque

unless they fight you there.

But if they do fight you, kill them.

This is the disbelievers’ reward.

192But if they should stop—God

is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

193Fight them until there is

no more persecution,

until worship at the sacred mosque

is for God alone. But if they stop,

let there be no more hostility

except against aggressors.

194Sacred month for sacred month;°

and for all violations, a fair requital.

If anyone assaults you, you may

respond in kind, equally, against them;

but fear God, and know that God

is with those who fear Him.

195Spend in the cause of God, to

avoid bringing ruin upon yourselves,°

and practice good deeds, for

God loves those who do good.

196Complete the major or minor pilgrimage

for the sake of God; if you are

prevented from this, then sacrifice

whatever animal you can,

and do not shave your heads

until the animal reaches

the sacrificial site.

If any of you is ill or has

a malady of the head,

they can compensate by fasting,

or charity or ritual sacrifice.

When you feel secure, those who

have the chance to perform

the minor along with the major pilgrimage

should offer whatever sacrifice

they can afford; those without

the means should fast for three days

during the major pilgrimage, and seven days

upon your return, ten days in all.

This is for people whose house

is not near the sacred mosque.

Be mindful of God, and know

that God is Severe in Requital.

SECTION 24

197The major pilgrimage occurs during

the ordained months; those who

perform the duty of pilgrimage then

should refrain from lewdness,

or wickedness, or quarreling.

And whatever good you do,

God knows it.

Take provision for your journey—

but the best provision

is mindfulness of God.

Be mindful of Me,

you who understand.

198There’s nothing wrong with your

seeking the bounty of your Lord

[while the pilgrimage goes on].°

Then when you leave, going down

from Mount ʿArafat, remember God

at the sacred site of Muzdalifa.°

Remember Him, for He guided you

before, when you were astray.

199Then leave, going down,

where all the other people go down,

and ask forgiveness of God; for

God is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

200When you have finished

your rites of worship, remember

God—as you remember

your fathers, or with more fervent

remembrance. For some people

pray, “Our Lord, grant us good

in this world”—they shall have

no share in the hereafter.

201There are others who pray,

“Our Lord, grant us good in

this world and in the hereafter,

and deliver us from

the torment of fire.”

202They shall have what they earned;

for God is Swift in Reckoning.

203And remember God

during the appointed days,°

but if anyone leaves earlier

—in two days—this is no sin,

nor if anyone stays longer,

for those who fear God.

So fear God, and know that

you will be gathered to Him.

204There’s a kind of person

whose talk in this worldly life

might please you, and they call

on God to witness

what is in their heart—

yet they are the most

contentious of opponents.

205When they turn to go away,

they strive to sow corruption

in the land, and to destroy

crops and livestock—

and God despises corruption.

206When urged, “Be mindful

of God,” their pride leads them to sin.

Hell shall be ample for them—

an evil end.

207But there are also people

who would sell their own selves

seeking to please God—and

God is Most Compassionate

toward His servants.

208You who believe,

submit yourselves entirely,

and don’t follow

in the footsteps of Satan—

your open enemy.

209If you backslide, after

clear signs have come to you,

you should know that God

is Almighty, All Wise.

210Are they waiting for God

to come to them in the shadows

of clouds, with a train of angels?

No—the entire matter is settled.

All matters revert to God.

SECTION 25

211Ask the children of Israel

how many clear signs

We sent to them.

But those who alter

the blessings of God

after what has come to them,

should know that

God is Severe in Requital.

212This worldly life is alluring

to those who disbelieve, and they

mock those who do believe.

But those who are mindful of God

will be higher than them

on the day of resurrection, and

God provides without measure

for those whom He will.

213Humankind was one community,

[then they quarreled]

so God sent prophets to bear

joyous news and to warn people.

He sent with them the Book,

with truth, to judge between people

in the things they disputed.

But, in their mutual envy,

those who were given the Book

quarreled, even after receiving

clear signs. So, God guides

the believers to the truth, by His will,

in the things they dispute.

And God guides whom He will

to a straight path.

214Or, do you think you will

enter the garden without facing

the trials imposed

on those before you?

They were struck by misfortune

and hardship, and were so shaken

that their messenger and those

who believed with him

cried, “When will the help

of God come?” Without doubt,

the help of God is near.

215They ask you what they

should spend in charity.

Say, “Whatever you spend for good

should be for parents, close kin,

orphans, the poor, and travelers.

And whatever good you do,

God Knows it.”

216Fighting is ordained for you

though you find it abhorrent.

But it may be that you abhor

something which is good for you,

and love something

which is bad for you;

for God knows—and you do not.

SECTION 26

217They ask you about fighting

during the sacred month. Say,

“Fighting in it is a grave offense,

but hindering people from

God’s path, disbelieving in Him,

barring access to the sacred mosque,

and driving out its people

are even more grave in God’s eyes,

for persecution is worse

than killing.” They won’t stop

fighting you until they turn you back

from your religion, if they can.

And those of you who turn back

from their religion and die

as disbelievers—their deeds

shall be vain in this life

and in the hereafter,

and they shall be inmates

of the fire—forever.

218Those who have believed,

migrated, and striven in God’s cause

can hope for God’s mercy—

God is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

219They ask you about wine

and gambling. Say, “In them both

is great sin, and some gain for people;

but their sin is greater than their gain.”

They ask you what they should spend

in charity. Say, “Whatever

you can spare.” In this way,

God makes clear for you His signs,

that you might reflect,

220both in this life

and the hereafter.

And they ask you about orphans.

Say, “Improving their state is best.

and if you mix with them,

bear in mind that they

are your brothers; for God knows

the difference between those

who corrupt and those who reform.

Had He wished, He could have

made things difficult for you.

God is Almighty, All Wise.”

221Do not marry women who

are polytheists, until they believe—

for a believing female slave

is better than a polytheist,

however alluring she is to you;

nor give your women in marriage

to men who are polytheists,

until they believe—

for a believing male slave

is better than a polytheist,

however alluring he is to you.

These beckon you to the fire—

while God beckons to the garden,

and forgives by His leave;

He makes clear

His signs to humankind

that they might take heed.

SECTION 27

222They ask you about menstruation.°

Say, “It is an infirmity, so keep away

from women during menstruation;

don’t approach them

until they are purified. When pure,

you may approach them

as God has ordained.”

God loves those who turn to Him,

and He loves those

who keep themselves pure.

223Your wives are your fields

so go into your fields

as you please, advancing

good deed for yourselves,°

and be mindful of God;

know that you will meet Him, and

give joyous news to the believers.

224And don’t make

your oaths to God an excuse

for neglecting good deeds

or being mindful of God,

or reconciling between people,

for God is All Hearing, All Knowing.

225God will not call you to account

for oaths you spoke unintentionally,

but He will call you to account

for what your hearts have earned—

God is Forgiving, Most Forbearing.

226For those who swear

to abstain from their wives,

there will be a waiting period

of four months—and if

they go back [to them],

God is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.°

227But if they resolve on divorce,

they should know that God

is All Hearing, All Knowing.

228Divorced women shall wait

for three monthly periods

[before marrying again],

and it is not lawful for them

to hide what God has created

in their wombs—if they believe

in God and the last day.

If their husbands want to reconcile,

they have more warrant

to take them back during this time.

And their rights are similar

to the rights over them,

as in what is known to be fair;

though husbands have

a degree [of right] over them—

God is Almighty, All Wise.

SECTION 28

229Divorce [can be revoked] twice.

Each time, keep your wife

on equitable terms, or

release her in a kindly manner.

It’s not lawful for you to take back

anything you gave her, unless

you both fear that you can’t adhere

to the limits set by God;

if you fear this, there is no blame

on either of you if the woman

gives a sum for her release.

These are the limits set by God,

so do not transgress them.

Those who do so are wrongdoers.

230If a husband then divorces his wife,

it’s not lawful for him

to remarry her unless she has married

another husband; if he divorces her,

then there is no blame if she and her

first husband return to each other,

if they think they can adhere

to the limits ordained by God.

These are the limits set by God,

which He makes clear

for those who know.

231When you divorce women,

and they finish their waiting period,

either keep them or release them

on fair terms; but don’t keep them

with intent to harm them, so as to transgress.

Whoever does this

wrongs himself. Do not take

the signs of God in jest—

remember God’s favor to you

and the Book and wisdom

He revealed, to instruct you.

Be mindful of God, and know

that God Knows all things.

SECTION 29

232When you divorce women,

and they finish their waiting period,

don’t prevent them from marrying

their former husbands, if they

both agree, on fair terms.

This is counsel for those of you

who believe in God and the last day

to make you more virtuous and pure,

for God knows—and you do not.

233Mothers suckle their offspring

for two whole years, if they wish

to complete the term; the father

should maintain and clothe them

in a suitable manner. No one should

be burdened beyond their limit.

The mother shall not suffer

on account of her child, nor

the father on account of his.

The same duty falls upon

the father’s heir. And there’s no fault

if the couple, by mutual consulting

and consent, want to wean the child,

nor if you procure a wet nurse

for your child, provided you give

fair payment. Be mindful of God,

and know that God

Sees all that you do.

234If any of you die and leave

widows behind, they shall wait

for four months and ten days [before

remarrying]; and when they reach

this appointed term, there is no blame

on you [the guardians] if they then

conduct their affairs honorably.°

God is Aware of all that you do.

235There is no blame on you whether

you hint at a proposal of marriage

to these women or don’t disclose it.°

God knows that you want to propose

to them. Don’t make a secret contract

with them but speak honorably to them;

and don’t bind the knot of marriage

until the appointed period expires.

And know that God knows what is

within you; heed Him, and know

that God is Forgiving, Forbearing.

SECTION 30

236There is no blame on you

if you divorce women before

you consummate the marriage

and you have not fixed their dowry.

But provide a suitable gift for them,

the rich according to their means,

and the poor according to theirs—

a duty for those who do good.

237If you divorce women before

you consummate the marriage but

after you have fixed their dowry,

then give them half of the dowry,

unless they—or those holding

the marriage tie°—waive it.

Waiving it comes closer

to being mindful of God. So do not

forget to be generous to one another.

God Sees all that you do.

238Preserve your practice of prayers,

especially the midafternoon prayer,

and stand before God in devotion.

239If you are in fear of [an enemy],

then pray on foot, or while riding;

but when you are safe, remember God

in the way He taught you,

which you did not know before.

240Those of you who die

and leave widows behind

should bequeath your widows

a year’s provision, and not

expel them. But if they leave,

there is no blame on you

[the guardians] if they then

conduct their affairs honorably.°

God is Almighty, All Wise.

241Divorced women should be

fairly provided for—a duty

for those who are mindful of God.

242This is how God makes clear

His signs, so that you might

use your reason.

SECTION 31

243Won’t you reflect on those

who abandoned their homes,

though in their thousands, in fear

of death? God commanded them,

“Die!” But then He brought them

back to life. God is full of favor

toward humankind, yet

most are ungrateful.

244So fight in the cause of God,

and know that God

is All Hearing, All Knowing.

245Who will lend to God

a beautiful loan, which He might

multiply for them many times?

It is God who withholds or

grants in abundance—and to Him

you shall be returned.

246Won’t you reflect on the chiefs

of the children of Israel

after the time of Moses?

When they said to the prophet

among them, “Appoint for us a king,

so that we might fight

in the cause of God,”° he answered,

“Perhaps if you were commanded

to fight, you might not fight?”

They said, “How could we not

fight in the cause of God

after we have been turned out

of our homes, with our children?”

Yet when they were commanded

to fight, they turned back

—all but a few—

God Knows those who do wrong.

247Their prophet said to them,

“God has appointed Saul as your King.”

They said, “How can he be our king

when we have more right to kingship than him?

And he has not even been granted

much wealth.” The prophet replied,

“God has chosen him over you, and

has granted him much knowledge,

and a fair form.

God grants kingship to whom He will,

for God is Expansive, All Knowing.”

248And their prophet said to them,

“A sign of his kingship is that

the ark of the covenant° shall come

to you; it shall bear reassurance

from your Lord and relics from

the family of Moses and of Aaron,

which the angels shall bear.

In this is a sign for you

if you are true believers.”

SECTION 32

249Then, when Saul set out with

his armies, he said, “God will test you

at the river. Whoever drinks from it

shall not belong with me, and

whoever refrains from tasting it

shall be with me, though those who

take a handful will be excused.”

But all except a few drank from it.

When they crossed the river,

he and the believers with him said,

“We lack strength this day against

Goliath and his forces.” But those

assured of meeting God responded,

“How often has a small force

vanquished a large one,

by God’s leave? For God

is with those who show patience.”

250When they advanced against

Goliath and his armies, they prayed,

“Our Lord, fill us with patience,

make firm our feet, and help us

against a disbelieving people.”

251So they defeated them,

by God’s leave, and David

killed Goliath; God gave David

sovereignty and wisdom, and

taught him what He wished.

If God did not restrain

some people by others, the earth

would be corrupt—but God is

Full of Grace to humankind.

252These are the signs of God;

We recite them to you, the truth,

for you are one of the messengers.

253We favored some

of these messengers over others.

God spoke to some, and raised others

in rank. We gave Jesus, son of Mary

clear proofs, and strengthened him

with the holy spirit. If God had willed,

their descendants would not have

fought one another after clear signs

had come to them. But they disputed,

some believed, others disbelieved;

had God willed, they would not have

fought—but God does as He intends.

SECTION 33

254You who believe, spend

in charity from what We give you—

before there comes a Day

when there will be

no bargaining,

nor friendship,

nor intercession;

for the disbelievers are wrongdoers.

255God—there is no god but He,°

the Living, the Self-Subsisting.

Never can slumber seize Him,

nor sleep. To Him belongs

all that is in the heavens, and

all that is on the earth.

Who can intercede with Him

except by His leave? He knows

what lies ahead, and

what lies behind.

None can approach His knowing,

only as He wills.

His throne extends

over the heavens and the earth,

which He guards and preserves

with no fatigue,

for He is Most High,

Supreme.

256There shall be no compulsion

in religion; true guidance is now

distinct from error.

Whoever denies false gods

and believes in the One God

has grasped the firmest handhold,

which shall never break—for God

is All Hearing, All Knowing.

257God is the Protector of those

who believe, Who leads them

from darkness into light;

but the protectors of those

who disbelieve are false gods,

who lead them from light

into darkness. They shall be

inmates of the fire—forever.

SECTION 34

258Have you reflected on the man

who argued with Abraham about

his Lord because He granted him

sovereignty?° When Abraham said,

“My Lord is He Who brings life

and death,” he replied, “I bring life

and death.” Abraham responded,

“My Lord brings up the sun

from the East—why don’t you

try to bring it from the West?”

So the disbeliever was speechless;

God does not guide

a people who do wrong.

259Or like the man who passed by

a ruined city, its roofs overturned,

and remarked, “How will God

bring it to life after its death?”

Then God made him die

for a hundred years, and

raised him up again.

God asked him,

“How long have you been here?”

He answered,

“I have been here a day or part

of a day.” God said,

“No, you have been here

a hundred years;

look at your food and drink—

they have not changed;

and look at your donkey.

“We shall make you a sign

for people.

And look at the bones,

how We raise them and cover

them with flesh.”

When it was made clear to him,

he said, “I know that God

has Power over all things.”

260When Abraham said,

“My Lord, show me how

you give life to the dead,”

He said, “Do you not believe?”

He replied, “Yes, but to satisfy

my heart.” God said,

“Take four birds, train them

to return to you, then

place pieces of them

on each hill, and call to them.

They will fly back to you in haste—

know that God is Almighty, All Wise.”

SECTION 35

261A parable: those who spend

their wealth in God’s cause are like

a grain of corn that grows seven ears,

and each ear bears a hundred grains.

God gives in abundance

to whom He will,

for He is Expansive, All Knowing.

262Those who spend their wealth

in God’s cause—without reminders

of their kindness or words that hurt—

their reward is with their Lord;

they shall not fear, nor grieve.

263Kind words and forgiveness

are better than charity followed

by hurt—and God

is Self-Sufficient, Forbearing.

264You who believe, don’t annul

your acts of charity by reminders

or hurtfulness, like those who

spend their wealth only to be seen

of people—those who don’t

believe in God and the last day.

They are like a smooth rock

covered with soil;

heavy rain falls on it

and leaves it bare.

They have no power

over what they reap,

for God does not guide

a people who disbelieve.

265Another parable: those

who spend their wealth seeking

to please God and assure their souls

are like a garden lodged on a height;

heavy rain falls on it and its yield

is doubled; and if not heavy rain,

even the dew will water it—

God Sees all that you do.

266Would any of you wish

to have a garden with date palms

and grapevines, and rivers

flowing beneath, in which they have

all kinds of fruit, only to be struck

by old age while their children

are vulnerable, and for it to be

engulfed by a whirlwind of fire

and burned up? This is how

God makes clear for you His signs,

that you might reflect.

SECTION 36

267You who believe, give

charitably of the good things

you have earned, and of what

We have brought out for you

from the earth; and don’t aim

to give shabby things which you

yourselves would only accept

with closed eyes;

and know that God

is Self-Sufficient, Praiseworthy.

268Satan promises you poverty,

and incites you to indecency;

but God promises you His grace

and forgiveness; for God is

All Embracing, All Knowing.

269He grants wisdom to whom

He will, and whoever gains wisdom

has been granted great good;

but only those with insight

will take heed.

270Whatever you spend

or vow to spend in charity,

God knows it; and the wrongdoers

shall have none to help.

271If you reveal your deeds

of charity, that is fine; but if you

conceal them, and give to the poor,

this is better for you, and will atone

for some of your bad deeds,

for God is Aware of all that you do.

272It is not for you, Prophet,

to guide them; God guides whom

He will. Whatever you spend

for good, it is for your own souls,

if you spend it solely seeking

the Face of God.

Whatever you spend for good

shall be fully returned to you

and you shall not be wronged.

273Give in charity to the poor

who are committed to God’s cause

and unable to travel in the land.

The ignorant might think them rich

on account of their self-restraint

but you will recognize them

by their trait of refraining from

begging insistently; and whatever

you spend for good, God Knows it.

SECTION 37

274Those who spend of their wealth

in charity, by night and by day,

in private and in public—

they shall have a reward

with their Lord;

they shall not fear,

nor shall they grieve.

275Those who devour money

through usury° will stand on the day

of resurrection as people confounded

by Satan’s touch. That is because

they say, “Usury is merely like trade.”

But God has allowed trade

and forbidden usury. Those who desist

after receiving admonition

may retain their previous gains,

and their case shall be judged by God.

But those who persist in its practice

shall be inmates of the fire; there

they shall stay forever.

276God will nullify gain from usury

and bless deeds of charity

with increase, for God

dislikes ungrateful sinners.

277Those who believe,

and do good deeds,

are steadfast in prayer,

and practice charity,

shall have a reward with their Lord;

they shall not fear, nor grieve.

278You who believe,

be mindful of God

and give up any

gain left from usury

if you are truly believers.

279If you do not, be warned of

war from God and His messenger.

But if you repent, you can keep

your capital, without wronging

others or being wronged.

280If the debtor is in hardship,

grant postponement

until their plight is eased.

But if you charitably

forgo the loan,

this is better for you,

if only you knew.

281And fear the day

when you shall be

brought back to God.

Then every soul shall

be paid what it earned,

and none shall be wronged.

SECTION 38

282You who believe, when you

contract a debt for a fixed term,

put it in writing;° let a scribe

write it down equitably

between you, and let the scribe

not refuse to write it; let him inscribe

as God has taught him.

So let him write, and

let the debtor dictate and let him

be mindful of God, his Lord,

and not reduce [the debt] at all.

If the debtor is mentally disabled

or weak or unable to dictate, then

let his guardian dictate equitably,

and call two witnesses from your men.

If there are not two men, then one man

and two women whom you approve

as witnesses; if one forgets,

the other can refresh her memory.

The witnesses should not refuse,

when called. And do not neglect

to write the debt down, whether

small or large, and its term.

This is more equitable in the sight

of God, more upright as testimony,

and more apt to forestall doubts

between you—unless it is

a transaction you conduct

on the spot between you—

then there is no blame on you

if you don’t write it down.

And be sure to summon witnesses when you

conduct a commercial transaction,

and neither the scribe nor the witness

should be harmed; doing this

is a sin for you. So, be mindful

of God, for it is God

Who will teach you—

God Knows all things.

283If you are on a journey,

and cannot find a scribe,

then some goods should be

handed over as surety;

but if you trust one another,

let the trustee fulfill his trust and

let him be mindful of God, his Lord.

And do not conceal testimony, for

whoever does so has a sinful heart;

and God Knows all that you do.

SECTION 39

284To God belongs

all that is in the heavens, and

all that is on the earth;

and whether you reveal

what is within you or conceal it,

God will call you to account for it.

He forgives whom He will, and

He punishes whom He will,

for God has Power over all things.

285The messenger believes

in what was revealed to him

by His Lord, as do the true believers.

They all believe in God, His angels,

His Books, and His messengers.

[They say], “We make no distinction

between any of His messengers.”

And they say, “We hear and we obey.

We seek your forgiveness, our Lord,

and to you is our final journey.”

286God burdens no soul beyond

its means; what it earns

will be for it or against it.

“Our Lord, don’t take us to task

if we forget or err.

Don’t burden us with the load

you laid upon those before us.

Our Lord, don’t lay a burden on us

which we lack strength to bear.

Pardon us, forgive us, and

show mercy to us.

You are our Protector, so help us

against people who disbelieve.”

SURA 3

The Family of ʿImran (Al ʿImran)

The Family of ʿImran, named after the family of Moses and Jesus (v. 33), numbers 200 verses. It was revealed in Medina following two early battles against Meccan opponents (Badr, 624, and Uhud, 626), though only the first, Badr, is mentioned by name (v. 123). After addressing the divine origin of the Quran, it narrates stories of Zachariah, Mary, and Jesus, before critiquing unobservant Jews, then exhorting believers to persist in the face of expulsion, warfare, and also the death of some companions.

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1Alif. Lam. Mim.°

2God—there is no god but He,

the Living, the Self-Subsisting.

3He revealed to you the Book

bearing the truth, confirming

what had come before.

He revealed the Torah and the Gospel

4before, as guidance for humankind.

And He revealed the criterion

[of right and wrong]. Those

who deny the signs of God

shall face severe torment,

for God is Almighty,

Lord of Requital.

5Nothing on the earth

or in the heavens

is hidden from God.

6It is He who shapes you

in the womb as He wishes.

There is no god but He,

the Almighty, the Wise.

7It is He who revealed to you

the Book. Some of its verses

are clear in meaning—these

are the basis of the Book°—

while others are allegorical.

The perverse in heart

follow what is allegorical,

seeking discord, seeking

its deeper meanings.° But none knows

its deeper meaning except God.

Those firmly grounded in knowledge

say, “We believe in it. All of it

is from our Lord.” But only those

who understand will take heed.

8“Our Lord,” they say,

“Let our hearts not deviate

after You have guided us,

but bestow upon us Your mercy;

You are the Ever Giving.

9“Our Lord, You shall gather

humankind together on a day

of which there is no doubt.

God never breaks His promise.”

SECTION 2

10As for those who deny the truth—

their wealth and their children

cannot help them at all against God;

and they shall be fuel for the fire.

11Like the people of Pharaoh

and those before them, they denied

Our signs, so God seized them

for their sins; and God

is Severe in Retribution.

12Tell those who disbelieve,

“Soon you will be overcome, and

gathered into hell—an evil end.°

13“You had a sign already

in the two armies that met,° the one

fighting in God’s cause, the other

disbelieving. The first saw

with their own eyes that the other

was twice its size; but God

reinforces with His help whom

He will. Here is a lesson

for those who perceive.”

14Men’s° eyes are allured by love

of what they desire—women,

children, treasures of gold and silver,

branded horses, cattle, arable land—

these are provisions of this

worldly life; but the finest home

for our return is with God.

15Say, “Shall I tell you of things

finer than these, for those mindful

of God? Gardens in God’s presence,

with flowing rivers beneath,

abiding there forever, with

pure spouses, and God’s good pleasure.

For God Sees His servants—

16“those who say,

‘Our Lord, we do believe, so

forgive us our sins, and save us

from the torment of hellfire,’

17“those who are patient, truthful,

and devout, who spend in charity,

and pray for forgiveness

during the early morning hours.”

18God bears witness that

there is no god but He—

as do the angels and those

with knowledge, who uphold

justice. There is no god but He,

the Almighty, the Wise.

19True religion in the sight of God

is submission° [to His will].

Those who were given the Book

dissented from it through

mutual envy, only after knowledge

had been given to them.

Whoever denies the signs of God

[should know that] God

is Swift in Reckoning.

20So if they dispute with you,

say, “I have submitted

my whole self to God,°

along with those who follow me.”

And ask those given the Book,

as well as those with no scripture,°

“Do you submit yourselves

to God?” If they do submit,

they are rightly guided,

but if they turn away, your task

is only to convey the message.

For God Sees all things

concerning His servants.

SECTION 3

21As for those who deny the signs

of God, killing the prophets unjustly,

and killing those who exhort people

to be just—announce for them

a painful punishment.

22They are the ones whose works

are vain—in this world and

the hereafter; and they shall have

none to help them.

23Have you not seen those

who were given part of the Book?

When asked to use God’s Book

to judge between them, a group

of them turned away, averse.

24For they say, “The fire shall

touch us but for a few days.”

What they have forged

deludes them in their faith.

25So how will it be for them

when We gather them together

on a day [whose coming]

is beyond doubt

—when each soul

shall be paid in full

for what it earned—

without being wronged.

26Say, “O God, Dominion

is Yours. You give dominion

to whom You will, and wrest it

from whom You will.

You exalt whom You will,

and debase whom You will;

all good is in Your Hand; You

have Power over all things.

27“You fade night into day,

and day into night;

You bring the living from the dead,

and the dead from the living;

and You give provision

to whom You will, without measure.”

28Believers should not take

unbelievers as allies, rather than

believers; those who do this

will have no kind of bond

with God—unless you do this

out of fear, to protect yourselves.

And it is God Himself

Who warns you°—to God

you will finally return.

29Say, “Whether you conceal

what is in your hearts or reveal it,

God knows it; and He knows

what is in the heavens and the earth,

for God has Power over all things.”

30“On the day when each soul is

confronted with the good and evil

it has done, it will wish [that evil]

were far, far away. It is God Himself

Who warns you, though He is

Most Kind toward His servants.”

SECTION 4

31Say, “If you love God,

follow me. God will love you

and forgive you your sins, for God

is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.”

32Say, “Obey God

and the messenger.”

But if they should turn away,

God does not love the unbelievers.

33God chose Adam and Noah

and the family of Abraham

and the family of ʿImran

over all peoples,°

34making them offspring

of one another; and God

is All Hearing, All Knowing.

35When the wife of ʿImran said,

“My Lord, I vow to you

what is growing in my womb—

to be dedicated to your service,

for You are the All Hearing,

the All Knowing”—

36then she gave birth, and said,

“My Lord, I have given birth

to a girl.” And God knows best

to what she gave birth, for the male

is not like the female.°

“I have named her Mary,

and I seek refuge in You

from the accursed Satan—

for her and her offspring.”

37Her Lord graciously accepted her,

nurtured her immaculately,

entrusting her to the care

of Zachariah. Whenever

he entered her sanctuary, he found her

supplied with provisions. He asked,

“Mary, where did you get these?”

She replied, “They are from God.

God provides without measure

for those whom He will.”

38Then Zachariah

called upon his Lord, “My Lord,

grant me from Your grace°

a pure child. You are the One

Who Hears prayer.”

39The angels called out to him

while he stood praying

in the sanctuary, “God gives you

joyous news of a son, John,

confirming God’s Word°—

one noble and chaste, a prophet,

one of the righteous.”

40He asked, “My Lord,

how can I have a son

when old age has withered me

and my wife is barren?”

The angel responded,

“This is how it is:

God does what He will.”

41He said, “My Lord, give me

a sign.” The angel said, “Your sign

is that you will not speak to people

for three straight days,

except by gestures.

And remember your Lord often,

glorifying Him evening and morning.”

SECTION 5

42The angels proclaimed,

“Mary, God has chosen you

and purified you;

He has chosen you

above all women.”

43“Mary, devote yourself

to your Lord; prostrate yourself

in worship, and bow in prayer

with all those who bow.”

44This is a disclosure from

the unseen, which We reveal to you,

Prophet, for you were not

among them when [the priests]

cast lots to see which of them

should have charge of Mary;

you were not among them

when they argued about this.

45The angels said, “Mary,

God gives you joyous news

of His Word—He shall be called

the messiah, Jesus, son of Mary,

and he shall be honored in this world

and the hereafter, and he shall be

among those closest to God.

46“He shall speak to the people

from the cradle and in adulthood,

and he shall be among those

who do good.”

47She said, “My Lord, how

shall I have a son, when no man

has touched me?” He replied,

“So it is—God creates what He will.

When He decrees a thing,

He merely says to it, ‘Be’ and it is.”

48“And God will teach him

the Book, and wisdom,

the Torah, and the Gospel,

49“and appoint him as a messenger

for the Children of Israel,

‘I have come to you with a sign

from your Lord: I will create for you

the form of a bird from clay, and

breathe into it so that it becomes

a living bird, by God’s leave.

“ ‘I heal the blind and the leper,

and I bring the dead to life,

by God’s leave. And I inform you

of what you can eat, and what

you should store in your homes.

In this is a sign for you,

if you are believers.

50“ ‘And I have come to confirm

the Torah that came before me,

and to make lawful part of what

was forbidden to you.

And I have come to you with a sign

from your Lord, so be mindful

of God, and obey me.

51“ ‘God is my Lord

and your Lord,

so worship Him:

this is a straight path.’ ”

52When Jesus sensed some

disbelief among them, he said,

“Who will help me

[in calling people] to God?”

The disciples said,

“We will help in God’s cause.

We believe in God: so bear witness

that we submit to God’s will.”°

53“Our Lord, we believe

in what You have revealed,

and we follow the messenger.

List us, then, among the witnesses.”

54And the unbelievers schemed;

but God also schemed. And God

is the best of schemers.

SECTION 6

55God said, “Jesus, I will take you

back and raise you to My presence.

I will purge you of the company

of disbelievers. On the day

of resurrection, I will place those

who follow you above those

who disbelieve. Then you shall all

return to me and I shall judge

between you on the things

you dispute.

56“As for those who disbelieve,

I shall afflict them with

severe torment in this world

and the hereafter, and they

shall have none to help them.

57“As for those who believe and

do good deeds, God will give them

their full reward; for God

does not love the wrongdoers.

58“In this way, We recite to you,

Prophet, some of the signs—

and the wise reminder.”

59In the sight of God,

Jesus is like Adam;

He created him from dust,

saying to him, “Be”—and he was.

60The truth is from your Lord;

so don’t be one of those who doubt.

61If someone argues with you

after the knowledge given to you,

say to them, “Come, let us call

our sons and your sons,

our women and your women,

ourselves and yourselves,

then let us pray earnestly

and invoke the curse of God

upon those who lie.”°

62—This is the true narrative.

There is no god but the One God,

and God is Almighty, All Wise.

63If they then turn away,

God Knows all about

those who wreak mischief.

SECTION 7

64Say, “People of the Book, come,

let there be a common word

between us and you—that we

worship none but the One God,

and associate none with Him,

and not take one another

as lords—only God.”

And if they turn away, say,

“Bear witness that we

submit to God’s will.”

65People of the Book,

why do you dispute about Abraham,

when the Torah and the Gospel

were not revealed until after him?

Will you not use reason?

66You are the ones who argued

over things you knew,

so why do you argue now

over things you don’t know?

God knows—and you do not.

67Abraham was not a Jew

nor a Christian; rather,

he believed only in the One God,

submitting to God’s will,°

not one of those who

join other gods with God.

68The nearest among people to

Abraham are those who follow him,

this messenger, and believers.

And God is the Protector

of those who believe.

69A group of the people of the Book

wish to misguide you, but they

misguide only themselves,

though they don’t realize it.

70People of the Book, why do you

deny the signs of God, when you

yourselves are witness to their truth?°

71People of the Book, why do you

confound truth with falsehood, and

hide the truth, when you know it?

SECTION 8

72A group of the people of the Book

say, “Believe in what was revealed

to the believers at the beginning

of the day, then reject it at the end

of the day; perhaps the believers

too will turn back.”

73[And they say,] “Believe only those

who follow your religion.”

Tell them, Prophet, “All guidance

is guidance from God.” [They say,

“Don’t believe] that

anyone can be given

what you have been given,

or dispute with you

before your Lord.”

Say, “All grace is in God’s hand;

He gives it to whom He will.

For God is Expansive,

All Knowing.”

74He chooses whom He will

for His mercy—

God’s grace is great.

75Among the people of the Book

are some who, if you entrust them

with a great treasure, they’ll return it;

and others, if you entrust them

with one dinar,° won’t return it unless

you stand watching over them,

for they say, “We have no obligation

to the gentiles.”

But they lie about God—

and they know it.

76Yes—God loves those

who fulfill their pledge

and are mindful of Him,

77but those who sell their pledge

to God and their oaths

for a paltry price shall have

no share in the hereafter;

God shall not speak to them,

nor look at them

on the day of resurrection,

nor shall He purify them.

And they shall face

painful torment.

78Among them is a group who

distort the Book with their speech,

so you might think it is from

the Book, but it is not;

they say it is from God, but it is not;

for they speak a lie about God,

and they know it.

79No person to whom God

had given the Book, and wisdom,

and prophethood, would say

to the people,

“Worship me, instead of God.”

Rather, he would say,

“Be one of the learned,°

for you have taught the Book,

as you have studied it.”

80Nor would he command you

to take angels and prophets as lords.

Would he command you to disbelief

after you have submitted

to God’s will?

SECTION 9

81God took a pledge

from the prophets, saying,

“If a prophet comes to you,

confirming what I have given you

of the Book and of wisdom,

you must believe in him

and you must support him.

Do you accept and affirm this,

my covenant?”

They responded, “We affirm it.”

He declared, “Then bear witness,

and I too shall be a witness.”

82If any turn away after this,

they are transgressors.

83Do they seek something other

than the religion of God?

For all in the heavens and on earth

submit to Him, willing or unwilling;

they shall be brought back to Him.

84Say, “We believe in God,

what has been revealed to us,

and what was revealed to Abraham,

Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the tribes;

and what was given to Moses, Jesus,

and the prophets, from their Lord.

We make no distinction

among any of them, and to Him

we submit our will.”

85If anyone seeks a religion other

than submission to God, it shall

never be accepted of them; and

in the hereafter they shall be

among those in loss.

86How will God guide a people

who disbelieve after having faith,

who witnessed

that the messenger is true—

and clear proofs had come to them?

God does not guide

a people who do wrong.

87Their recompense will be

the curse of God, the angels,

and all humankind.

88There they shall stay forever—

their torment shall not be lightened

nor shall they find respite,

89except those who repent,

after this, and amend themselves;

for God is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

90As for those who disbelieve

after having faith, and increase

their disbelief, their repentance

shall never be accepted, for they

have gone far astray.

91As for those who disbelieve

and die as disbelievers, even though

they offered as ransom enough gold

to fill the earth, it would never

be accepted of any of them.

They shall face painful torment,

with none to help them.

SECTION 10

92You shall never attain

righteousness unless you give

freely from what you love; and God

Knows fully what you give.

93All food was lawful

for the Children of Israel except

for what Israel° forbade himself

before the Torah was revealed.

Say, “Bring the Torah and

recite it, if you speak the truth.”

94Those who invent a falsehood

about God, after this, do wrong.

95Say, “God has declared the truth,

so follow the creed of Abraham,

who was pure in faith,

never a polytheist.”

96The first House of worship

founded for people

was the one at Mecca°—blessed,

a guide for humankind.

97In it are clear signs, as in the

place where Abraham stood to pray;

whoever enters it will be safe.

Pilgrimage to the House is a duty

to God—for all those

able to undertake the journey.

Those who disbelieve should know

that God is Self-Sufficient,

beyond need of His creatures.

98Say, “People of the Book,

why do you deny the signs of God

when God Himself is Witness

to whatever you do?”

99Say, “People of the Book,

why do you bar believers

from the path of God, seeking

to make it crooked, when you

yourselves are witness to the truth?

And know that God is not

heedless of what you do.”

100You who believe, if you

heed them, a group of those

who were given the Book

would turn you back

into disbelievers—

after you had believed.

101And how can you disbelieve

when the signs of God have been

recited to you, and His messenger

is among you?

Whoever holds fast to God

shall be guided to a straight path.

SECTION 11

102You who believe,

be mindful of God, as is His due,

and do not die without

submitting to His will.

103Hold fast to the rope of God,

all together, and don’t be divided.

Remember God’s favor to you,

when you were enemies:

He brought your hearts together,

and you became brothers,

by His favor. Even when you were

on the brink of a pit of fire,

He delivered you from it.

In this way, God makes clear to you

His signs, that you might be guided.

104You should be a community

who invite others to what is good,

enjoining what is right,

and forbidding what is wrong—

these are the people who flourish.

105And don’t be like those

who are divided, and dispute

after clear signs have come to them,

for they shall face great torment.

106On the day when some faces

brighten and others darken, those

with darkened faces shall be asked,

“How could you deny the truth,

after having believed? Taste, then,

the torment for disbelieving.”

107But those with brightened faces

shall live in God’s mercy—forever.

108These are the signs of God;

We recite them to you, Prophet—

the truth—for God desires

no injustice for His creatures.

109To God belongs

all that is in the heavens

and all that is on the earth—

to God all things shall return.

SECTION 12

110You are the finest community

raised for humankind; you enjoin

what is right, forbid what is wrong,

and you believe in God.

Had the people of the Book believed,

it would have been better for them.

Among them are true believers

but most of them are transgressors.

111They can never harm you,

beyond a minor slight. Even if they

fight you, they will soon turn

their backs to you, fleeing;

then they shall find no help.

112Shame shall fall upon them

wherever they are found—unless

they hold fast to a rope from God

and a rope from humankind.°

They bring down on themselves

the wrath of God, and indigence

shall fall upon them—because

they disbelieved in the signs of God,

killing prophets unjustly—because

they disobeyed, always transgressing.°

113Not all of them are alike:

among the people of the Book

are some who are upright,

who recite the verses°

of God during the hours of night

and prostrate themselves.

114They believe in God

and the last day;

they enjoin what is right,

and forbid what is wrong;

and they hasten to do good works;

they are among the righteous.

115None of the good they do

will be rejected, for God well Knows

those who are mindful of Him.

116As for those who disbelieve,

neither their wealth nor children

will help them in any way

against God; they shall be

inmates of the fire—forever.

117The parable of what they spend

in this worldly life is that of a wind

which brings a biting frost;

it strikes the harvest of a people

who have wronged themselves

then destroys it. It is not God

who wrongs them, but they

who wrong themselves.

118You who believe,

don’t be close to outsiders

who will spare you no ruin,

and wish only to see you suffer.

Hatred seethes from their mouths,

but what lies hidden in their hearts

is worse. We have made the signs

clear to you, if you use reason.

119See, you love them—

but they don’t love you.

You believe in the Book, all of it.

When they meet you, they say,

“We believe,” but when alone,

they gnaw at their fingertips,

raging at you. Say, “Perish

in your fury—God Knows

what is in your hearts.”

120If something good comes

your way, it grieves them, and

if any misfortune strikes you,

they rejoice in it. But if you are

patient and mindful of God,

their scheming can’t harm you at all.

God Encompasses all that they do.

SECTION 13

121Prophet, remember when

you left your household early

to assign the believers their

battle positions?° God

is All Hearing, All Knowing.

122Remember when two groups

of you began to lose heart? But God

was their ally. So let the believers

put their trust in God.

123God helped you at the Battle of Badr

when you were but a weak force;

be mindful, then, of God,

that you might be thankful.

124Remember when you said

to the believers, “Is it not enough

that your Lord reinforced you with

three thousand descending angels?

125“Yes—if you remain patient

and mindful of God, even if

the enemy falls upon you suddenly,

your Lord will reinforce you with

five thousand assigned angels.”°

126God made it only a message

of hope for you, to reassure

your hearts—there is no help

except from God,

the Almighty, the Wise—

127that He might cut off the flanks

of the unbelievers’ forces, and

frustrate them, so that they would

turn back, hopeless.

128It is not for you [Prophet,

but for God] to decide

whether He turns to them,

relenting, or punishes them—

they are wrongdoers.

129To God belongs

all that is in the heavens

and all that is on the earth.

He forgives whom He will

and punishes whom He will;

God is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

SECTION 14

130You who believe, do not devour

interest from usury, doubled and

multiplied; but be mindful of God

that you might flourish.

131Be fearful of the fire, prepared

for those who disbelieve;

132obey God and His messenger

that you may obtain mercy.

133And hasten to forgiveness

from your Lord and a garden

whose expanse spans the heavens

and the earth, prepared

for those mindful of God,

134those who give freely

in both prosperity and adversity,

who restrain their anger, and

pardon others. For God loves

those who do good,

135and those who, after committing

indecency or wronging themselves,

remember God and seek forgiveness

for their sins—who forgives sins

except God?—and don’t persist

knowingly in doing wrong.

136Theirs shall be a reward

of forgiveness from their Lord,

and gardens with rivers flowing

beneath, abiding there forever.

How excellent is the reward

of those who labor [to do good].

137How many ways of life°

have passed before your time.

Travel through the earth, and see

how it ended for those

who denied the truth.

138Here is a clear lesson for people,

guidance, and admonition for those

who are mindful of God.

139So don’t weaken, or grieve,

for you will prevail—if you believe.

140If you have suffered a wound,

[remember that] their people

have also borne a wound;°

we give such days to people in turn,

that God may know those

who believe and those

He may take as martyrs°

—God does not love those

who do wrong—

141and that God may purify

those who believe, and destroy

the disbelievers.

142Or did you think

you would enter the garden

without God knowing those

who strove so hard among you

and those who remained steadfast?

143Yes, you used to wish

for death, before you met it;

and now, you’ve seen it—staring

at it, with your own eyes.

SECTION 15

144Muhammad is no more than

a messenger, and messengers

passed away before him. If he died

or were killed, would you turn

upon your heels? Whoever so turns

can do no harm to God;

but God will reward those

who are grateful.

145Nor can a soul die

except by God’s leave,

its term decreed.

Whoever desires

the reward of this world,

We shall give it to them;

and whoever desires

the reward of the hereafter,

We shall give it to them;

and We shall reward

those who are grateful.

146And how many prophets fought,

alongside many pious men,

but they never lost heart when

calamity struck them, in God’s path,

nor did they weaken or give up.

God loves those who are steadfast.

147And the only words they spoke

were “Our Lord, forgive us our sins

and extravagances,°

make firm our feet, and help us

against the disbelievers.”

148And God gave them

the reward of this world

and the more glorious reward

of the hereafter,

for God loves those who do good.

SECTION 16

149You who believe,

if you heed the disbelievers,

they will drive you back,

on your heels, and you will

turn back, to your own loss.

150No—God is your Protector,

and He is the Best of Helpers.

151We shall cast terror

into the hearts of the disbelievers

since they joined partners with God,

for which He revealed no sanction.

Their refuge shall be the fire—

what an evil home for the wrongdoers!

152God fulfilled His promise

to you, when, by His leave,

you were routing them—until

you faltered, disputed

the Prophet’s command,

and disobeyed it, after

He brought you within sight

of what you coveted.°

Some among you craved this world

while others desired the hereafter.

Then He caused you to retreat

from them, in order to test you. Now

He has forgiven you; for God

is Ever Gracious to the believers.

153You clambered away from the foe,

without even a glance at anyone,

while the messenger was calling you

from behind. So God gave you grief

upon grief—to teach you not

to lament over what had eluded you

or what had befallen you.

For God is Aware of all that you do.

154After this grief, He sent down

calm upon you, a sleep that fell over

a group of you, while another group,

caring only about themselves,

entertained false notions of God,

notions from the age of ignorance.°

They said, “Do we have any voice

in the matter?” Prophet, tell them,

“The matter is wholly with God.”

They conceal within themselves

what they will not reveal to you.

They say, “If we had had a voice

in the matter, we would not have

been killed here.” Say, “Even if

you had stayed at home, those

for whom death was decreed

would still have gone toward

their final place of rest.”

This was so that God

could test your hearts,

and purify what was in them°

for God is Aware of whatever

lies within your hearts.

155As for those of you who

turned back on the day

the two armies clashed,

it was Satan who caused them

to backslide, for something

they had done. But God

has pardoned them. For God

is Forgiving, Forbearing.

SECTION 17

156You who believe, do not

be like the disbelievers, who say

of their brothers who journeyed

in the land or went on a raid,

“Had they stayed with us, they

would not have died or been killed,”

for God will make [such thoughts]

a source of sorrow in their hearts.

It is God who gives life

and brings death. And God

Sees whatever you do.

157And if you are killed

in the cause of God, or die,

God’s forgiveness and mercy

are better by far than

all the goods they amass.

158And if you die, or are killed, it is

to God that you will be gathered.

159It is through the mercy of God

that you dealt gently with them;

had you been rough and hard-hearted,

they would have scattered away

from you. So pardon them,

and ask forgiveness for them, and

consult with them in your affairs.

Then, when you decide on something,

place your trust in God, for God

loves those who trust in Him.

160If God helps you,

none can overcome you.

If He forsakes you, who

can help you?

So let the believers

trust in God.

161No prophet would defraud

[anyone of booty from the battle].

If anyone does defraud, he shall bring

his fraud to the day of resurrection—

then, every soul shall receive its due

for whatever it earned; and none

shall be wronged.

162Can one who seeks to please God

be like one who draws God’s wrath

upon himself, whose home

is hell, an evil end?

163They are ranked differently

in the eyes of God, and God

Sees all that they do.

164God granted a favor to the

believers when He sent to them

a messenger from their own people,

reciting His verses to them,

purifying them, and teaching them

the Book and wisdom; for

before this, they were clearly astray.

165Why do you say, when

misfortune strikes you—even though

you have struck your foes with twice

as much—“Where is this from?”

Say, “It is from yourselves—

God has Power over all things.”

166What happened to you

on the day the two armies met

happened with God’s leave,

that He might know

who were the true believers,

167and who were the hypocrites.

They were told, “Come, fight

in the cause of God, or at least

defend yourselves.” They replied,

“If we knew how to fight,

we would have followed you.”

That day, they were closer

to unbelief than belief.

They say with their mouths

what is not in their hearts; and God

knows best what they conceal.

168As for those who sat idly behind

and said of their brothers, “If only

they had heeded us, they would not

have been killed,” tell them, “Then

avert death from yourselves,

if you speak the truth.”

169Do not think that those

killed in the cause of God

are dead—no, they are living,

with their Lord, enjoying

what He has provided for them,

170rejoicing in what God

has given them from His grace

and joyful that those left behind

who have not yet joined them

shall neither fear nor grieve.

171They rejoice in the grace of God

and His favor, knowing that

God will never forfeit the reward

of the believers.

SECTION 18

172Those who answered the call

of God and the messenger,

even after suffering hurt—

those of them who do good,

and are mindful of God,

shall have a great reward;

173those whose faith was only

strengthened when people told them,

“The people have amassed

a great army against you—

you should fear them.”

They responded, “God is enough

for us—He is the best Custodian

of all affairs.”

174And they returned, through

God’s grace and favor, unharmed,

for they sought to please God—

and God is Most Gracious.°

175It is Satan who fills you

with fear of his allies. But

do not fear them—fear Me,

if you are true believers.

176And do not be grieved by those

who hasten to unbelief. They can

never harm God in any way.

God intends to give them

no share in the hereafter, and they

shall face great torment.

177Those who exchange faith for unbelief

can never do any harm to God, and

they shall face painful torment.

178Don’t let the unbelievers think

that when We grant them respite,

it is good for them. We grant respite

only for them to grow in sin,

and they shall face disgraceful torment.

179God will not leave you believers

as you are, without setting apart

the good from the bad.

God will not disclose to you

the unseen, but He chooses

as His messengers whom He will

[to give this knowledge]. So believe

in God and His messenger; and if

you believe, and are mindful of God,

yours shall be a great reward.

180And don’t let those who

greedily withhold what God

has given them through His grace

think that this is good for them—no,

it is bad for them. What they withheld

shall be hung around their necks

on the day of resurrection; it is God

Who shall inherit the heavens

and the earth, and God

is Aware of all that you do.

SECTION 19

181God has heard those who taunt,

“God is poor, while we are rich.”

We shall record what they say,

as well as their unjust killing

of the prophets; and We shall say,

“Taste the punishment

of the searing fire.”

182“This is for the bad deeds

you accrued, with your own hands—

God never wrongs His servants.”

183As for those who say,

“God took from us a pledge

that we should not believe

in any messenger until He sent to us

a sacrifice that fire consumes,”

say to them, “Messengers have

come to you before me,

with clear signs, including

what you speak of, so why did you

kill them—if you are speaking the truth?”

184If they deny you, know that

messengers before you were denied,

even though they came with clear signs,

scriptures, and an enlightening Book.

185Every soul shall taste death,

and only on the day of resurrection

shall you receive your recompense.

Whoever is drawn out from

the fire and brought into

the garden shall have triumphed.

For the life of this world gives

but illusory pleasure.

186You will surely be tested

through your possessions and

your lives, and you shall hear

much that is harmful from

those given the Book before you

and those who are polytheists.

Resoluteness in all things

rests on patience

and mindfulness of God.

187When God made a covenant

with those given the Book—

“Make it known to the people,

and don’t hide it”—they

threw it behind their backs,

and traded it for a paltry price.

How wretched was their bargain!

188Don’t think, Prophet, that

those who rejoice in what

they have brought about

and love to be praised

for what they do not do—

don’t think that they will escape

punishment; for they

shall face painful torment.

189To God belongs dominion

of the heavens and the earth;

and God has Power over all things.

SECTION 20

190In the creation of the heavens

and the earth, in the revolving

of night and day, are signs

for those with understanding,

191those who remember God

while standing, sitting, or lying

on their sides, pondering on the

creation of the heavens and the earth,

“Our Lord, You did not create all this

in vain; glory be to You, and

save us from the torment of fire.

192“Our Lord, You cover with shame

those You cast into the fire—

and the wrongdoers shall find

none to help them.

193“Our Lord, we have heard the call

of someone calling to the faith,

‘Believe in your Lord,’

and we do believe. Our Lord,

forgive us our sins, and absolve

us of our evil deeds, and let us die

in the company of the righteous.

194“Our Lord, grant us what

You promised us

through Your messengers,

and do not shame us

on the day of resurrection.

You never fail in Your promise.”

195Their Lord answered them,

“I shall not allow the deeds

of any of you—whether you are

male or female—to be lost;

you are from one another. As for those

who migrated, or were driven from,

their homes, or suffered hurt

in My cause, or fought or were killed,

I will absolve you of your

bad deeds, and I will usher you

into gardens, beneath which

rivers flow—a reward from

God Himself, for with God

is the most excellent reward.”

196Do not be deluded by

the unbelievers, strutting about

throughout the land—

197a brief enjoyment—then

hell will become their home—

a woeful place of repose.

198But those who are mindful

of their Lord shall have gardens,

beneath which rivers flow,

abiding there forever, a gift from

God Himself—for whatever God has

is better for those who are righteous.

199And there are those among

the people of the Book

who believe in God, in what

has been revealed to you—and what

was revealed to them; they bow

humbly before God. They do not sell

the signs of God for a paltry price;

they shall have a reward

from their Lord Himself,

for God is Swift in Reckoning.

200You who believe, be patient—

compete in patience, be constant;

and be mindful of God,

that you might flourish.

SURA 4

Women (Al-Nisa)

Late Medinan, this sura numbers 176 verses and concerns women, first those afflicted by war, widowhood, or raising orphans, then those faced with challenges of fornication, divorce, or inheritance. The Prophet’s authority as God’s emissary and arbiter is extolled, while those deemed hypocrites and people of the Book are reminded of God’s transcendence and self-sufficiency: Jesus is the messiah, but also servant of the One with angels stationed near Him (vv. 171–72).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1Humankind, be mindful

of your Lord, Who created you

from a single soul, and from this

created its mate, multiplying them

into multitudes of men and women.

Be mindful of God, in whose Name

you ask one another about your rights

and those of your relatives—

God is Ever Watchful over you.

2Give to orphans whatever wealth

is left to them, and don’t substitute

worthless things for things of value;

nor consume their wealth

along with yours—

for that would be a grave sin.

3If you fear that

you can’t be fair to orphan girls,°

then marry other women

who seem suitable to you

—two, or three, or four—

but if you fear that

you can’t treat them justly,

then marry only one, or those

you own.° This way, you’ll be

less prone to mistreating them.

4Give women their bridal gift

with goodwill, but if they choose

to forgo a portion, by all means

enjoy it at your pleasure.

5And don’t entrust your property°

to simpletons—for God made it

a means of support for you;

but feed them and clothe them,

and speak to them with kind words.

6Monitor° orphans until they reach

the age of marriage; then if you find

them to be of sound judgment,

disburse their wealth to them,

and don’t consume it wastefully,

or in haste before they come of age.

Let a rich guardian refrain from

using any part of it, while

a poor one can use a fair portion.

When you disburse their wealth,

summon witnesses before them—

for God suffices as Reckoner.

7There is a portion

for both men and women

from what parents

and near relatives leave

—whether small or large—

a specified portion.

8And if other relatives or orphans

or the poor are present during

the distribution, give them a portion

and speak to them with kind words.

9And let them show the same

solicitude [for orphans] as for any

vulnerable offspring of their own

that they might leave behind.

Let them be mindful of God,

and speak words that are fitting.

10Those who wrongfully devour

the wealth of orphans shall devour

fire into their bellies—burning

in a blazing fire.

SECTION 2

11As for your children—in your will,

God directs you to leave the male

a portion equal to that of two females.

If there are only daughters—

two or more—two-thirds

of the inheritance goes to them;

if there is only one, she gets half.

Parents get a sixth share each

if [the deceased] leaves children;

but if he leaves no child,

and the parents are his sole heirs,

then his mother gets a third,

unless he has brothers and sisters,

then his mother gets a sixth.

[The distribution of any will

shall be made] after payment of

any bequests or debts.

You do not know which

of your parents or children

will be of more benefit to you—

hence the obligation

laid down by God.

God is All Knowing, All Wise.

12From what your wives leave,

your portion is a half, if they leave

no child. But if they leave a child,

then yours is a fourth, after payment

of bequests and debts.

And from what you leave,

their share is a fourth, if you leave

no child. But if you leave a child,

then theirs is an eighth, after payment

of bequests and debts.

As for the inheritance

of a man or woman

who has no direct heir

[neither child nor parents]

but has a brother or sister,

each of the two shall get a sixth;

but if more than two,

they will share a third, after payment

of bequests and debts

so that no one suffers loss.

This is the ordinance from God—

God is All Knowing, Most Kind.

13These are the limits laid down

by God. Those who obey

God and His messenger

shall be brought by Him into gardens

with rivers flowing beneath,

residing there forever—

that is the supreme triumph.

14But those who disobey

God and His messenger,

and transgress His limits

shall be thrust by Him into fire,

abiding there forever,

in shameful torment.

SECTION 3

15If any of your women

commits indecency, summon

four witnesses against them

from among you. And if these

attest to their guilt, then

confine them within their home

until death comes to them, or

God finds another way for them.°

16If two people among you

commit indecency, punish

them both. But if they

repent and amend their ways,

then turn away from them;

for God is Ever Relenting,

Ever Merciful.

17God accepts the repentance

only of those who do evil

through ignorance and soon

repent. God will turn

to them in forgiveness,

for God is All Knowing, All Wise;

18but not the repentance

of those who do evil deeds

until death approaches them,

and then say, “Now I repent”;

nor the repentance of those

who die as disbelievers.

For these, We have prepared

a painful punishment.

19You who believe,

it is unlawful for you to inherit

women against their will, or

to treat them harshly,

hoping to take back part of

the bridal gift you gave them, unless

they commit open indecency.

Rather, live with them in kindness,

for if you dislike them, perhaps

you dislike something in which

God imbues much good.

20But if you intend to take

one wife in place of another,

don’t take back any of the bridal gift

you gave to the former,

even if it was a substantial sum.

Would you take it by slander

and blatant sinning?

21For how could you take it

when you have been intimate,

and she has taken from you

a solemn oath?

22And do not marry

any of the women

your fathers married—

though its past practice

is excused—for it is

an indecency, loathsome,

a wicked custom.

SECTION 4

23It is forbidden for you

to marry your mothers,

your daughters, your sisters,

your father’s sisters,

your mother’s sisters,

daughters of brothers,

daughters of sisters,

the foster mothers who nursed you,

the foster sisters nursed with you,

mothers of your wives,

the stepdaughters

in your custody, [born] of the wives

with whom you were intimate

—though if you were not intimate,

there is no blame on you—

the wives of your sons

who are from your loins,

and two sisters at once.

However, the past practice

of all these things is excused—

God is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

24Also prohibited are

women already married,

except those you own—this

is what God has decreed for you.

Apart from these, others

are lawful to you, provided

you seek them in marriage,

not in lust, and give them

something of your wealth.

Give the bridal gifts

to those you enjoy thereby,

as an obligation,

but there is no blame on you

if you mutually agree upon

something modifying this obligation°—

God is All Knowing, All Wise.

25And those among you

who can’t afford to marry

free chaste believing women,

can marry believers

among your maidservants.°

God best knows your faith;

you belong to one another.

Wed them with permission

of their families, and be fair

in giving them their bridal due.

They should be chaste, not

immoral, taking secret lovers.

Once they are married,

if they commit indecency,

their punishment should be

half of that for free women.

This option is for those of you

who fear falling into sin

by remaining unmarried.

But it is better for you

to be patient—God

is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

SECTION 5

26God wants to make

His laws clear to you,

and to guide you in the ways

of those before you. And He

turns toward you, for He

is All Knowing, All Wise.

27God wants to turn

toward you, but those

who follow their own desires

want you to deviate—

going far astray.

28God wants to ease

the burdens upon you,

for humans were created weak.

29You who believe,

do not devour one another’s

property wrongfully—

rather, let there be trade

by mutual consent.

Nor kill one another.°

God is Ever Merciful to you.

30And whoever does this,

spitefully and unjustly,

We shall thrust them

into the fire—

this is easy for God.

31If you avoid the major sins

that are forbidden to you,

We shall absolve you

of your minor sins,

and let you enter with honor.

32And do not covet the favors

that God has granted to some

more than others. Men will have

their due share of what they earned,

and women will have

their due share of what they earned.

So entreat God for His favor—

God Knows all things.

33And for everyone,

We have appointed heirs

to what is left behind by parents

and relatives; so give those

to whom you have pledged

your hand

their due portion—

God is Witness to all things.

SECTION 6

34Men are maintainers of women,

for God has thereby advantaged one

over the other—and they

support them from their means.°

So righteous women are devout,

guarding [their husband’s means

and honor], even in their absence,

what God has guarded.

But if you suspect misconduct

from them, first counsel them,

then withdraw from their beds, then

resort to [harmless] force.° But if

they now obey you, seek no

further course against them—

God is Most High, Most Great.

35If you fear a rift between husband

and wife, appoint arbiters,

one from his family and one from hers.

If they desire to reconcile,

God will bring accord between them

for God is All Knowing, All Aware.

36Worship God—and do not

associate partners with Him.

Be kind to parents and relatives,

to orphans, and the poor,

to neighbors—both kin and strangers,

to the companions by your side,

to travelers, and to those you own.

God does not love those

who are proud and boastful—

37nor those who are stingy,

who urge stinginess in others,

and hide what God has given them

by His favor. We have prepared

for the disbelievers

a disgraceful torment—

38nor those who spend

of their wealth to be seen

of people, but who don’t believe

in God and the last day.

Whoever takes Satan

as his companion

has an evil companion indeed.

39What would they lose

if they were to believe in God

and the last day, and spend

in charity from what God

has provided them?

For God Knows all that they do.

40God does not wrong anyone

even by the weight of an atom.

If there is any good done,

He doubles it, and He grants

from Himself a great reward.

41How will it be when We bring

from each people a witness,

and We bring you, Prophet,

as a witness

against these people?

42On that day, those who

disbelieved and disobeyed

the Prophet will wish

the earth had swallowed them,

but they will never hide

anything from God.

SECTION 7

43You who believe,

do not come to prayer

intoxicated, but wait until

you know what you are saying.

Nor come in a state

of major ritual impurity,

—unless traveling—until

you have washed yourselves.

If you are ill, or on a journey,

or one of you has answered

a call of nature, or has been

intimate with women, and you can

find no water, then perform

a ritual cleansing with pure soil,

wiping your faces and hands.

God is Ever Pardoning, Forgiving.

44Have you not seen

those who were given

a portion of the Book

trafficking in error,

wanting you to go astray?

45God best knows your enemies—

God is sufficient as

both Protector and Helper.

46Among the Jews are some

who distort the contexts of words,

saying, “We hear and disobey” or

“Hear without hearing” or

“Attend to us,” twisting them

with their tongues

and defaming the religion.°

If they had said “We hear and obey”

and “Hear and attend to us,”

it would have been better for them

and more fitting, but God

has cursed them for their disbelief,

for only a few of them believe.

47You who were given the Book,

believe in what We have now revealed,

confirming what you already have,

before we erase your faces,

turning them backward,

or curse you, as We cursed

those who broke the Sabbath—

God’s command is always fulfilled.

48God does not forgive

the joining of other gods with Him,

but He forgives anything else

for whom He will. And whoever

joins other gods with God

contrives a great sin.

49Have you not seen those

who claim to purify themselves?

No, it is God who purifies

whom He will; and they

will not be wronged

by even the hair’s width

on a date stone.°

50See how they contrive

a lie about God—

and this itself amounts

to a blatant sin.

SECTION 8

51Have you not seen those

who were given a portion

of the Book believing

in sorcery and false gods,

and saying that the disbelievers

are better guided on the right path

than the believers?

52These are the ones

God has cursed.

And you will find

for whoever is cursed by God

none to help them.

53Or, do they have a share

in His kingdom? Even then,

they would give to people

not even the pith of a date seed.

54Or do they envy people

for what God has given them

from His grace? But We gave

the people of Abraham

the Book and wisdom,

and We granted them

a great kingdom.

55Among them, some believed in it,

while others turned away from it.

But hell will suffice as a blazing fire.

56Soon We shall cast into fire

those who deny Our signs—

whenever their skins

are burned away, We shall

replace these, so they

taste more torment.

God is Almighty, All Wise.

57But those who believe

and do good deeds,

We shall bring into gardens,

with rivers flowing beneath,

to live there forever,

with pure companions, and

We shall bring them into

shade within shade.

58God commands you to repay

your trusts to their owners,

and when you judge between people,

judge with justice.

Excellent is the advice

God gives you in this—

God is All Hearing, All Seeing.

59You who believe, obey God

and obey the messenger and those

in authority among you.

If you disagree among yourselves

in anything, refer it

to God and the messenger,

if you believe

in God and the last day—

that is best and most fitting

as the final recourse.

SECTION 9

60Have you not seen those

who claim to believe in

what was revealed to you and

what was revealed to those

before you, yet wish

to refer judgment to false gods,

though commanded to deny them?

Satan would lead them far astray.

61And when they are told,

“Come to what God has revealed,

and to the messenger,”

you see the hypocrites turning

away from you, in aversion.

62When calamity befalls them

—through their own deeds—

how they come to you, swearing

by God, “We wanted merely

to do what was good and

bring about mutual accord.”

63God well knows what is in

the hearts of these people, so turn

away from them, and advise them,

using words that reach

their inmost selves.

64Any messenger that We sent

was to be obeyed, by God’s leave.

If only they came to you, Prophet,

when they had wronged themselves,

seeking God’s forgiveness,

and the messenger had asked

forgiveness for them—

they would have found God

Ever Relenting, Ever Merciful.

65No, by your Lord,

they will not believe

until they secure you as judge

in their disputes

and find in themselves

no disquiet about what

you decide, yielding to it,

with full submission.

66If We had enjoined them

to lay down their lives

or leave their homes,

only a few of them

would have complied.

But had they done

what they were advised to do,

that would have been

better for them, and would have

strengthened them.

67And then We, from Our grace,

would have given them

a great reward;

68and We would have

guided them to a straight path.

69Those who obey God

and the messenger

are in the company of those

whom God has favored

among the prophets,

the truthful, the martyrs,

the doers of good—

noble companions.

70This is the favor from God,

and God is ample in Knowing.

SECTION 10

71You who believe,

take due precautions [in war],

and advance either in units

or all together.

72Yes, there is among you

the straggler, who says,

when adversity strikes you,

“God has favored me

for I was not there with them.”

73But if good fortune came to you

from God, he would say

—as though no affection ever stood

between you and him—

“I wish I’d been there with them,

I would have had great success.”

74Let those fight in the path of God

who trade the life of this world

for the hereafter.

And whoever fights in the path of God

—whether killed or victorious—

We shall grant him a great reward.

75And why should you not fight

in the path of God

and of those who are weak

—men, women, children—

who cry out, “Our Lord,

deliver us from this town,

whose people are tyrants,

and grant us from Your grace° a protector,

and also from Your grace a helper”?

76Those who believe fight in the path of God,

and those who disbelieve fight in the path of false gods.

So fight against the allies of Satan.

Feeble, indeed, are the wiles of Satan.

SECTION 11

77Have you not seen those who

were told, “Hold back from fighting,

to observe prayer and give in charity”?

Then, when commanded to fight,

a group of them feared people

as much as—or more than—

they feared God, and they implored,

“Our Lord, why did You command

us to fight? Why did You not grant us

reprieve for a while?”

Say, “Enjoyment of the world is brief,

and the hereafter is better for those

who fear God—you will not

be wronged by the hair’s width

on a date seed.”

78“Death will find you,

wherever you are, even

if you were in high towers.”

If some good comes to them,

they say, “This is from God,”

and if harm comes to them,

they say, “This is from you, Prophet.”

Tell them, “All is from God.”

Why can these people scarcely

grasp plain speech?

79Whatever good comes to you

is from God,

and whatever harm comes to you

is from yourself.

And We sent you, Prophet,

as a messenger to humankind—

God suffices as Witness.

80Whoever obeys the messenger

is obeying God. As for whoever

turns away—we have not sent you,

Prophet, to be their guardian.

81They say they obey you,

but when they leave you,

a group of them scheme by night

against what you say. But God

records what they scheme.

So turn away from them

and place your trust in God,

for God suffices as Guardian.

82Do they not ponder the Quran?

Had it been from anyone but God,

they would have found

much incoherence in it.

83When any news reaches them

concerning security or causing alarm,

they spread it abroad.

Had they referred it

to the messenger, and those

in authority among them,

these would have known

how to appraise it.

Were it not for God’s Favor

to you, and His Mercy,

all but a few of you

would have followed Satan.

84So fight in the path of God.

You need answer only for yourself,

and urge on the believers; perhaps

God will curb the force

of the disbelievers.

For God is sturdier in force

and sturdier in chastisement.

85Whoever pleads for a good cause

will gain from it, and

whoever pleads for an evil cause,

will lose from it. For God

is Sustainer of all things.

86Whenever you are graced

with a greeting, meet it

with one sweeter, or

repeat it. God is Reckoner

of each thing.

87God—there is no god but He.

He will surely bring you, gathered,

to the day of resurrection,

of which there is no doubt—and who

speaks with greater truth than God?

SECTION 12

88Believers, why are you

divided about the hypocrites,

when God has curbed them

for what they have done?

Do you wish to guide those

whom God has allowed to stray?

You can never find a way for them.°

89They would have you disbelieve

as they disbelieve, so that you

will be like them.

So don’t take allies from them

until they migrate to the path

of God. But if they renege,

seize them and slay them

wherever you find them,

and do not take from them

any ally or helper—

90except those who join a group

that has a treaty with you,

or those who approach you

with hearts hesitant to fight you

or to fight their own people.

Had God willed, He could

have empowered them over you

and they would have fought you.

So if they withdraw from you,

don’t fight them. And should they

offer you peace, then God

gives you no cause against them.

91You will find others

who seek to be safe from you

and from their own people.

But when tempted to attack

again, they plunge into it.

If they don’t withdraw from you,

offer peace, and restrain themselves,

seize them and slay them

wherever you encounter them.

We have given you

a clear mandate against them.

SECTION 13

92A believer should never kill

another believer, except in error.

Whoever kills a believer in error

should free a believing slave,

and pay due indemnity

to his family, unless, charitably,

they waive it. If the victim

belonged to a hostile people,

and was a believer, it is enough

to free a believing slave.

But if he belonged to a people

with whom you have a treaty,

then pay due indemnity

to his family, and

free a believing slave.

Let those unable to do this

fast for two straight months,

turning in repentance to God,

for God is All Knowing, All Wise.

93Anyone who kills a believer

willfully will have hell

as their recompense, to dwell

there forever, with God’s wrath

and curse upon them—

God has prepared for them

a great punishment.

94You who believe, when you

venture out in the cause of God,

be cautious [in telling friend from foe],

and don’t say to one who greets you

with peace, “You are no believer”

—seeking the fleeting goods

of worldly life—for God

has abundant treasures.

You yourselves were like this

before God showed favor to you.

So, be scrupulous, for God

is Aware of all that you do.

95The believers who remain behind

—excepting the disabled—

are not equal to those striving

in the cause of God, with their wealth

and their lives. God grants

a higher rank to those who so strive

over those who remain.

God has promised good for all,

but He will favor those who strive

over those who remain, with

a great reward,

96conferring on them exalted rank,

forgiveness and mercy. For God

is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

SECTION 14

97When the angels take the lives

of those who wrong themselves,

they will ask,

“What was your plight?”

The wrongdoers will reply,

“We were downtrodden on earth.”

The angels will respond,

“Was God’s earth not wide enough

for you to find refuge?”

Such people will find their abode

in hell—an evil end—

98except those who were

indeed downtrodden

—men, women, and children—

with no means and no guidance

to find a way out.

99Perhaps God will pardon

such people, for He

is Ever Pardoning, Forgiving.

100Whoever forsakes his home

for God’s path will find on earth

many a refuge—and abundance;

and whoever forsakes his home

fleeing toward God and His Prophet,

and then is overtaken by death,

shall find his due reward from God,

for God is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

SECTION 15

101When you travel in the land

you incur no blame if you

shorten your prayers, fearing

that the disbelievers might

attack you—the disbelievers

are your open enemies.

102And when you, Prophet,

are among the believers, and

stand to lead them in prayer,

let one group stand with you,

retaining their arms, and

when they finish bowing in prayer,

let them move behind you,

while another group comes forward

to pray with you, using due vigilance,

their arms with them.

The disbelievers hope you might

neglect your arms and baggage,

so they might assault you in a

single strike. But there’s no blame

if, hampered by rain or illness,

you lay down your arms.

But be vigilant.

God has prepared for the disbelievers

a disgraceful punishment.

103Even after finishing prayer,

keep remembering God,

whether standing, sitting,

or lying on your sides.

And when you feel secure,

resume regular prayer—

prayer is enjoined for believers

at appointed times.

104And don’t falter

in pursuing the enemy.

Though you suffer,

they too suffer like you—

but you have hope in God,

while they have none.

God is All Knowing, All Wise.

SECTION 16

105We have sent down

to you the Book with the truth

that you might use

what God has shown you

to judge between people—

so do not plead for those

who are treacherous.

106But seek forgiveness

from God, for God is

Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

107And do not plead for

those who betray themselves—

for God does not love

the treacherous, the sinful.

108They try to hide from people,

but they can’t hide from God,

for He is with them

when they conspire by night

using words He finds displeasing—

God Encompasses all that they do.

109Here you are, believers,

pleading for them,

in the life of this world—

but who will plead for them to God,

on the day of resurrection?

Who will be their defender?

110Yet whoever does evil

or wrongs himself, then

seeks forgiveness from God,

shall find God Forgiving,

Ever Merciful.

111And whoever reaps sin

reaps it for himself—

God is All Knowing, All Wise.

112But whoever reaps

a wrong or sin, and foists it

on an innocent person

will burden himself

with slander and blatant sin.

SECTION 17

113Without God’s favor to you,

and His mercy, a party of them

would have resolved

to lead you astray. But they

lead only themselves astray,

and cannot harm you in any way,

since God has sent to you the Book

and wisdom, teaching you

what you did not know—

God’s favor to you is great.

114There’s no virtue

in most of their furtive talk—unless

one of them enjoins charity, kindness,

or harmony between people.

To anyone who does this, seeking

to please God, We shall grant

a great reward.

115But those who oppose

the messenger, after clear guidance

has come to them, and follow

some other path than that

of the believers, We’ll let them follow

what they have chosen—and We shall

burn them in hell—an evil end.

SECTION 18

116God will not forgive

the joining of other gods with Him,

but He will forgive all else

for whom He pleases.

Whoever joins other gods

with the One God

has wandered far astray.

117Instead of calling on God,

the polytheists call on goddesses°—

and they call on none

but a rebellious Satan.

118God cursed him, and Satan said,

“I will take a due quota of your servants;

119“and I will lead them astray,

and excite vain desires in them,

and command them to slit the ears

of cattle, and command them

to deface God’s creation.”

Whoever takes Satan as protector

instead of God

shall suffer glaring loss.

120Satan makes them promises,

and incites vain desires in them—

but he promises nothing

but delusion.

121[His followers] shall

have their dwelling in hell,

from which they shall find no escape.

122But We shall admit those

who believe and do good deeds

into gardens, with rivers flowing

beneath, dwelling there forever—

the true promise of God. For who

speaks with greater truth than God?

123Your desires [carry no weight]

nor those of the people of the Book—

whoever does evil shall be

requited for it, and they shall find

no protector or helper besides God.

124We shall admit into the garden

whoever does good deeds and believes

—whether male or female—

and they shall not be wronged

by even the breadth of hair

on a date seed.

125Who is better in religion than

one who submits his entire self

to God, does what is good,

and follows the creed of Abraham,

the pure in faith?°

For God held Abraham as friend.

126To God belongs

all that is in the heavens and

all that is on the earth—

God Encompasses all things.

SECTION 19

127They ask you, Prophet,

for your ruling on women. Say,

“God gives the ruling on them—[see]

what is recited to you in the Book

concerning orphan girls whom

you wish to marry, while withholding

their prescribed shares. [God also

gives you the ruling concerning]

children who are helpless: you should

uphold justice for orphans—God

is Aware of whatever good you do.

128If a wife fears ill conduct

or desertion by her husband,

neither of them will be culpable

if they reach a mutual agreement,

for this is better.°

People are prone to avarice,

but if you do good deeds

and are mindful of Him,

God is Aware of what you do.

129You will never be able

to deal justly between wives,

however much you may want to.

But don’t incline altogether

toward one of them, leaving the other

in abeyance.° If you reconcile,

and are mindful of Him,

God is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

130But if they separate,

God will enrich them

from his expanse, for

God is Expansive, All Wise.

131To God belongs

all that is in the heavens and

all that is on the earth.

We enjoined those

given the Book before you,

as We enjoin you,

to be mindful of God,

but if you disbelieve—still

to Him belongs

all that is in the heavens and

all that is on the earth.

God is Self-Sustaining,

Ever Worthy of Praise.

132To God belongs

all that is in the heavens and

all that is on the earth. He

suffices as Guardian of all trust.

133People, if He willed it,

He could remove you,

and replace you with others—

such is His Power.

134If any desires a worldly reward,

[know that] the reward

of this world and of the hereafter

are both from God—for God

is All Hearing, All Seeing.

SECTION 20

135You who believe, uphold justice,

as witnesses for God,

even if this proves to be

against yourselves or parents

or kin, whether rich or poor,

for God is closer to both.

Desist from your own desires

that you might behave

justly. If you distort

or turn away from justice,

God is Aware of all that you do.

136You who believe,

believe in God and His messenger,

and the Book He revealed

to His messenger,

and the Book He revealed before.

Whoever denies God, his angels,

His Books, His messengers,

and the day of reckoning

has gone far astray.

137God will not forgive

those who believe,

then disbelieve, then

believe again, then

disbelieve again, then

grow in unbelief—

nor will He guide them

to the right path.

138Tell these hypocrites that they

shall face a painful punishment.

139As for those who take

disbelievers as allies rather than

believers: is it power they seek

through them? All power

belongs to God alone.

140He has revealed to you in the Book

that if you hear the verses of God

being denied or mocked [by people],

don’t sit with them unless

they turn to some other discourse,

for then you would be like them.

God will gather the hypocrites and

disbelievers all together—in hell.

141These are the ones who wait on you

[for the outcome of battle],

and if God gives you victory,

they say, “Weren’t we with you?”

But if disbelievers make some gain,

they say, “Didn’t we have the edge

over you, yet defend you

from the believers?”

But God shall judge between you

on the day of reckoning,

and He shall never grant disbelievers

the means of defeating

those who believe.

SECTION 21

142The hypocrites seek

to deceive God, but it is He

Who will render them deceived.

When they stand in prayer,

they stand shiftlessly, merely

to be seen of people, and little

do they remember God—

143wavering, between

this and that, for neither

this side nor the other—

You will never find a way

for those whom God leaves astray.

144You who believe, don’t take

disbelievers over believers as allies.

Would you give God

clear proof against yourselves?

145The hypocrites shall be

in the lowest depths of fire,

and you shall never find

anyone to help them;

146except for those who repent,

amend themselves, and hold fast

to God, sincere to Him in faith.

They shall be with the believers—

to whom God will grant

a great reward.

147Why would God punish you

if you are grateful and believe?

For God is Appreciative, All Knowing.

148God dislikes the mentioning

of bad deeds in public, except by

someone who has been wronged;

and God is All Hearing, All Knowing.

149Whether you reveal

a good deed or conceal it,

or pardon an evil deed—

know that God is Pardoning,

All Powerful.

150As for those who deny God

and his messengers, and wish to

distinguish between God

and His messengers, saying,

“We believe in some but deny others,

and seek a middle way”—

151they are really disbelievers,

and We have prepared for them

a disgraceful punishment.

152We shall soon grant

their rewards to those who believe

in God and His messengers,

and make no distinction

among any of them—for God

is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

SECTION 22

153The people of the Book

ask you to send down to them

a book from heaven.

They asked of Moses more

than this, when they said:

“Show us God—openly.”

A thunderbolt struck them

for their offense.° Then,

they took the calf for worship

even after clear signs

had come to them.

Still, We pardoned them for this,

and gave Moses clear authority.

154And We raised Mount Sinai,

towering over them,

as they took their pledge,

and We said to them:

“Enter the gate,° prostrating,” and

“Do not profane the Sabbath”—

We took from them a solemn pledge.

155Then We punished them

for breaking their pledge,

for denying the signs of God, and

for killing the prophets wrongfully,

and for saying, “Our hearts are covered”°

—no, God has sealed them

in their disbelief;

so little do they believe—

156and for their disbelief, and for

speaking great slander against Mary,

157as well as for saying,

“We killed Jesus the messiah,

son of Mary, messenger of God.”

But they did not kill him

or crucify him, though it appeared

to them as such.° And those who differ

on this are full of doubt about it,

with no knowledge beyond

the fancies they follow. Assuredly,

they did not kill him—

158no—God raised him up to Himself,°

for God is Almighty, All Wise.

159And there’s not one

among the people of the Book

who before death will not

believe in Jesus°—and on

the day of resurrection

he will be a witness against them.

160For all these wrongs of the Jews,

We made unlawful certain good things

formerly lawful for them,

and for barring people

often from the path of God—

161and for taking up usury,

which was forbidden to them,

and for wrongfully devouring

the property of people.

We have prepared a painful torment

for the disbelievers among them.

162However, We shall grant

a great reward to those

firmly rooted in knowledge

among them and the believers,

who believe in what was

revealed to you, and what was

revealed before you;

who are steadfast in prayer,

who give in charity, and

who believe in God

and the last day.

SECTION 23

163We inspired revelation in you

as We inspired Noah

and the prophets after him.

We also inspired Abraham, Ishmael,

Isaac, Jacob, and the tribes,

as well as Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron,

and Solomon. And to David

We gave the Psalms.

164We inspired some messengers

whom We have mentioned

to you before, and others

whom We have not mentioned.

And God spoke directly to Moses.

165Those messengers were

bearers of joyous news and warning,

so that after them, humankind

should have no alibi before God—

for God is Almighty, All Wise.

166God Himself bears witness

to the truth He has revealed to you:

He revealed it to you

with His knowledge.°

And the angels too bear witness,

though God suffices as Witness.

167Those who disbelieve

and bar others from the path of God

have gone far astray.

168God shall not forgive those

who disbelieve and do wrong,

nor shall He direct them to any path,

169except the path to hell,

to dwell there forever—

this is easy for God.

170Humankind, the messenger

has come to you with the truth

from your Lord. It’s better

that you believe—for even

if you disbelieve, it is to God

that all in the heavens and earth

belongs; and God

is All Knowing, All Wise.

171People of the Book,

don’t be excessive in your religion,

nor speak anything

but the truth about God.

The messiah, Jesus, son of Mary,

was but a messenger of God—

His Word, conveyed to Mary,

through His spirit.° So believe

in God and His messengers,

and refrain from talk of “trinity”—

restraint will be better for you.

God is the One God, glorified

far above the begetting of any son.

To Him belongs

all that is in the heavens

and all that is on the earth;

and God suffices as Guardian.

SECTION 24

172The messiah would never spurn

serving God, nor would

the angels close to Him.

He will gather

those who spurn His worship,

those who are proud,

before Him—all of them.

173He will grant a full reward

to those who believe

and do good deeds, giving them

ever more from His grace.

But He will give painful torment°

to those who are disdainful, proud—

they shall not find any protector

or any helper besides God.

174Humankind, conclusive proof

has come to you from your Lord,

and We have revealed to you

a Light supremely clear.

175So, God will admit

into His Mercy and grace

those who believe in Him

and hold fast to Him;

and He will guide them

to Himself on a straight path.°

176They will ask you, Prophet,

for a ruling. Say, “God gives

the ruling concerning inheritance

[for one with neither parents

nor offspring]:°

If a man dies, leaving a sister

but no child, she shall receive

half of what he leaves.

If she dies leaving no child,

her brother will inherit

everything from her.

If there are two sisters,

they shall have two-thirds

between them of what he leaves.

But if there are brothers and sisters,

the male shall get twice

the share of the female.

God makes this clear for you,

so you do not fall into error—

for God Knows all things.

SURA 5

The Table Spread (Al-Ma ʾida)

Middle and late Medinan, this sura numbers 120 verses. “The Table” refers to the table of the Last Supper (v. 114), here sent down from heaven as a sign of Jesus’ prophethood. It includes numerous regulations for believers, from injunctions and affirmations to prohibitions and exceptions. It also condemns certain pagan practices, while calling out Jewish rejection of the Prophet’s message and Christian error in ascribing partners to God. Near the end, Jesus is lauded for recognizing that he does not know what God knows—“Knower of all that is unseen” (v. 116).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1You who believe,

honor your obligations:

it is lawful for you to use

livestock animals for food

except those cited below.

It is not lawful to hunt

while you are on pilgrimage.

God decrees what He will.

2You who believe,

don’t violate the sanctity

of the rites of God,

nor those of the sacred month,

nor of the animals garlanded

for sacrifice,°

nor of those arriving

at the Sacred House,°

striving for the grace

and pleasure of their Lord.

But when you are finished

with the pilgrimage,

you may resume hunting.

And don’t let hatred of those who

barred you from the sacred mosque

incite you to transgress.

Help one another

to be righteous,

to be mindful of God,

and not to sin and transgress.

Be mindful of God,

for God is Severe in Retribution.°

3Forbidden to you are carrion,

blood, and the flesh of swine,

and anything killed invoking

some other name than God’s,

as well as anything that has died

by strangling, beating, falling, or

being gored, or being eaten

by a beast of prey—unless

you can kill it [in the correct way]—

or what is sacrificed on stone altars,

or divided by divining arrows,°

which is grave impiety.

This day, those who disbelieve

have despaired of [making you

abandon] your religion,

so do not fear them but fear Me.

This day I have perfected

your religion for you, and

I have completed My favor to you,

and I have chosen as your religion

submission to My will.°

But if someone is constrained

by hunger [to eat what’s unlawful],

without meaning to sin—

they will find God Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

4They ask you what is lawful

for them. Say, “It’s lawful for you

to eat things that are good and pure,

and the things you’ve taught

your hunting animals [to catch],

as God has taught you.

So eat what they catch for you,

pronouncing God’s Name on it,

and be mindful of God—

God is Swift in Reckoning.”

5This day all good things

have been made lawful for you.

The food of those given the Book°

is lawful for you, and

yours is lawful for them.

Also lawful are chaste women

among the believers and among

those given the Book before you—

provided you give them their dowries,

as chaste men, with no lewdness,

not taking them as lovers.

The work of those who deny faith

will be in vain—and in the hereafter,

they will be among those in loss.

SECTION 2

6You who believe,

before you stand in prayer,

wash your faces and your arms

to the elbow, and wipe your heads,

and wash your feet to the ankles.

If you’re in a condition

of major ritual impurity,

purify yourselves by ritual bathing.

And if you’re ill

or on a journey, or if any of you

have just relieved yourselves or

had contact with women

and do not find water, then

find for yourself clean sand

and wipe your faces with it

and your hands.

God does not want hardship for you;

rather, He intends to purify you

and to complete His favor to you,

that you might be grateful.

7And remember God’s favor to you

and the pledge he took from you

when you declared, “We hear and obey.”

And be mindful of God, for He Knows

what your hearts enclose.

8You who believe, be steadfast for God,

as witnesses for justice,

and don’t allow hatred of anyone

to stop you from acting justly.

Be just—for that is close to piety.

And be mindful of God,

for He is Aware of all that you do.

9God has promised

forgiveness and a great reward

for those who believe

and do good deeds.

10Those who disbelieve

and deny Our signs

shall be inmates of hellfire.

11You who believe, remember

the favor God showed you,

when a certain people schemed°

to raise their hands against you,

and He restrained them.

So be mindful of God,

and let the believers trust in God.

SECTION 3

12God made a covenant

with the children of Israel,

and We appointed from them

twelve captains. And God said,

“I am with you, if you are steadfast

in prayer, practice charity, and

believe in my messengers,

honoring them, and if you

lend to God a beautiful loan;°

then I will expiate your bad deeds,

and admit you into gardens

beneath which rivers flow.

But whoever disbelieves after this

has strayed from the right path.”

13But because they broke the covenant,

We cursed them and made hard their hearts.

They distort the context of words,

and forget part of the message recalled to them.

Nor will you cease to find treachery

among all but a few of them.

But pardon them,

and overlook their misdeeds,

for God loves those who do good.

14And We made a covenant

with those who say,

“We are Christians,” but they forgot

part of the message recalled to them,

so We aroused among them

enmity and hatred,

until the day of resurrection—

then God shall inform them

of all that they have done.

15People of the Book,

Our messenger has come to you,

making clear many things

that you concealed in the Book,

and overlooking many errors.

A new light has come to you

from God—and a clarifying Book—

16by which God guides

those who seek to please Him

to the paths of peace.

He leads them

out of darkness into light,

by His leave; and He guides them

to a straight path.

17Those who proclaim,

“God is the messiah, son of Mary”

are disbelievers. Say,

“Who would have any power

against God if He wished to destroy

the messiah, son of Mary, and

his mother, and all upon the earth?”

To God belongs dominion

over the heavens and the earth

and all that lies between them.

He creates what He will—

God has Power over all things.

18Jews and Christians both claim,

“We are the children of God,

and loved by Him.”

Say, “Why then does He

punish you for your sins?

No—you are merely human beings,

from among those He created.

He forgives whom He will,

and punishes whom He will.”

To God belongs dominion

over the heavens and the earth

and all that lies between them.

And to Him is the final return.

19People of the Book,

Our messenger has come to you,

clarifying things for you

—after a pause in the line

of messengers—so that you

don’t claim, “No one came to us

bearing joyous news or warning.”

Now, someone has come to you

with good news and warning—

for God has Power over all things.

SECTION 4

20When Moses said to his people,

“My people, remember the favor

God showed you,

when He placed prophets among you,

and made you kings, and gave you

what He had not given

to any people in all the world;

21“my people, enter the holy land,

which God has ordained for you,

and do not turn your backs

for you will then return as losers,”

22they said, “Moses, a tyrannical people

live in that land, and we will never enter it

until they leave. If they leave it,

then we will enter.”°

23Then two of the God-fearing men,

whom God had favored, said,

“Attack them at the gate—

once you enter, you will be victorious.

So trust in God, if you are true believers.”

24They said, “Moses, we won’t enter it

while they remain there.

So go, you and your Lord, both—

and fight, while we stay here.”

25He said, “My Lord,

I have control only over

myself and my brother,

so set us apart in Your sight

from this disobedient people.”

26God said, “This land

shall be forbidden to them

for forty years. They shall wander

upon the earth, aimless—

so do not grieve over

this disobedient people.”

SECTION 5

27Tell them the actual story

of the two sons of Adam—

when they both offered a sacrifice.

It was accepted of one of them

but not of the other, who said,

“I’ll kill you.” The first replied,

“God accepts sacrifice only

from those who are mindful of Him.

28“If you raise your hand to kill me,

I will not raise my hand against you, for

I fear God, Lord of the universe.

29“I would have you bring upon yourself

my sin as well as yours

so you’ll be among the inmates of the fire—

the reward of wrongdoers.”

30Still, the other sibling’s soul

prompted him to kill his brother—

now,° he was one of those in loss.

31Then God sent a raven,

which scratched the ground

to show him how to cover

the dead body of his brother.

He said, “Alas! Could I not

have been like this raven

and covered my brother’s body?”

And he was filled with remorse.

32On that account, We decreed

for the children of Israel—

if anyone kills a person

—other than for murder or

sowing corruption in the land°—

it will be as if he had killed

all humankind; and if anyone

saves a life, it will be as if he

had saved all humankind.

Our messengers came to them

with clear signs, but even after this,

many among them were

transgressors in the land.

33The retribution for those

who wage war against God and

his messenger and strive to spread

corruption through the land

is that they be killed or crucified

or their hands and feet cut off

on alternate sides—or that they be

exiled from the land.

Such is their disgrace in this world,

and in the hereafter

they shall face great torment,

34except for those who repent

before you prevail against them;

know, then, that God

is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

SECTION 6

35You who believe,

be mindful of God

and seek the means

to come closer to Him,

and strive in His way,

that you might flourish.

36As for those who disbelieve,

if they had all that is on the earth,

and twice that, to offer as ransom

for their punishment on the day of resurrection,

it would not be accepted of them—

they shall face painful torment.

37They will want to come out of the fire,

but they shall not escape it,

for they shall face enduring torment.

38As for the thief—male and female—

cut off their hands:

the recompense they earned—

an example, from God—

for God is Almighty, All Wise.

39But God will relent, pardoning

those who repent after their crime,

reforming themselves—

for He is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

40Do you not know:

to God belongs dominion over

the heavens and the earth?

He punishes whom He will

and He forgives whom He will—

for God has Power over all things.

41Messenger, don’t be grieved

by those who hasten to unbelief—

those who say with their mouths,

“We believe,” while their hearts

disbelieve; or those Jews

who listen to falsehood, or to others

who have not come to you [for a ruling].

They distort words from

their contexts, and they say,

“If you are given this ruling,

take it, but if not, then beware.”°

You have no sway with God

on behalf of those He would test.

They are the ones whose hearts

God has no desire to purify.

They shall be disgraced in this world,

and they shall face great torment

in the hereafter—

42those who listen to lies and

consume what is proscribed.

If they come to you,

judge between them or

turn away from them.

If you turn away,

they can’t harm you at all.

And if you do judge, then

judge between them justly—

God loves those who are just.

43Yet why do they appoint you

as judge when they have their Torah

bearing God’s judgment?

And even after this, they turn away,

for they are not true believers.

SECTION 7

44We revealed the Torah

[to Moses], bearing guidance

and light—by this,

the prophets submissive to God’s will

judged for the Jews,

as did the rabbis and the scholars,

by the Book of God

entrusted to their care, and to which

they bore witness.

So do not fear people,° but fear Me,

and do not sell My signs

for a paltry price.

As for those who do not judge

by what God has revealed—

they are the unbelievers.

45In the Torah We told them,

a life for a life, an eye for an eye,

nose for nose, tooth for tooth,

and fair requital for any wound.

But those who forgo reprisal,

out of charity, will thereby atone

for their bad deeds.

As for those who do not judge

by what God has revealed—

they are wrongdoers.

46In their footsteps, We sent Jesus,

son of Mary, verifying the Torah

that came before him;

We gave to him the Gospel,

bearing guidance and light,

verifying the Torah

that came before him—

guidance and counsel

for those mindful of God.

47Let the followers

of the Gospel judge

by what God has revealed in it;

as for those who do not judge

by what God has revealed—

they are the disobedient.

48And We revealed the Book,

with the truth, to you, Prophet,

verifying the earlier Book,

preserving it. So judge between them

by what God has revealed,

and do not follow their desires,

straying from the truth

that has come to you.

For each of you, We made a law

and a path. If God had willed,

He could have made you one people,

but He would test you

in what He has granted you:

so compete in good works.

All of you shall return to God—

He alone shall enlighten you

about the things you dispute.

49So judge between them

by what God has revealed,

and do not follow their desires—

beware that they don’t entice you

away from some of what

God has revealed to you.

And if they turn away, know that

God intends to scourge them

for some of their sins—

for most people are disobedient.

50Do they seek a judgment

from the days of pagan ignorance?°

Who is better in judging than God

for a people of assured faith?

SECTION 8

51You who believe, do not take

the Jews and Christians as allies—

they are allies of each other.

Whoever among you turns to them

belongs with them.

God does not guide a wrongful people.

52You see those with sick hearts

hastening to them, saying

“We fear a turn of fortune.”

But God may bring you victory,

or a ruling from Himself—

then they will regret what

they hid within themselves.

53And those who believe

will say, “Are these the ones

who swore the strongest oaths by God

that they were with you?”

All their deeds have been in vain

and they are now the losers.

54You who believe, if any of you

turn away from their faith, then

God will replace you with a people

whom He loves and who love Him—

humble toward believers, and

robust against disbelievers,

striving in the path of God, not

fearing reproach from anyone.

This is the grace of God, which

He brings to those whom He will,

for God is Expansive, All Knowing.

55Your allies are God,

His messenger, and the believers

who are steadfast in prayer

and charity, bowing [in worship].

56The party of God

—those who turn to God,

His messenger, and the believers—

shall be victorious.

SECTION 9

57You who believe,

do not take as allies those

who take your religion

in jest and sport, among those

who were given the Book

before you and the unbelievers.

Rather, be mindful of God

if you are true believers.

58When you voice the call to prayer,

they take it in jest and sport—

for they are people void of reason.

59Say, “People of the Book,

do you resent us just because

we believe in God,

in what was revealed to us

and what was revealed before,

while most of you are disobedient?”

60Say, “Shall I tell you

who deserved a punishment

worse than this from God?

Those whom God cursed,

His wrath falling on them,

some of whom He turned

into apes and swine,

and who worshipped false gods.

They have an even worse rank

and have strayed farther

from the even path.”

61When they come to you,

they say, “We believe.”

But really they enter and leave

in a state of disbelief—and

God knows best what they conceal.

62And you see many of them

hastening to sin and transgression,

and gorging on unlawful earnings.

How wicked their deeds have been!

63Why do their rabbis and scholars

not forbid them from speaking sin

and gorging on unlawful earnings?

How wicked their works have been!

64The Jews say,

“God’s hand is chained”—

it is their hands that are chained

and they are cursed for what they assert.

The hands of God are in fact outstretched

and He gives as He will.

Your Lord’s revelations to you

intensify rebellion and unbelief

in most of them. We have cast

enmity and hatred among them

until the day of resurrection.

Whenever they fuel the fire of war

God extinguishes it. They strive

to sow corruption upon the earth—

and God dislikes those who do this.

65Had the people of the Book

believed and had they been mindful

of God, We would have expiated

their evil deeds and urged them

into gardens of bliss.

66If they had stood firm

by the Torah and the Gospel

and what was revealed to them

from their Lord, then sustenance

would have showered down on them

from above, and risen from beneath

their feet. Among them is a group

on the right course, yet

what many of them do is wicked.

SECTION 10

67Messenger, proclaim all

that has been revealed to you

from your Lord—if you don’t,

you won’t have conveyed

His message.

And God shall guard you

against people [who oppose you].

God does not guide

people who disbelieve.

68Say, “People of the Book,

you stand upon no ground, unless

you stand firmly by the Torah

and the Gospel and what was

revealed to you from your Lord.”

But what was revealed to you

from your Lord, Prophet, simply deepens

the rebellion and disbelief

of most of them—but do not grieve

over people who disbelieve.

69Those who believe, including

Jews, Sabians,° and Christians—

all who believe in God

and the last day

and do good works—

they shall not fear, nor grieve.

70We made a covenant

with the children of Israel,

and We sent messengers to them.

Whenever these brought to them

directives not suiting their desires,

they rejected some of them

and killed others.

71They thought there would be

no trial—so they became

blind and deaf.

Yet God turned to them [in mercy],

yet, again, many of them became

blind and deaf—

God Sees all that they do.

72Those who say,

“God is the messiah, son of Mary”

disbelieve. For the messiah said,

“Children of Israel, worship God—

my Lord and your Lord.”

God will bar from the garden those

who associate others with Him;

their home shall be the fire,

and there shall be none

to help the wrongdoers.

73Those who say,

“God is the third in a trinity”

disbelieve. There is no god

beyond the One God, and if they

don’t desist from saying this,

those of them who disbelieve

shall face painful torment.

74So why don’t they turn to God,

seeking His forgiveness?

For God is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

75The messiah, son of Mary,

was but a messenger, and before him

other messengers passed away.

His mother was a truthful woman;

they both ate food [like other mortals].

See how We make clear

Our signs [to people], and see

how deluded they are!

76Say, “Do you worship

something other than God

which has the power

neither to do you harm or good?”

God is All Hearing, All Knowing.

77Say, “People of the Book,

don’t trespass, in your religion,

beyond the boundaries of truth.

And don’t follow the desires of those

who went astray before

and led many others astray—those

who strayed from the even path.”

SECTION 11

78The unbelievers among

the children of Israel were cursed

by the words of David and of Jesus,

son of Mary—for they disobeyed

and were always transgressing.

79They would not forbid

one another from the iniquities

they committed. The things

they did were wicked.

80You see many of them

turning to the unbelievers.

The deeds their souls

bring to their own account°

are wicked—God’s wrath

falls upon them, and they

will dwell in torment forever.

81If they had believed

in God and the Prophet

and what has been revealed to him,

they would not have taken

[the unbelievers] as allies.

But most of them are disobedient.

82You’ll find that, of all people,

the Jews and polytheists are

most hostile to the believers;

you’ll find those who say,

“We are Christians” nearest

in love to the believers, for

among them are priests and monks

who are not filled with pride.

83When they hear what

is revealed to the messenger,

you’ll see their eyes brim with tears,

for they know the truth. They say,

“Our Lord, we believe, so record us

among the witnesses.”

84“Why would we not believe

in God and the truth that has

come to us? For we yearn

for our Lord to include us

among the righteous people.”

85And God has rewarded them

for what they say, with gardens

with rivers flowing beneath;

there they shall live forever—

that is the reward

of those who do good.

86But those who disbelieve

and deny Our signs

shall be inmates of hellfire.

SECTION 12

87You who believe,

do not forbid the good things

which God has made lawful for you,

and do not transgress—for God

does not love transgressors.

88Eat of the lawful and good things

that God has given, and be mindful

of the One God in Whom you believe.

89God will not call you to account

for what you utter unthinkingly

in your oaths,

but He will call you to account

for the oaths you pledge solemnly.

To atone for breaking an oath,

you should feed ten needy people,

as you would feed your families,

or else clothe them, or free a slave.

Whoever finds this beyond their means

should fast for three days.

This is the atonement for oaths

you have sworn. So keep your oaths.

In this way, God makes clear

His signs for you,

that you might be grateful.

90You who believe—

wine, games of chance,

sacrifices at stone altars, and

arrows used for divining

are all an abomination—

the work of Satan.

So turn away from them,

that you may flourish.

91Satan desires merely

to incite enmity and hate

between you, through wine

and games of chance, and

to impede you from

remembrance of God

and from prayer.

Will you not, then, refrain?

92So, obey God, and obey

the messenger, and be wary;

and if you turn away, know that

Our messenger’s task is only

to convey the message clearly.

93Those who believe and

do good deeds will not be blamed

for what they ate in the past,

if they are mindful of God,

believe, and do good deeds;

then are still mindful of God

and believe;

then are still mindful of God

and do better deeds—

for God loves those who do good.

SECTION 13

94You who believe, God will

test you through the game you hunt

with your hands and spears

that He may know who fears Him,

even though they cannot see Him;

and whoever transgresses after this

shall face painful torment.

95You who believe, do not kill prey

while you are dressed as pilgrims.

Those of you who do so willfully

must compensate,

by bringing to the Kaʿba°

a domestic beast as an offering,

equivalent to what they killed,

as judged by two just men among you,

or, as atonement, by feeding

needy people or, instead,

by fasting—so that they may taste

the seriousness of their act.

God will pardon a past action,

but if anyone repeats it,

God will requite them,

for God is Almighty,

Lord of Requital.

96It’s lawful for you and travelers

to catch and eat prey from the sea,

but to hunt prey from the land

is unlawful for you while dressed

as pilgrims. And be mindful of God,

to Whom you will be gathered.

97God made the Kaʿba,

the Sacred House, a secure haven

for humankind, as also

the sacred months, and the animals

for sacrifice, and the garlands—

all, so you might know that

God knows all that is in

the heavens and the earth,

and that God Knows all things.

98Know also that

God is Severe in Retribution

yet He is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

99It is the messenger’s task

only to convey the message;

for God knows all that you reveal,

and all that you conceal.

100Say, “The good and the bad

are not equal, even though

the abundance of bad things

may please you.

So be mindful of God,

You who possess insight,

that you might flourish.”

SECTION 14

101You who believe,

don’t ask about things [hidden]

which, if made clear, would grieve you.

But if you ask about them

when the Quran is revealed,

they will be made clear to you;

and God will pardon your asking,

for God is Forgiving, Forbearing.

102People before you asked such questions

and ended up disbelieving.

103It was not God who set up

the dedication to idols of

a slit-eared she-camel, nor

a she-camel freed to pasture, nor

a twin-bearing female, nor

a camel stallion freed to stud°—

but rather, those who disbelieve,

inventing a lie against God,

for most of them do not

make use of reason.

104And when they are told,

“Embrace what God has revealed

to His messenger,” they say,

“What our forefathers left us°

is quite sufficient for us.”

Really? Even though their forefathers

knew nothing and were not guided?

105You who believe, you are

accountable for your souls.

Those who stray can’t harm you

if you are guided. To God

you will all be returned,

and He will inform you

of all that you have done.

106You who believe, when death

approaches any one of you,

let two just men among you testify

when a will is being made,

or two others from outside

if you are traveling in the land

and happen to meet your death.

If you doubt [the two witnesses],

detain them both after prayer,

and let them both swear by God:

“We shall not sell our testimony,

even for a close relative, and

we shall not hide God’s testimony,

for then we would be sinning.”

107But if it is perceived

that these two were guilty

of the sin [of perjury], let

them be replaced by two others

among those who are deemed

more worthy than the first two,

and let them swear by God:

“Our testimony is truer than

that of those two, and

we have not transgressed, for then

we would be doing wrong.”

108This will make them more likely

to give true evidence, or make them

wary that their oaths might be

countered by the oaths of others.

So be mindful of God, and listen—

for God does not guide

a disobedient people.

SECTION 15

109On the day God gathers

the messengers together,

He will ask,

“How were you answered?”

They will respond,

“We do not know;

You alone Know the unseen.”

110And God will say,

“Jesus, son of Mary, remember

my favor to you and to your mother,

when I strengthened you

with the holy spirit;

you spoke to the people from

the cradle and in maturity, and when

I taught you the Book and wisdom,

the Torah and the Gospel, and when

you created from clay the form of a bird

by My leave—you breathed into it

and it became a bird,

by My leave;

and you healed the blind and the leper

by My leave;

and when you brought forth the dead

by My leave;

and when I held back from you

the children of Israel, when

you came to them with clear signs,

for the disbelievers among them said,

“This is clearly nothing but magic.”

111When I inspired the disciples

of Christ to believe in Me and

in My messenger, they proclaimed,

“We believe—bear witness

that we submit to God’s will.”

112When the disciples said,

“Jesus, son of Mary, can your Lord

send down to us from heaven

a table spread with food?

He said, “Be mindful of God

if you are true believers.”

113They said, “We want to eat of it

and ease our hearts, and to know

that you have told us the truth,

so that we may be witnesses to it.”

114Jesus, son of Mary, said,

“O God, our Lord, send to us

from heaven a table spread

with food, as a festival

for the first of us and the last—

as a sign from You.

Provide for us—for You

are the Best of Providers.”

115God responded,

“I am sending it to you,

but I shall punish any of you

who disbelieves after that,

with a punishment such as

I have never imposed on anyone

in all the world.”

SECTION 16

116And when God asked,

“Jesus, son of Mary, did you say

to people, ‘Take me and my mother

both as gods instead of God,’ ”

he will answer, “Glory be to You;

I would never say what I had no right

to say—if I had said it,

You would have known it. You know

what is within me, but I do not know

what is within You—Knower

of all that is unseen.

117“I said to them only

what you commanded me to,

‘Worship God, my Lord and

your Lord,’ and I was a witness

to them while I was among them.

When You raised me up, You

were Watching over them, and You

are Witness to all things.

118“If you punish them,

they are Your servants;

and if You forgive them—

You are the Almighty, All Wise.”

119God will say, “On this day,

the truthful shall benefit from

their truthfulness. They shall have

gardens with rivers flowing beneath;

there they shall live forever. God

shall be pleased with them, and they

with Him—the supreme triumph.”

120To God belongs dominion

over the heavens and the earth,

and all within them. And He

has Power over all things.

SURA 6

Cattle (Al-Anʿam)

Late Meccan with some Medinan additions, this sura numbers 165 verses. It refers to pre-Islamic practices about cattle sacrifice in vv. 138–46 but also offers strong directives about exclusive worship of the one God, ending with exemplary testimony from the Prophet (vv. 161–65).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1All praise be to God

Who created the heavens and the earth,

Who made the darkness and the light—

yet those who disbelieve

ascribe equals to their Lord.

2It is He Who created you from clay,

then decreed for you a term,

—then a fixed term with Him°—

yet still you are in doubt.

3And He is God

in the heavens and the earth;

He knows what you conceal

and what you reveal—

He knows what you reap.

4Yet no sign ever comes

to them from their Lord

but they turn away from it.

5And so they denied the truth

when it came to them, but soon

the truth of what they ridiculed

shall fall upon them.

6Don’t they see the generations

We destroyed before them?

We had settled them on the earth

more securely than you;

We poured down on them

abounding rain from the sky,

and We made rivers

flow beneath them—but

We destroyed them for their sins,

and We brought forward

other generations after them.

7Even if We sent you a Book

written on parchment, which

they could touch with their hands,

those who disbelieve would still say,

“This is nothing but plain sorcery.”

8And they ask, “Why isn’t

an angel sent down to him?”

Had We sent an angel,

judgment would have been

pronounced on them°—then

they would have no respite.

9Had We made him an angel,

We would have shaped him

in the form of a human—

furthering their confusion.

10Messengers before you, Prophet,

were mocked, but those who scoffed

were engulfed by what they mocked.

SECTION 2

11Say, “Wander through the earth

and see how things ended

for those who denied the truth.”

12Ask, “To whom belongs all

that is in the heavens and earth?

Answer, “To God.

He has pledged Himself

to showing mercy;°

He will gather you

on the day of resurrection—

which is beyond doubt;

but those who have lost their souls,

will not believe.

13To Him belongs all that lives

by night and day—for He is

the All Hearing, All Knowing.”

14Say, “Shall I take as my protector

any but God, Maker of the heavens

and the earth, He Who feeds

and is not fed?” Say,

“I am commanded to be the first

of those who submit to God’s will,

so don’t you be among

those who join others with God.”

15Say, “If I disobeyed my Lord,

I would fear the torment

of a momentous day.

16“Whoever is spared [torment]

that day—it is through God’s mercy,

and that will be the clear victory.”

17If God touches you

with affliction, none but He

can remove it;

and if He touches you

with good—it is He

Who has Power over all things.

18He is the Omnipotent, far above

His worshippers, and

He is the All Wise, All Aware.

19Ask, “Whose witness carries

the greatest weight?”

Answer, “God is Witness between me and you;

and this Quran was revealed to me

that I might thereby warn you and

whomever else it reaches.

Can you bear witness that,

besides God, there is another god?”

Say, “I cannot.” And say,

“He is the One God, and I disown

whatever you join with Him.”

20Those to whom We gave the Book

recognize it, as they recognize

their own children;

those who have lost themselves

do not believe.

SECTION 3

21Who does more wrong than

those who invent a lie about God,

and deny His signs?

Those who do wrong shall not flourish.

22One day We shall gather

them all together, then We shall say

to those who ascribed partners to Us:

“Where are the partners you claimed?”

23Then, their only plea will be

to swear, “By God, Our Lord,

we did not ascribe partners to You.”

24See how they lie about themselves

and how the gods they invented

have abandoned them.

25Among them are some who

seem to listen to you.

But We have placed

veils over their hearts—lest they

understand [the Quran]—

and deafness in their ears.

And even if they saw every sign,

they would not believe it,

so that, when they come to you,

they dispute with you.

The disbelievers say,

“These are nothing

but tales of the ancients.”

26And they withhold others

from the Quran—as they themselves

stay away from it; but they merely

bring about their own ruin,

without realizing it.

27If you could see when they are

made to stand before the fire—

they will say, “If only

we could be sent back—

we would not deny the signs

of our Lord, and we would believe.”°

28No—the truth they used to hide

will become clear to them,

and if they were sent back,

they would just go back

to what was forbidden to them,

for they are liars.

29They say, “There is nothing

beyond our life in this world,

and we shall not be resurrected.”

30If you could see when they

stand before their Lord—He will say,

“Is this not real?” They will answer,

“Yes, by our Lord.” He will say,

“Taste, then, the punishment

for persisting in disbelief.”

SECTION 4

31Those who deny the meeting

with God are lost—until the hour

strikes suddenly, and they say,

“How sorry we are

that we did not heed it!”

For they’ll bear their burdens on

their backs—a wicked burden!

32What is the life of this world

but play and a pastime?

The home of the hereafter is better

for those who are mindful of God.

Will you not, then, use reason?

33We know that what they say

grieves you, Prophet, but it’s

not you they deny—it’s the signs

of God the wrongdoers deny.

34Indeed, messengers were denied

before you, and they bore

denial and injury patiently

until Our help came to them.

For none can alter the words of God—

you have received before now

accounts of the messengers.

35If it is so hard on you, when they

turn away, what if you could seek

a tunnel in the earth

or a stairway toward the sky,

to bring them a sign?°

If God wished, He could gather

all of them to guidance; so do not

join those who are ignorant.

36Only those who listen respond;

and God shall bring the dead to life—

then to Him they’ll be brought back.

37And they say, “Why is no sign

sent down to him from his Lord?”

Say, “God has the Power

to send a sign”; but most of them

don’t know it.

38All creatures on the earth,

and all birds that fly on their wings,

are communities,° like you.

We have overlooked nothing

in the Book—then, to their Lord

they shall be gathered.

39Those who deny Our signs

are deaf and dumb, in darkness—

God allows whom He will to stray,

and He sets whom He will

on a straight path.

40Say, “Think to yourselves,

if God’s punishment or the hour

were to come to you, would you call

on any other besides God,

if what you say is true?”

41You would call on Him alone;

if He wished, He would remove

the distress that made you call

on Him—and you would forget

the partners you joined with Him.

SECTION 5

42Yes, We sent messengers

to many nations° before you,

striking them with adversity

and hardship, that they

might learn humility.

43But when Our adversity

fell upon them, why didn’t they

humble themselves? Rather,

their hearts hardened, and Satan

made their actions seem fair to them.

44So, when they forgot

what they had been reminded of,

We opened for them the doors

to all good things,° until

—as they enjoyed their gifts—

We suddenly seized them,

sinking them in despair.

45So the last vestige

of the wrongdoers was erased°—

praise be to God,

Lord of the universe.

46Say, “Do you think that,

if God were to take away

your hearing and your sight, and

seal up your hearts, some other god

could restore them to you?”

See how We explain Our signs—

yet still they turn aside.

47Say, “If God’s punishment

fell on you—whether unforeseen

or seen—do you think that anyone

except those who do wrong

would be destroyed?”

48We send the messengers

only to bring joyous news

and to warn people—

so those who believe

and do good deeds

shall have no fear,

nor shall they grieve.

49But punishment shall strike

those who denied Our signs,

for they were disobedient.

50Say, “I do not say to you

that I have the treasures of God,

nor that I know the unseen, nor

that I’m an angel. I merely follow

what is revealed to me.” Say,

“Are the blind the same

as those who can see?

Won’t you, then, reflect?”

SECTION 6

51And use this [Quran] to warn

those who fear that they will be

gathered before their Lord—so that

they might be mindful of God—

beyond Him they shall have

no protector nor any intercessor.

52Do not send away

those who call upon their Lord,

morning and evening, seeking

His Face. No part of their reckoning

falls on you, nor yours on them.

Should you send them away,

you would be doing wrong.

53In this way, We tried

some of them by means of others,

that they might ask,

“Are these the ones God

has favored among us?”

Does God not know best

who are thankful?

54When those who believe

in Our signs come to you, say,

“Peace be with you.”

Your Lord has pledged Himself

to showing mercy.° If any of you

did wrong in ignorance, and then

repented and amended themselves—

God is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.”

55In this way, We explain the signs

so that the way for sinners

might be made plain.

SECTION 7

56Say, “I am forbidden

to worship the gods on whom

you call besides the One God.”

Say, “I shall not follow

your desires, for I would stray

and not be rightly guided.”

57Say, “I stand upon clear proof

from my Lord, while you deny it.

What you seek to hasten is

not in my power—the decision is

with God alone. He relates the truth,

for He is the Best of Arbiters.”

58Say, “If what you seek to hasten

lay in my power, the matter would be

settled between you and me; but God

best knows who the wrongdoers are.”

59With Him are the keys of the unseen,

which none knows but He.

He knows what is on land and sea;

not a leaf falls without

His knowing; nor is there a grain

in the depth of earth’s darkness,

nor moisture nor dryness, without

being set down in a clear Book.

60It is He Who calls back your souls

by night, knowing all you have done

by day; then, He raises you up,

to fulfill the appointed term. To Him

you shall return—then He will

inform you of all you have done.

SECTION 8

61He is the Forceful, far above

His worshippers, and He sends

guardians over you until,

when death comes to any of you,

Our envoys° take his soul—and they

never fail in their duty.

62Then they shall be returned

to God, their true Protector.

His alone is the judgment, and He

is the Swiftest of Reckoners.

63Say, “Who is it that saves you

from the dark depths of land and sea,

when you call on Him

humbly and secretly,

saying, ‘If He saves us from this,

We shall truly be thankful’?”

64Say, “It is God who saves you

from this and every distress—yet still

you ascribe partners to Him.”

65Say, “He is Able to send

punishment to you, from above,

or from beneath your feet,

or split you into factions, to let you

taste one another’s aggression.”

See how We vary Our signs,

so that they might understand.

66But your people deny it,

though it is the truth. Tell them,

“I am not your guardian.

67“There is a given term

for every prophecy—

and soon you will know.”

68When you see people talking idly

about Our signs, turn away from them

until they talk of something else—

if Satan makes you forget,

then, when you remember,

sit apart from those who do wrong.

69Nothing of their reckoning

falls on those who fear God,

except to remind them that they

should be mindful of God.

70As for those who take

their religion as play and a pastime,

deluded by the life of this world—

leave them to themselves—but

remind them that a soul

is destroyed by what it reaps;

it shall have no protector besides God,

nor any intercessor; and no matter

what ransom it offered, none

will be accepted from it. Those

are the ones to be destroyed

by what they have reaped; they

shall have scalding water to drink

and painful punishment, for they

always denied the truth.

SECTION 9

71Say, “Shall we call on others

besides God—who can do us

neither good nor harm?

And shall we turn upon our heels

after God has guided us, like one

seduced by Satan, wandering

bewildered through the land, though

his friends call to him, ‘Come to us!’?”

Say, “God’s guidance

is the right guidance,

and we have been commanded

to submit our will

to the Lord of the universe,

72“to be steadfast in prayer, and

to be mindful of Him—

for it is to Him

that you shall be gathered.”

73It is He Who created

the heavens and the earth

with true purpose;° on the day

when He says, “Be,” it shall be.

His Word is the truth.

And His shall be dominion

on the day the trumpet is blown—

Knower of the unseen and the seen,

He is All Wise, All Aware.

74Remember when Abraham

asked his father, Azar,

“Do you take idols as gods?

I see that you and your people

are clearly wrong.”

75And We showed Abraham

the Kingdom of the heavens

and the earth—to assure his faith.

76When night covered him

with darkness, he saw a star,

and said, “This is my Lord.”

But when it set, he said,

“I dislike things that set.”

77When he saw the moon rising,

he said, “This is my Lord.”

But when it too set, he said,

“If my Lord does not guide me,

I will be one of those

who’ve gone astray.”

78When he saw the sun rising,

he said, “This is my Lord.

This is the most great.”

But when it too set, he said,

“My people, I renounce

your practice of ascribing

partners to God.

79“I have set my face toward the One

Who fashioned the heavens

and the earth; upright in faith,

I shall never be a polytheist.”

80His people argued with him.

He said, “Are you arguing with me

about God, when He has guided me?

I have no fear of the gods

you join with Him;

unless He wishes it, [nothing can happen].

My Lord embraces all things

in His knowing.

So won’t you take heed?

81“Why should I fear what you

join with Him, when you

have no fear of joining partners

with God, for which no sanction

has been sent down to you?

So, which of our two parties

has more right to feel secure?

[Tell me], if you know.

82“Those who believe

and don’t confound their belief

with doing wrong—they are the ones

who will be secure, for they

are the rightly guided ones.”

SECTION 10

83This was the argument We gave

to Abraham against his people.

We raise in rank whom We will—

your Lord is All Wise, All Knowing.

84We gave him Isaac and Jacob,

and We guided all of them.

Earlier, We had guided Noah

and his descendants: David, Solomon,

Job, Joseph, Moses, and Aaron

—this is how We reward

those who do good—

85and Zachariah, John, Jesus, and Elijah

—all were among the righteous—

86and Ishmael, Elisha, Jonah, and Lot—

We favored them above all peoples,

87and their fathers, descendants,

and their brothers—We chose some

and guided them to a straight path.

88This is guidance from God;

He guides by it whichever

of His worshippers He will.

If they were to join partners

with Him, all their deeds

would be rendered vain.

89These were the people to whom

We gave the Book, wisdom,

and prophethood.

If now they deny all this,

We shall entrust it to a people

who will not deny it.

90Those were the people God guided,

so, Prophet, follow the guidance

that they gained. Say,

“I ask of you no reward for this—

this is nothing less than a reminder

for all the worlds.”

SECTION 11

91They fail to appraise

the true measure of God when they say,

“God has never revealed anything

to a mere mortal.” Say,

“Who revealed the Book

by which Moses brought light

and guidance to his people—

you divide it into parchments,

disclosing some things

but hiding many more?

You were taught

what you did not know—

you nor your forefathers.”

Answer, “God revealed it,”

then leave them floundering

in their idle talk.

92This is a blessèd Book

that We have revealed,

confirming what came before it,

that you might warn

the mother of cities,°

and those around her.

Those who believe in the hereafter

believe in the Book,

and they preserve

their practice of prayer.

93Who does more wrong than those

who invent a lie about God, or say,

“Revelation came to me”—

when it did not come to them—or,

“I shall reveal something

similar to what God has revealed”?

If you could see the wrongdoers

in the agonies of death, as the angels

stretch out their hands, saying,

“Surrender your souls. Today,

you shall reap the torment

of humiliation for the untruths

you spoke about God, and for your

proud disdaining of His signs.”

94“And [God will say],

Now, you return to Us alone,

as when We first created you:

you have left behind whatever gifts

We granted you. We do not see

any of your intercessors with you—

those you claimed as God’s partners

in your affairs. All bonds

between you and them are severed,

and those you claimed as partners

have forsaken you.”

SECTION 12

95It is God who splits open

the seed and the date stone;

He brings the living from the dead

and the dead from the living—

this is God—so how

can you be deluded?

96It is He Who breaks open the dawn,

Who makes the night for repose,

and the sun and moon for reckoning.

This is the providence

of the Almighty, the All Knowing.

97It is He Who made for you

the stars, to guide you

in the darkness of land and sea.

We have made Our signs clear

for a people who know.

98It is He who brought you forth

from a single soul, furnishing

a place to dwell and to rest.

We have made Our signs clear

for people who understand.

99It is He Who sends down rain

from the sky—from this

We bring out every plant, from which

We bring greenery, out of which

We bring grain in heaped piles;

and from the spathes of date palm,

low-hanging clusters of dates,

gardens of grapevines, olives, and

pomegranates—all alike yet diverse.

See their fruits as they bear fruit

and ripen—in all this are signs

for people who believe.

100Yet they ascribe jinn as partners

with God—though He created them;

and they falsely ascribe to Him sons

and daughters—without knowledge.

May He be glorified, exalted

far beyond what they ascribe—

SECTION 13

101the Originator of the heavens

and the earth—how could He

have a son, when He has no consort?

He created all things, and He

Knows all things.

102This is God, your Lord.

There is no god but He,

Creator of all things—

so worship Him, for He

Oversees all things.

103No sight can encompass Him,

but He encompasses all sight,

for He is Ever Subtle, All Aware.

104Now insight has come to you

from your Lord—

those who see, shall do so

for their own good;

and those who are blind, shall be so

to their own cost. Tell them, Prophet,

“I am not your guardian.”

105In this way, We explain

and clarify the signs to people

who know, though

[disbelievers] will say to you,

Prophet, “You have been tutored.”

106Follow what your Lord inspired

in you—there is no god but He; and

turn away from those who ascribe

partners to Him.

107Had God wished it, they would not

have ascribed partners to Him;

but We have not made you

their guardian, nor their overseer.

108And do not revile

those they call upon besides God

in case they should revile God

through hostility, without knowing.

We made each nation’s deeds

seem fair to them, but then

they will return to their Lord,

and He shall inform them

of all that they did.

109They swear their strongest oaths

by God, that if a sign came to them,

they would believe it. Tell them,

“Signs are in the hands of God alone.

What would make you realize,

believers, that even if a sign came

to them, they would not believe?”

110We would turn away their hearts

and their vision—just as they

did not believe in it at first,

and we would leave them

in their transgression,

wandering blindly.

SECTION 14

111Even if We sent angels down

to them, and the dead spoke

to them, and We gathered all things

[as evidence] before them,

they would not believe,

unless God wished it—

but most of them are ignorant of this.

112In this way, We made an enemy

for every prophet—demons, among

humans and jinn, urging one another

using deceptive rhetoric.°

Had God wished it, they would not

have done this; so leave them,

with their fabrications,

113so that the hearts of those

who don’t believe in the hereafter

might lean toward their deceit,

pleased with it, and so reap

the evil they have sown.°

114Ask, “Shall I seek some other

judge than God, when it is He

who revealed to you the Book,

explaining all things?

Those to whom We sent the Book

know that it is the truth revealed

by your Lord—so don’t be in doubt.°

115The Word of your Lord

is perfected in truth and justice.

His words cannot be changed,

for He is All Hearing, All Knowing.

116If you followed most of those

upon the earth, they would make you

stray from the path of God;

they follow nothing but conjecture,

and they do nothing but speculate.

117Your Lord knows best

who strays from His path;

and He also knows best

who are rightly guided.

118Eat of animals over which

the name of God has been invoked,

if you truly believe in His signs.

119Why should you not

eat of animals over which

the name of God has been invoked,

when He has explained to you

what He has forbidden to you,

unless driven by need?

But many lead people astray

by indulging their desires

without knowledge—

God knows best

those who transgress.

120Avoid sin, open or secret;

those who reap sin shall be rewarded

for all that they wrought.

121Avoid eating animals over which

God’s name has not been invoked,

for that is willful disobedience.

Yet the demons are always inciting

their disciples to dispute with you;

but if you should heed them,

you too will be polytheists.

SECTION 15

122Can a dead person, to whom

We gave life—and a light by which

to walk among people—be compared

to someone mired in darkness,

unable to emerge from its depth?

This is how the unbelievers’ deeds

seem fair in their own eyes.

123In this way, We placed in every city

prominent criminals, to contrive

their plots there; yet they merely plot

against themselves—unwittingly.

124When any sign comes to them

they say, “We’ll never believe

until we’re given a sign like those

given to the messengers of God.”

God knows best where to place

His message. Those who do wrong

shall face humiliation before God,

and severe torment for their plotting.

125God opens the hearts of those

He would guide—to submit to Him,°

and He tightens and constricts

the hearts of those He would let stray,

as though they were climbing toward

the sky. This is how God mires

the disbelievers in their own squalor.

126This is the path of your Lord,

made straight—We have explained

the signs to people who take heed.

127They shall have a home of peace

with their Lord; in view of their deeds,

He shall be their Protector.

128On the day He gathers them all,

saying, “Assembly of jinn, you led

many humans astray,” their allies

among humankind will say,

“Our Lord, some of us profited

from others, and now we reach

your appointed term for us.”

He will say, “The fire is your home

forever—unless God wills otherwise.”

Your Lord is All Wise, All Knowing.

129And so We make the wrongdoers

friends of one another, for the deeds

they reaped together.

SECTION 16

130“All you jinn and humankind!

Did messengers not come to you,

from among you, reciting My signs,

and warning you of the meeting

with God on this day of yours?”

They will reply,

“We bear witness against ourselves.”

The life of this world deluded them,

and they do bear witness

against themselves—

that they were disbelievers.

131So [messengers were sent], for

your Lord would not destroy towns

unjustly, while their people

were unaware of the truth.

132All people are ranked

by their deeds;

your Lord is not unaware

of what they do.

133Your Lord is Self-Sufficient,

Full of Mercy; if He wished,

He could displace you with

whichever successors He would—

just as He raised you

from the offspring of another people.

134All that has been promised you

shall come—you shall not escape.

135Say, “My people, go on

behaving as you are,° as will I.

Soon, you shall know whose end

is best in the home of the hereafter;

the wrongdoers shall not prosper.”

136They assign to God a share

of the crops and cattle He created,

claiming, “This is for God,

and this is for our idols.”

But their idols’ share does not

reach God, while God’s share does

reach their idols. How iniquitous

is their judgment!

137Likewise, their idols

made the polytheists think that

killing their children was fine—

to ruin them, and to confuse them

in their religion.

Had God wished, they would not

have done this. So leave them—

with their fabrications.

138And they claim,

“These cattle and crops are forbidden;

only those we allow may eat them.”

There are some cattle that they

don’t allow to be yoked,

and others that they slaughter

without invoking the name of God—

imputing such invented rules to Him.

Soon He shall requite them

for their inventions.

139They say, “The newborn

from these cattle is only for our men

and forbidden to our women.

But if it is stillborn,

they may share in it.”

Soon shall God requite them

for their imputations.

He is All Wise, All Knowing.

140The losers will be those

who kill their children in folly,

without knowledge, and forbid

the food God has provided,

inventing lies about God—

they are astray, without guidance.

SECTION 17

141It is He Who brings out gardens,

trellised and untrellised, the date palm,

crops that are various in taste, the olive,

and the pomegranate, alike yet diverse.

Eat of their fruit when they bear fruit,

and give what is due on harvest day,

but do not be wasteful, for God

dislikes those who are wasteful.

142Some cattle are for burden,

others for meat. Eat of what

God has provided for you, and do not

follow in the footsteps of Satan,

for he is your avowed enemy.

143God gave you eight animals

in pairs: two sheep and two goats.

Say, “Has He forbidden

the two males or the two females

or the young in the wombs

of the two females?

Inform me—from your knowledge—

if you are speaking the truth.”

144And two camels and two cows.

Say, “Has He forbidden

the two males or the two females

or the young in the wombs

of the two females?

Were you witnesses when God

commanded you to do this?

Who does more wrong than someone

who invents lies about God,

to lead people astray,

without knowledge?

God does not guide

a people who do wrong.”

SECTION 18

145Say, “In the revelation to me

I do not find any food forbidden

except carrion, flowing blood

or the flesh of swine—for it is foul—

or animals over which a name other

than God’s was profanely invoked.

But if someone is compelled

by hunger, without intending to sin

or transgress—God is Forgiving,

Ever Merciful.

146And for the Jews, We forbade

every animal with claws, the fat

of cows and sheep except what is

on their backs or in their entrails

or attached to bones.

This is how We requited them

for their defiance—

and We speak only the truth.

147If they deny you, say,

“The mercy of your Lord is wide,

but His wrath cannot be turned back

from wicked people.”

148Those who ascribe partners to God

will say, “If God had wished it,

we would not have ascribed partners,

nor forbidden anything.”

Likewise, those before them denied

until they tasted Our wrath.

Say, “What knowledge can you

produce for us? You follow

nothing but conjecture

and do nothing but speculate.”

149Say, “The conclusive argument

is God’s—had He wished,

He would have guided all of you.”

150Say, “Bring out your witnesses

who testify that God forbade this.”

And if they testify,

don’t testify with them,

and don’t follow the desires of those

who deny Our signs, and those

who don’t believe in the hereafter,

for they set up equals with their Lord.

SECTION 19

151Say, “Come, I will recite to you

what your Lord has forbidden you:

don’t associate anything with him,

be kind to parents, and

don’t kill your children out of want;

We shall provide for you and them.

And stay clear of indecency,

either open or concealed;

and do not take life

—that God has made sacred—

except with just cause.

This is what He enjoins you to—

that you might use reason.

152“Stay clear of an orphan’s property

except with the best intentions,

until they reach maturity;

give full measure and weight, justly

—We do not burden any soul

beyond its capacity—

and when you speak, be fair,

even if it is with a relative,

and fulfill God’s covenant.

This is what He enjoins you to—

that you might take heed.

153“And this is My path, straight, so

follow it and don’t follow other ways

for they will cleave you from His way.

This is what He enjoins you to—

that you might be mindful of Him.”

154We gave Moses the Book,

perfecting Our favor to those

who do good, explaining all things—

a guide and a mercy—that they might

believe in the meeting with their Lord.

SECTION 20

155This also is a blessèd Book

that We have revealed, so follow it,

and be mindful of God,

that you might be shown mercy—

156in case you say,

“The Book was revealed only

to two communities before us,

and we were unaware

of what they studied.”

157Or in case you say,

“If only the Book had been revealed

to us, we should have been

better guided than them.”

But now there has come to you

clear proof, guidance, and mercy

from your Lord.

Who does more wrong than someone

who denies the signs of God, and

turns away from them?

We shall requite those who

turn away from Our signs

with a dreadful punishment.°

158Are they waiting to see

if the angels come to them,

or your Lord Himself,

or some of His signs?

The day such signs° come,

it shall not help any soul

to have faith in them

if it had no faith before,

nor reaped any good

by its faith. Say, “Wait—

we too are waiting.”

159As for those who divide

their religion into sects—

have nothing to do with them;

their case is with God, and He will

inform them of what they’ve done.

160Whoever does a good deed

shall reap its reward ten times;

and whoever does a bad deed,

shall reap the reward for it alone;

and they shall not be wronged.

161Say, “My Lord has guided me

to a straight path, an upright religion,

the creed of Abraham, pure in faith,

who was not a polytheist.”

162Say, “My prayer, my sacrifice,

my life and my death, are all for God,

Lord of the universe.

163“He has no partner—

this is what I am commanded to,

and I am the first

to submit my will to Him.”

164Say, “Shall I seek as Lord

something other than God, when He

is Lord of all things?”

Each soul reaps the reward

only of its own deeds; and no soul

shall bear the burden of another.

Then, you shall return to your Lord

and He shall inform you of the things

over which you differed.

165He Who made you

regents on the earth, and

He raised some of you above others

in rank, that He might test you

through what He has given you.

Your Lord is Swift in Retribution,

yet He is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

SURA 7

The Heights (Al-Aʿraf)

Also late Meccan, this sura of 206 verses was revealed before the preceding sura but the Heights, mentioned in v. 46, is likely included after the sura called “Cattle” since it develops similar topics about God’s Oneness and the need for human obedience to divine messengers. The history of earlier prophets, from Noah to Hud, Salih, Lot, and Shuʿayb, anticipates the long section on Moses (vv. 103–71). There is a central reference to the Beautiful Names (v. 180) that underscores the enduring human need to remember God and seek refuge from Satan, as also to seek repentance and forgiveness.

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1Alif. Lam. Mim. Sad.°

2A Book is revealed to you, Prophet

—don’t let it disquiet your heart—

that you might use to warn

and remind the believers.

3People, follow what is revealed

to you from your Lord, and

follow no protector but Him—

how little you pay heed!

4See how many towns We destroyed,

Our wrath falling upon them

by night or while they slept at noon!

5Their only cry, when Our wrath

fell upon them, was

“Yes, we did wrong.”

6We shall question those

to whom Our message was sent—

and equally, We shall question

those who were sent.

7And We shall recount to them

[their deeds], with full knowledge—

We were never away from them.

8The balance° on that day

shall be just.

Those whose balance

is heavy [with good deeds]

shall flourish.

9And those whose balance is light

have lost their souls

for they did injustice to Our verses.

10We settled you on the earth

and gave you livelihood there—

how little you give thanks!

SECTION 2

11We created you and shaped you;

then We commanded the angels,

“Bow down before Adam.”

All bowed down—except Iblis,

who would not bow.

12God asked, “What stopped you

from bowing as I commanded you?”

He retorted, “I am better than him;

You created me from fire, but him

you fashioned from mere clay.”

13God said, “Go down from here;°

it’s not your place to be proud here—

go, for you are truly debased.”

14Iblis said, “Give me reprieve

until the day that all people

are raised up from the dead.”

15God answered, “You shall

be granted a reprieve.”

16Iblis said, “Because

you’ve sent me astray,

I shall lie in wait for them

on Your straight path.°

17“I shall come upon them

from before and behind them,

from their right and from their left,

and You will find that most of them

are not grateful to You.”

18God replied, “Go out from here,

disgraced and exiled.

As for those who follow you—

I shall fill hell with all of you.

19“Adam, you and your spouse

may live in the garden, and

eat wherever you will,

but do not approach this tree,

for you would be doing wrong.”

20Then Satan whispered to them both,°

—so as to expose their shameful parts,

which had been hidden from them—saying,

“Your Lord forbade you to eat

from this tree only to stop you

from becoming angels or immortals.”

21And he swore to them both,

“This is sincere advice I offer you.”

22So, through his guile,

he lured them both [to fall].

And once they tasted of the tree,

they realized their nakedness,

and began to cover themselves

with leaves from the garden.

And their Lord called to them both,

“Did I not forbid you both

to eat from this tree?

Did I not tell you both

that Satan is your open enemy?”

23They responded, “Our Lord,

we have wronged ourselves—

if You do not forgive us

and have mercy on us,

we’ll be among

the ones who fall into loss.”

24God said, “Go down from here,

as enemies of one another;

you shall have a home

and livelihood upon the earth—

for a short while.”

25He said, “There you shall live

and die, and from there

you shall be brought out again.”

SECTION 3

26Children of Adam,

We have given you garments

to cover your nakedness, and

to adorn you. But the best garment

is mindfulness of God.

This is one of the signs of God

that people might take heed.

27Children of Adam,

don’t let Satan tempt you

—as he did your parents

bringing them out of the garden—

to strip them of their garments,

and expose their nakedness to them;

he sees you, he and his tribe,

from where you can’t see them—

We made the devils allies

of those who don’t believe.

28When they commit any indecency,

they say, “This is what we found

our fathers doing,” and

“God commanded us to do it.” Say,

“God never commands indecency—

would you say about God

things you do not know?”

29Say, “My Lord commands justice,

so set your faces toward Him

wherever you pray,°

and call upon Him, sincere in faith.

Just as He first made you,

so you shall return [at last to Him].”

30He has guided some, while others

have rightly been left to stray,

for they have taken devils as allies

instead of God, thinking that they

are rightly guided.

31Children of Adam, wear

proper clothes wherever you pray;

eat and drink, but not to excess,

for God dislikes the extravagant.

SECTION 4

32Say, “Who forbids the adornment

that God furnished for His servants

and the good things to sustain them?”

Say, “They are for those

who believed, in the life of this world,

and are only for them

on the day of resurrection.”

This is how We expound Our signs

for people who have knowledge.

33Say, “My Lord has forbidden only

immoral deeds, open or concealed,

as well as sin, lawless aggression,

and your joining partners with God—

for which no sanction has been sent—

or that you speak about God

things beyond your knowledge.”

34Each community is assigned

a fixed time°—when this time arrives,

they can neither delay nor hasten it—

not even by an hour.

35Children of Adam, when

messengers from your own people

come to you, reciting My signs,

those who are mindful of Me

and amend themselves

shall neither fear nor grieve.

36But those who deny Our signs,

and proudly disdain them

shall be inmates of the fire—forever.

37Who does more wrong than those

who invent lies about God or deny

His signs? They will get their share

as decreed in the Book—but when

Our angels come to take them,

and ask, “Where are those

on whom you called besides God?”

They will answer,

“They have abandoned us,”

and they will be witnesses

against themselves—

that they were disbelievers.

38He will say, “Enter the fire,

with the communities before you—

jinn and humankind.

Whenever a people enters,

it curses its sister community, and

when they all arrive inside,

the last of them will say of the first,

“Our Lord, these are the ones who

led us astray; so double

their punishment in the fire!”

He will say, “It shall be doubled

for each—though you don’t know it.”

39The first ones will say to the last,

“So you were no better than us.

Taste, then, the punishment

you have earned!”

SECTION 5

40The gates of heaven shall never

open to those who deny Our signs

and proudly disdain them,

nor shall they enter the garden,

until a camel can pass through

a needle’s eye.° This is how

We reward the sinners.

41Hell shall be their bed

and also the covering above them—

this is how We recompense

those who do wrong.

42Those who believe

and do good deeds—We place

no burden on a soul beyond its limit—

shall live in the garden, forever.

43And We shall remove ill feeling

from their hearts. Rivers will flow

beneath them, and they will say,

“Praised be God who guided us here;

we could not have found guidance

without God—our Lord’s messengers

brought the truth.”

And a voice will call to them,

“This is the garden—yours

to inherit—for all you have done.”

44The people in the garden

will call out to the inmates of the fire,

“We have found the promise

of our Lord to be true;

have you found it to be true?”

They will answer, “Yes,”

and a herald among them

shall cry out, “The curse of God

is upon those who do wrong,

45“those who bar others from the path

of God, and seek to make it crooked,

those who deny the hereafter.”

46Between the two groups a barrier

shall stand, with people on its heights

—not yet in the garden but hoping—

who recognize all by their marks.

They shall greet the people

in the garden, “Peace be with you!”

47But when their eyes are turned

toward the inmates of the fire,

they will say, “Our Lord, don’t place

us with the wrongdoers.”

SECTION 6

48And the people on the heights

will call out to people they recognize

by their marks,

“What did you gain by your

great numbers and proud disdain?

49“Are these the ones you swore

would not be granted God’s mercy?

—who are now told, ‘Enter the garden—

you shall have no fear, nor grieve’?”

50The inmates of the fire

will call to the people of the garden,

“Pour water upon us, or whatever

God has given you.” They will reply,

“God has forbidden both

to the disbelievers,

51“those who took their religion

as play and a pastime, those

deluded by the life of this world.

That day We shall forget them,

just as they forgot the meeting

with Us on this day of theirs,

and rejected Our signs.”

52For We brought them a Book,

that We explained—on the basis

of certain knowledge—as guidance

and mercy for people who believe.

53Are they just waiting

for its warning to be fulfilled?

On the day it is fulfilled, those

who had forgotten it will say,

“Our Lord’s messengers

brought the truth. And now,

will anyone intercede for us?

Or can we be sent back

to act differently than we did?”

They have lost their souls,

and their invented idols

shall abandon them.

SECTION 7

54Your Lord is God, Who created

the heavens and the earth in six days,

then took up the throne.

He veils day with night,

which trails it swiftly.

He created the sun, moon, and stars—

all subject to His command.

Is the creation not His,

and the command? Blessèd be God,

Lord of the universe.

55Call on your Lord,

in humility, and secretly—

He dislikes those who transgress.

56Don’t sow corruption in the land

now that it has been reformed,

but call on Him, in fear and hope.

The mercy of God is near

for those who do good.

57It is He who sends the winds,

bearers of joyous news,

heralding His mercy;

when they carry the heavy clouds,

We drive them to barren land,

We send rain on it, and

We raise up from it fruit of all kinds.

In the same way,

We shall raise up the dead—

that you might take heed.

58Good soil yields rich vegetation,

by permission of its Lord,

but bad soil gives a meager yield—

in this way We vary Our signs

to a people who are grateful.

SECTION 8

59We sent Noah to his people.

He said, “My people, worship God—

you have no god but Him.

I fear for you the torment

of a momentous day.”

60The leaders of his people retorted,

“We see that you’re clearly wrong.”

61He replied, “My people,

I am not wrong—I am a messenger

from the Lord of the universe.

62“I am conveying to you

messages from my Lord,

and I am advising you,

for I know—from God—

what you do not.

63“Do you wonder that a reminder

has come to you from your Lord

through a man of your own people,

to warn you—that you might

be mindful of God,

and be shown mercy?”

64But they denied him,

so We delivered him,

and those with him, in the ark,

and We drowned those

who denied Our signs—

a blind people.

SECTION 9

65And We sent to the people of ʿAd

their brother Hud, who said,

“My people, worship God—

you have no god but Him.

Will you not be mindful of Him?”

66But the leaders of the unbelievers

among his people retorted,

“We think you’re a fool—and a liar.”

67He replied, “My people,

I am no fool—I am a messenger

from the Lord of the universe.

68“I am conveying to you

messages from my Lord,

and you can trust

the advice I offer you.

69“Do you wonder that a reminder

has come to you from your Lord

through a man of your own people,

to warn you—remember how

He made you heirs to Noah’s people,

and raised you greatly in stature.

Remember the bounties of God,

that you might flourish.”

70They retorted, “Do you come

to tell us to worship God alone, and

forsake what our fathers worshipped?

Bring us the torment you threatened

if you are speaking the truth.”

71He exclaimed, “Your Lord’s torment

and wrath shall fall on you.

Do you argue with me over names°

—that you and your fathers devised—

for which God has sent no sanction?

Wait, then; and I shall wait with you.”

72We saved him and those with him,

through Our mercy,

and We erased the last traces

of those who denied Our signs

and remained unbelievers.

SECTION 10

73We sent to the people of Thamud

their brother Salih, who said,

“My people, worship God—

you have no god but Him.

Clear proof has come to you from

your Lord: this she-camel of God

is a sign for you. So leave her

to graze on God’s earth,

and don’t harm her,

else a painful punishment

shall overtake you.

74“Remember how He made you

heirs to ʿAd’s people,

and settled you in the land;

you built castles on its plains,

and carved houses in the mountains.

Remember the bounties of God,

and don’t act wickedly in the land,

spreading corruption.”

75The leaders of some proud men

among his people said

to the believers they deemed weak,

“Do you know that Salih

is a messenger from his Lord?”

They answered, “We do believe

in the message sent with him.”

76Those proud people declared,

“We deny what you believe.”

77They hamstrung the she-camel,

and disdained their Lord’s command,

saying, “Salih, bring upon us

the torment you threatened,

if you really are a messenger.”

78So the earthquake shook them,

and by morning they lay fallen

on their faces, dead, in their homes.°

79Salih turned from them, saying,

“My people, I have conveyed

my Lord’s message to you,

and I’ve advised you—but it seems

you’re averse to all advisers.”°

80We also sent Lot,

who said to his people,

“How can you commit indecency—

like none in the world before you?

81“You lust after men

instead of women; you

exceed all due limits.”

82In response, the only thing

his people could say was

“Drive them out of your town—

these people who are so chaste!”

83But we saved him and his family,

except his wife, who stayed behind.

84And we rained down upon them

a rain [of stones]°—observe

the fate of those who sin.

SECTION 11

85We sent to the people of Midian

their brother Shuʿayb, who said,

“My people, worship God—

you have no god but Him.

Clear proof has come to you from

your Lord—so give

just measure and weight,

and don’t give people less

than the value of their goods.

Don’t sow corruption in the land

now it has been reformed.

This will be better for you

if you are believers.

86“Don’t lurk on every road,

threatening people, and barring those

who believe in God from His path,

seeking to make it crooked.

Remember, when you were few

how we multiplied you.

And observe the fate

of those who sow corruption.

87“And if some of you believe

in the message I’ve been sent with,

while others don’t, be patient

until God judges between us.

For He is the Best of Judges.”

88The leaders of some proud men

among his people said, “Shuʿayb,

we’ll drive you out of our town

—and those who believe with you—

unless you return to our creed.”

He retorted, “Even if we abhor it?

89“We’d be inventing lies about God

if we returned to your creed after God

had spared us from it; we could not

return to it unless our Lord God wished it.

Our Lord’s knowing embraces

all things. In God we place our trust,

‘Our Lord, decide justly between us

and our people—for You

are the Best of Arbiters.’ ”

90The chief unbelievers

among his people said,

“If you follow Shuʿayb,

it will be you who

fall into loss.”

91So the earthquake shook them,

and by morning they lay fallen

on their faces, dead, in their homes—

92as if those who denied Shuʿayb

had never lived there—

they were the ones

who fell into loss.

93So Shuʿayb turned from them,

saying, “My people, I have conveyed

the message of my Lord to you,

and I gave you sound advice—

so how can I grieve

for a people who don’t believe?”

SECTION 12

94Whenever We sent a prophet

to a town, We inflicted suffering

and adversity on its disbelievers,

to instill humility in them.

95Then We turned their distress

to prosperity, [but they forgot this],

and said, “Our fathers too were

touched by both hardship and ease”—

so We seized them suddenly,

while they were unaware.

96If the people of the towns had

believed and been mindful of God,

We should have opened the blessings

of heaven and earth to them;

but they denied Us, so We

seized them for their misdeeds.

97Do the people of the towns

feel certain that Our wrath

will not descend on them

by night, while they sleep?

98And do the townspeople

feel certain that Our wrath

will not fall upon them

by day, while they idly play?

99Do they feel secure

against God’s plan?

None can feel secure

against the plan of God

except those who

will fall into loss.

SECTION 13

100Is this not a lesson

for those who inherit the earth

after its former peoples—

that, if We wished, We could

strike them for their sins,

and seal up their hearts,

so that they could not hear.

101These were the towns

whose stories We have told you—

messengers came to them,

bringing clear proofs,

but still they would not believe

what they had denied earlier—

this is how God

seals the hearts of disbelievers.

102We found most of them

failing to fulfill their covenant,

and we found most of them

to be disobedient.

103After them, We sent Moses

to Pharaoh and his chiefs

with Our signs,

but they reviled them—

observe the fate of those

who sow corruption.

104Moses said, “Pharaoh,

I am a messenger sent

from the Lord of the universe,

105obliged to speak only the truth

about God. I have brought you

clear proof from your Lord—so

send the children of Israel with me.”

106Pharaoh retorted, “If you

have come with a sign, produce it,

if you are speaking the truth.”

107Then Moses cast down his staff,

and suddenly—it was now

a serpent for all to see.

108He drew out his hand, and

suddenly—it was gleaming white

for all to see.

SECTION 14

109Pharaoh’s chief people observed,

“This is an expert magician;

110“he wants to drive you

from your land.” Pharaoh asked,

“What do you advise, then?”

111They replied, “Stall him

and his brother, while you send

scouts to the cities to gather

112and bring to you

all the expert magicians.”

113When Pharaoh’s magicians came,

they asked,

“Shouldn’t we be rewarded

if we prevail?”

114He replied, “Of course,

and you’ll be within

my inner circle.”

115They asked, “Moses,

will you throw first, or shall we?”

116Moses said, “You throw first!”

And when they threw, people were

spellbound, terrified

by what they saw—

such a daunting display of magic.

117Then We inspired Moses,

“Throw down your staff!”

And suddenly it swallowed

all their concoctions.

118So the truth was verified

and all their deeds proved vain.

119Defeated there, humiliated,

120the sorcerers fell down,

prostrating themselves,

121proclaiming, “We now believe

in the Lord of the universe,

122“the Lord of Moses and Aaron.”

123Pharaoh bellowed,

“You believed in Him

before I allowed it?

I’m sure this is a plot

you’ve planned in the city,

to drive out its people—

but soon you will learn.

124“I’ll cut off your hands and feet

on either side, and crucify you all.”

125They said, “It is certain

that we’ll return to our Lord.

126“You take vengeance on us

only because we believed

in the signs of our Lord

when they came to us.

“Our Lord, fill us with patience,

and let us die submitting to Your will.”

SECTION 15

127The chiefs of Pharaoh’s people

asked him,

“Will you let Moses and his people

wreak mischief in the land,

and forsake you and your gods?”

He answered,

“We’ll kill their sons

and spare only their women.

For we have power over them.”

128Moses urged his people,

“Seek God’s help, and be patient.

The land belongs to God—

He bequeaths it to whichever

of His servants He will,

and those who are mindful of God

shall triumph in the end.”

129They said, “We were oppressed

both before you came to us, and now,

after you’ve come.” He responded,

“Your Lord may destroy your enemy

and make you successors to the land,

to see how you will behave.”

SECTION 16

130We harried Pharaoh’s people

with years of famine

and loss of crops—to warn them.

131When good things came to them,

they said, “We earned this.”

But when misfortune struck them,

they took it as an ill omen from Moses

and his companions, though

their ill omen actually came from God,

unbeknown to most of them.

132They said to Moses,

“No matter what signs

you bring to bewitch us—

we won’t believe in you.”

133So We sent the flood upon them,

and a scourge of locusts, lice, frogs,

and blood—all clear signs.

But they remained proud,

a people steeped in sin.

134Whenever a plague fell on them,

they said, “Moses, call on your Lord,

to fulfill the promise He gave you;

if you free us from the plague,

we’ll believe in you—and we’ll send

the children of Israel with you.”

135But when We lifted the plague

from them, and gave them a fixed time

to fulfill their promise—they broke it.

136So We requited them,

drowning them in the ocean—

for they denied Our signs,

always heedless of them.

137We made an oppressed people

heirs to the land, both East and West,

which We blessed. So your Lord’s

wondrous promise to favor

the children of Israel was fulfilled,

for they showed patience; and

We destroyed all that Pharaoh

and his people had wrought,

and all that they had built.

138We led the children of Israel

across the sea. When they came

upon a people devoted to their idols,

his people said, “Moses, make for us

a god like their gods.” He rejoined,

“You are an ignorant people.

139“The creed of these people

is doomed to die out,

for what they practice is futile.”

140He said, “Would I seek for you

a god other than the One God—

Who favored you over all peoples?”

141Remember when We saved you

from Pharaoh’s people, who inflicted

wicked torments on you, killing

your sons, sparing only your women.

This was a great trial from your Lord.

SECTION 17

142We assigned thirty nights

for Moses, and added ten more,

so he completed in forty nights

the term set by his Lord.° Then,

Moses said to his brother Aaron,

“Take my place among my people,

do good, and don’t follow the path

of those who sow corruption.”

143When Moses came

to Our assigned place

and his Lord spoke to him,

he implored, “Show yourself to me,

so I may look upon you.”

God said, “Never shall you see me,

but look up at the mountain—

if it stays in place, you will see me.

But when God’s glory shone upon

the mountain, it crumbled into dust,

and Moses fell down, unconscious.

Waking, he said, “Glory be to You.

I turn to You, repenting, and

I am the first to believe.”

144God said, “Moses,

I’ve chosen you above all people,

through My messages, My word.°

So hold fast to what I’ve given you,

and be grateful.”

145We made laws for him, on tablets,

instructing, and explaining all things.

We told him, “Hold to these firmly,

and enjoin your people to hold fast

to the excellence in them—

I shall show you the final homes

of those who are disobedient.”

146As for those who were proud

—with no right—on the earth,

I will turn My signs away from them.

Even if they saw all the signs,

they would not believe them,

and if they saw the right path,

they would not take it.

Yet if they saw the path of error,

they would take it—for they

denied Our signs, always

heedless of them.

147The deeds of those are vain

who deny Our signs and the meeting

with God in the hereafter.

Will they be rewarded for

anything but their deeds?

SECTION 18

148While Moses was gone,

his people made the image of a calf

from their ornaments—it seemed

to make a lowing sound.

Did they not see

that it could not speak to them,

or guide them to the right way?

They took to worshipping it—

and became wrongdoers.

149Realizing that they had strayed,

they said, wringing their hands,

“Unless our Lord shows us mercy

and forgives us, we’ll be among

the ones who fall into loss.”

150When Moses came back

to his people, he grew angry

and aggrieved, saying,

“What you’ve done in my absence

is just wicked. Are you so eager

to bring on your Lord’s judgment?”

He flung down the tablets

and seized his brother by the hair,

dragging him close. Aaron said,

“Brother, the people thought me

weak, and almost killed me.

Don’t let my enemies rejoice

at my lapse, and don’t count me

among the wrongdoers.”

151Moses prayed, “My Lord,

forgive me and my brother, and

admit us into your Mercy, for You

are the Most Merciful of all.”°

SECTION 19

152Those who took to worshipping

the calf shall be visited

by their Lord’s wrath, and disgrace

in the life of this world. This is how

We reward those who invent lies.

153As for those who do bad deeds,

and repent afterward, and believe—

then your Lord is Forgiving,

Ever Merciful.

154When Moses’ anger subsided,

he picked up the tablets—inscribed

on them were guidance and mercy

for those who fear their Lord.

155And Moses chose seventy men

from his people

for the meeting with Us; when

an earthquake seized them,

he cried out, “My Lord,

had You wished,

You could have destroyed them

and me long ago.

Would you now destroy us

for what the fools among us did?

“This is but a trial from You:

You lead astray by it whom you will,

and You guide whom You will.

You are our Protector, so forgive us

and have mercy on us—

for you are the supreme Forgiver.°

156“And decree for us what is good,

in this worldly life and the hereafter—

for we have turned to You.”

God said, “I visit My punishment

on whom I will, but My mercy

encompasses all things;

I shall decree it for those

who are mindful of Me,

who give in charity, and those

who believe in Our signs,

157“those who follow the messenger,

the ‘unlettered prophet,’°

whom they find mentioned

in their own Torah and the Gospel,°

who commands them to do right

and forbids what is wrong;

who makes lawful for them

what is pure, and forbids

what is impure;

who relieves their burdens,

and the shackles weighing on them.

“So those who believe in him,

honor him and help him,

and are guided by the light

sent down with him—

it is they who will flourish.”

SECTION 20

158Prophet, tell them, “People,

I am the messenger of God to you all.

To Him belongs dominion

over the heavens and the earth;

there is no god but He—He gives life

and He brings death. So believe

in God and His messenger,

the unlettered prophet, who believes

in God and His words—follow him,

that you might be rightly guided.”

159Among the people of Moses,

there is a group who guide

by the light of truth, by which

they also render justice.

160We divided them

into twelve tribes or communities.

When his people asked him for water,

We inspired Moses,

“Strike the stone with your staff.”

Twelve springs gushed out from it—

each tribe knew its drinking place.

We shaded them with clouds, and

sent down to them manna and quail,

saying, “Eat of the good things

We have provided for you.”

They did not wrong Us,

but wronged themselves.

161Remember when they were told,

“Enter this town, eat where you wish,

but first say, ‘Ease our burden,’

and enter the gate bowing low,

[voicing repentance].

We will forgive your mistakes

and increase the reward

of those who do good.”

162But the wrongdoers altered

the words they had been given,

so We sent upon them a plague

from the sky, for the wrong they did.

SECTION 21

163Ask them, Prophet, about the town

lodged by the sea; its people broke

the Sabbath, because their fish

appeared to abound on the Sabbath

but not on other days.

We tested them in this way

for they were always disobedient.

164And when a group of them

asked their preachers, “Why preach

to people whom God will destroy

or strike with severe punishment?”

they replied, “To be absolved

[of negligence] before your Lord; and

to make them mindful of God.”

165When they forgot

the warnings given to them,

We saved those who forbade evil,

and struck those who did wrong

with a stern° punishment,

for they were always disobedient.

166When they persisted

in doing what was forbidden,

We told them, “Become apes,

despised.”°

167Then your Lord declared

that He would send people°

to inflict harsh punishment on them,

until the day of resurrection.

Your Lord is Swift in Requital,

yet He is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

168We divided them

into communities on the earth.

Some of them are righteous

and others are not.

We tested them

with good things and bad,

that they might return

to Our path.

169After them came a generation

who inherited the Book, but took

instead the goods of this lower life,

saying, “We’ll be forgiven.”

And if more goods like this came,

they would still take them.

Was a pledge not taken from them,

in the Book, that they would speak

only the truth about God?

They had studied its contents well.°

And the home of the hereafter

is better for those

who are mindful of God.

Will you not, then, use reason?

170As for those who hold fast

to the Book, and are steadfast

in prayer—We do not overlook

the reward of those who do good.

171When We raised the mountain

so high above them, like a shadow,

they thought it would fall on them,

We said, “Hold fast

to what We gave you, and

remember what lies within it,

that you might be mindful of God.”°

SECTION 22

172When your Lord drew out

descendants from the loins

of the children of Adam,

and made them testify

about themselves, He asked,

“Am I not your Lord?”

and they answered,

“Yes, we do so testify”—

in case you should say

on the day of resurrection,

“We were unaware of this,”°

173or plead, “Our fathers before us

were polytheists, and we are merely

their descendants coming after them.

Would you destroy us

for the falsehoods they devised?”

174This is how We explain the signs

that they might return to Our way.

175Prophet, tell them the story

of the person who cast aside the signs

We gave him. So Satan overtook him,

and he went astray.

176Had We willed, We would have

raised him by Our signs; but he cleaved

to the earth, following his own desires.

His parable is that of a dog:

if you attack him, he pants,

and if you leave him be, he pants.

This is the parable of a people

who deny Our signs.

So tell them the story, Prophet,

to let them reflect.

177Those who deny Our signs

set a wicked example—

and they wrong themselves.

178Those whom God guides

are rightly guided;

but those He leads astray

are the ones who

will fall into loss.

179We have destined many

jinn and humans for hell—

they have hearts,

yet do not understand;

they have eyes,

yet do not see;

and they have ears,

yet do not hear.

They are like cattle—

no, even more astray—

for they are heedless.

180The Most Beautiful of Names°

are those of God. So use them

to call on Him; and abandon those

who abuse His names. Soon,

they will be rewarded

for all they have done.

181There is a community

among all those We created

that guides by the truth

and renders justice [by its light].

SECTION 23

182We shall gradually draw those

who deny our signs [to damnation]—

without their discerning it.

183I shall grant them respite

for a while—but My scheme

is inexorable.

184Do they not realize

that their companion is not mad?

That he is merely someone

who gives clear warning?

185Or, do they not contemplate

the kingdom of the heavens

and the earth,

and all that God has created?

That perhaps the end of their term

is approaching? What message

can they believe after this?

186Those whom God

allows to stray

shall have no guide;

and He will leave them

transgressing, wandering blind.

187They ask you about the hour—

When is it due? Say, “My Lord alone

has knowledge of this—only He can

reveal its time—which shall resound°

throughout the heavens and the earth;

when it comes, it will come suddenly.”

They ask you as if you knew

about it. Say, “God alone

has knowledge of it, yet most

people don’t know this.”

188Say, Prophet, “I have no power

to profit or harm myself—

except as God wishes.

If I had knowledge of the unseen,

I would have amassed good deeds,

and no evil would touch me.

I am merely someone who warns

and bears joyous news

for a people who believe.”

SECTION 24

189It is He who created you

from a single soul, and

made a mate from him, so that

he might find comfort with her.

Then, when he lies with her,

she carries a light burden,

going about with it.

Then, when she grows heavy,

they both pray to God,

“Our Lord, we’ll be thankful

if you grant us a healthy child.”

190But once He grants them

a healthy child, they claim that

partners of His had a hand in this.

But God is exalted far above

the partners they ascribe to Him.

191Do they ascribe to Him

partners—who can create nothing

and are themselves created?

192And who can neither help them

nor themselves?

193And if you invite them

to be guided, they won’t follow you;

it’s the same for you

whether you invite them

or remain silent.

194Say, “Those you call upon

besides God are just His servants,

like you. So, call upon them,

and let them answer you,

if you are speaking the truth.

195“Do they have feet to walk with?

Or hands to grasp with?

Or eyes to see with?

Or ears to hear with?”

Say, “Call upon those

you join with God, and

scheme against me—

without respite,

196“for my protector is God,

who revealed the Book; it is He

who protects those who do good.

197“As for those you call upon

besides God—they can help

neither you nor themselves.”

198If you invite them to guidance,

they don’t hear. You may see them

looking at you—but they don’t see.

199Resolve to show forgiveness,

enjoin what is good—and turn away

from those who are ignorant.

200Should Satan tempt you

with some wicked prompting,

seek refuge in God—He

is the All Hearing, All Knowing.

201Those who are mindful of God

remember Him if Satan tempts them

with any wicked prompting—

they will see [what is right].

202But the disciples° of Satan

plunge them ever deeper

into error—relentlessly.

203If you don’t bring them a sign,

they ask,

“Why have you not devised it?”

Answer,

“I follow only what my Lord reveals

to me. These are insights from

your Lord—guidance and mercy,

for a people who believe.”

204When the Quran is being read,

listen to it, attentively,

that you might be shown mercy.

205And remember your Lord within

yourself, with humility and fear,

without raising your voice,

in the mornings and evenings,

and do not be heedless.

206Those who are close to your Lord

are never too proud to worship Him;

they hymn His praise,

bowing low before Him.

SURA 8

The Spoils of War (Al-Anfal)

Named after a phrase used in v. 1, this sura of 75 verses was mostly revealed after the Battle of Badr in 624, though a section (vv. 30–36) was revealed in Mecca and the final 4 verses came after Badr, anticipating the subject of Sura 9.

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1They ask you, Prophet,

about the spoils of war. Say,

“The spoils are for God and the messenger

[to decide], so be mindful of God, and

make things right among yourselves.

Obey God and His messenger

if you are true believers.”

2True believers are those

whose hearts tremble in awe

at the mention of God,

and whose faith grows when

His verses are recited to them,

and who trust in their Lord,

3those who are steadfast in prayer,

and give in charity from what

We have given them—

4these are the believers—

they shall have a high station

in the sight of their Lord;

they shall have forgiveness,

and a gracious provision.

5For it was your Lord

Who made you leave your home,

for a just cause—despite

the displeasure of some believers,

6who disputed with you

about the truth, even after it

had been made clear—as if

they were being driven toward

a death they could actually see.

7When God promised you victory

over one of the two hostile groups,

you fancied the unarmed group.

But God wanted to prove

the truth of His Word—

and He cut off the unbelievers

at their source,

8that He might prove

the truth to be true,

and falsehood to be false—

though the sinners disapproved.

9When you implored your Lord

for help, He responded,

“I will reinforce you

with a thousand angels

row upon row.”

10God made this but a message of hope,

to assure your hearts—

and there is no help except from God;

God is Almighty, All Wise.

SECTION 2

11Remember when He shrouded you

in slumber—to make you feel safe,°

and sent you rain from the sky

to cleanse you, and to purge you

of the stain of Satan, and to strengthen

your hearts and make firm your feet.

12Remember when your Lord

inspired the angels, “I am with you.

So strengthen those who believe.

I shall cast terror into the hearts

of those who disbelieve—so

strike above their necks, and

strike at their fingertips.”

13For they opposed God

and His messenger; those

who do oppose them

should know that God

is Severe in Retribution.

14That is your [punishment],

“So taste it,” and know that

the disbelievers shall face

the punishment of fire.

15You who believe, when you face

the foe advancing in battle,

do not turn your backs to them.

16If any does turn their back to them

on that day—except as a battle tactic

or to link up with their own forces—

they shall incur the wrath of God,

and their home shall be hell,

a wretched end.

17It was not you who killed them

but God; it was not you who threw

[sand] at them° but God,

that He might Himself test

the believers through a fine trial.

God is All Hearing, All Knowing.

18So it is—God will undermine

the unbelievers’ designs.

19Disbelievers—if you were seeking

a judgment, it has come now.

If you stop now,

it is better for you.

But if you return, We shall return.

Your forces shall never help you,

however great in number—

for God is with the believers.

SECTION 3

20You who believe, obey God

and His messenger, and

do not turn away from him

when you hear him speak.

21And don’t be like those who say,

“We hear,” but do not hear.

22The worst of creatures

in the eyes of God

are the deaf and the dumb—

those who do not reason.

23If God had seen any good in them,

He would have made them listen;

yet even if He had, they would still

turn away, utterly averse.

24You who believe, answer God

and His messenger when they

invite you to what will give you life.

And know that God will come

between a person and their heart,

and that you will be gathered to Him.

25And beware of any strife

that might harm not just

the wrongdoers among you—know

that God is Severe in Retribution.

26Remember when you were few—

seen throughout the land as weak,

fearing that people might seize you—

He sheltered you,

strengthened you with His help,

and provided you with good things,

that you might be grateful.

27You who believe, do not betray

the trust of God and the messenger,

and do not knowingly betray

what is entrusted to you.

28And you should know that

your possessions and your children

are merely a trial, and that

there is a great reward with God.

SECTION 4

29You who believe,

if you fear God,

He will give you a criterion

of right and wrong,

absolve you of your bad deeds

and forgive you—

for God harbors abundant grace.

30Remember, Prophet, how

the unbelievers schemed against you,

to keep you captive, or kill you

or drive you out.

While they were scheming,

God was scheming;

and God is the best of schemers.

31When Our verses were recited

to them, they exclaimed,

“We’ve heard this before;

if we wished, we too

could speak like this—

these are merely

tales of the ancients.”

32And they said, “God, if this

really is the truth from you,

rain down upon us a shower

of stones from the sky,

or bring us some painful torment.”

33But God would not punish them

with you among them, Prophet,

nor would He punish them

if they sought forgiveness.

34And how could they claim

that God should not punish them

when they bar people

from the sacred mosque,°

though they are not its guardians?

Its only rightful guardians

are those who are mindful of God,

though most disbelievers

don’t discern this.

35Their prayers at God’s House are

nothing but whistling and clapping—

“Taste, then, the punishment,

for your disbelieving.”

36The unbelievers spend their wealth

to bar people from the path of God,

and will keep doing so. In the end,

however, they will regret this—

they will be vanquished.

And the unbelievers

shall be gathered into hell.

37God will divide

the wicked from the good

and He will heap

the wicked on top of one another,

piling them all together in hell—

they will be the ones who lose.

SECTION 5

38Prophet, tell the unbelievers—

if they desist, their past deeds

will be forgiven,

but if they persist—[remember]

what happened to their ancestors.°

39And fight them until

there is no more oppression,

and all religion is for God.

But if they cease—

God Sees all that they do.

40But if they turn away, know

that God is your Protector—

the best Protector, the best Helper.

41Know that, of the spoils you take,

one-fifth is for God, the messenger,

relatives, orphans, the needy,

and travelers—if you believe in God

and what was revealed to Our servant

on the day when right and wrong

were distinguished,°

the day the two forces met—

God has Power over all things.

42Remember when you were

on the near side of the valley,

and they on the far side,

with the caravan below you.

Even if you had agreed

to meet in battle,

you would have failed to come.°

But the battle did happen, so that

God might bring to pass

a matter already decreed, so that

those who perished might perish

and those who lived might live

after clear proof had been given.

God is All Hearing, All Knowing.

43Remember your dream, Prophet,

when God showed them to you as few;°

if He had shown them as many,

you would have lost heart, arguing

among yourselves over the issue;

but God preserved you—

He Knows what hearts enclose.

44And when your forces met,

He made them seem few

in your eyes,

and made you seem few

in their eyes,

so that God might bring to pass

a matter already decreed—

all matters come back to God.

SECTION 6

45You who believe,

when you meet a hostile force—

stand firm, and keep

remembering God

that you might succeed.

46Obey God and His messenger,

and do not quarrel with one another,

or you may become

disheartened and dispirited.

And be patient—

God is with those who show patience.

47And don’t be like those

who left their homes, boastfully,

to be seen of people, and

to bar them from the path of God.

For God Encompasses

[in His knowing] all that they do.

48And remember when Satan

made their deeds seem fair to them,

and said, “No force of men

can vanquish you this day,

for I am right beside you.”°

But when the two forces

came within sight of each other,

he turned on his heels, saying,

“I disown you—for I see

what you do not, and

I fear God—for God

is Severe in Retribution.”

SECTION 7

49The hypocrites and those

with sick hearts say about believers,

“Their religion has deluded them.”

But those who trust in God

[should know that]

God is Almighty, All Wise.

50If you could see—when angels

take the souls of the unbelievers,

striking their faces and their backs,

saying, “Taste the torment

of the blazing fire!”

51“This is for the deeds

your own hands have wrought°—

for God never wrongs His servants.”

52Likewise with Pharaoh’s people

and those before them—

they denied the signs of God,

so God seized them for their sins.

God is Strong, Severe in Retribution.

53For God does not alter the grace

He grants to people until they change

what is within themselves—

God is All Hearing, All Knowing.

54Likewise with Pharaoh’s people

and those before them—

they denied the signs of their Lord,

so We destroyed them for their sins,

and We drowned Pharaoh’s people,

for they were all wrongdoers.

55The worst of creatures

in the eyes of God

are those who deny the truth,

and will not believe—

56those with whom

you make a covenant, Prophet,

then break it every time—

those who don’t fear God.

57If you find them

on the battlefield, scatter them

so that those behind them

will take heed.

58And if you fear treachery

from any group, openly

dissolve your treaty with them,

for God dislikes the treacherous.

SECTION 8

59Let the unbelievers

not imagine that they have won—

they shall not escape.

60And prepare against them

whatever force you can,

with steeds of war, to strike fear

into God’s enemies and yours,

and others unknown to you

but known to God.

Whatever you spend in God’s cause

you shall get back in full—

you shall not be wronged.

61But if the enemy

inclines toward peace,

you should also incline to it,

and put your trust in God—

He is All Hearing, All Knowing.

62If they intend to deceive you,

know that God suffices for you;

it is He who strengthened you

with His help, and with the believers,

63and He has brought unity

between their hearts; had you spent

all that is on the earth, you could not

have brought such unity. But God

has brought it between them—

He is Almighty, All Wise.

64Prophet, God suffices

for you and for the believers

who follow you.

SECTION 9

65Prophet, rouse the believers

to fight: if there are twenty of you

who are steadfast, they will vanquish

two hundred; and if there are a hundred,

they will vanquish a thousand

of the unbelievers, for they

are people void of understanding.

66God has now lightened

your burden, for He knows

the weakness in you—

if there are a hundred of you

who are steadfast, they will vanquish

two hundred, and if a thousand,

they will vanquish two thousand,

by God’s leave—for God

is with the steadfast.

67It is not fitting for the Prophet

to take prisoners of war

before prevailing on the battlefield;

you desire the goods of this life,

but God desires for you the hereafter,

and God is Almighty, All Wise.

68Had a decree not been

preordained by God,°

you would be punished greatly

for what you have taken.°

69Enjoy, then, what you have taken,

in a good and lawful manner,

but be mindful of God—

God is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

SECTION 10

70Prophet, say to the captives

in your hands, “If God knows

of any good in your hearts,

He will give you something better

than what was taken from you,

and He will forgive you—

God is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.”

71But if they seek to betray you,

they have betrayed God before—

so He has made you

prevail over them—

God is All Knowing, All Wise.

72Those who believed, emigrated

and strove with their wealth

and their lives in the cause of God,

and those who gave shelter and help,

are allies of one another.°

As for those who believed

but did not migrate,° you are not

obliged to protect them

until they migrate.

But if they seek your help

on religious grounds,°

it’s your duty to give them help,

except against any people

with whom you have a treaty—

God Sees all that you do.

73The unbelievers are mutual allies;

unless you do likewise,

there will be oppression in the land

and much corruption.

74Those who believe and emigrate,

striving in the cause of God,

and those who give shelter and help—

those are the true believers.

They shall find forgiveness

and a gracious provision.

75Those who believed afterward,

and emigrated and strove with you

in the cause of God—they are of you;

but in the Book of God°

relatives have prior claim

over one another—

God Knows all things.

SURA 9

Repentance (Al-Tawba)

The sole sura without the opening basmala, or invocation of God’s name, its title, “Repentance,” comes from v. 104. It consists of 129 verses, closely tied to the themes and issues of Sura 8, especially conduct during and after war. Verses 38–99 refer to the Tabuk campaign in 630, the last battle in which the Prophet Muhammad participated, making this a late Medinan sura revealed shortly before the Prophet’s death in 632.

SECTION 1

1[A proclamation] that God

and His messenger have dissolved

your treaty with the polytheists.

2Polytheists, you may go about

freely for four months, but know that

you cannot escape God, and that

God will disgrace the disbelievers.

3On the day of the greater pilgrimage,

God and His messenger

will proclaim to the people,

“God and His messenger are released

from any treaty with the polytheists.

Polytheists, it will be better for you

if you repent—but if you turn away,

know that you cannot escape God.”

Prophet, warn the disbelievers

of severe torment—

4except for those polytheists who

did not break their treaty with you

or aid anyone against you—fulfill

your treaty with them for its term.°

God loves those who are righteous.

5But when the forbidden months

are over, kill the polytheists

wherever you encounter them;

seize them and besiege them

and lie in wait for them.

But if they repent, and pray,

and give in charity,

then let them go their way—

God is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

6If any of the polytheists should seek

protection from you, grant it to them

so they might hear the Word of God,

then escort them to a safe place—

they are a people void of knowledge.

SECTION 2

7How could polytheists have a treaty

with God and His messenger

except those with whom you made

a treaty at the sacred mosque?

If they remain true to you,

stay true to them—

God loves those who are righteous.

8So how could they° have a treaty—

if they gain ascendancy over you,

would they respect your ties of kin

or pacts of mutual protection?

They indulge you with their mouths

but refuse you in their hearts,

and most of them are rebellious.

9They sold the verses of God

for a paltry price,

and they barred people

from the path of God.

How wicked are their deeds!

10They do not respect

ties of kin, in believers,

or pacts of mutual protection—

they are the transgressors.

11But if they repent,

are steadfast in prayer,

and give due charity, then

they are your brothers in faith.

We make clear Our signs

for a people with knowledge.

12But if they break their oaths

after their treaty with you,

and defame your religion, then

fight the leaders of disbelief

—for oaths mean nothing to them—

to make them cease

[their transgression].

13Won’t you fight a people

who broke their oaths and resolved

to drive out the Prophet, and

attacked you first? Do you fear them?

It is God you should rightly fear

if you are true believers.

14Fight them—God will punish them

by your hands, disgrace them,

and help you vanquish them;

He will heal the hearts

of people who believe,

15and purge the anger

from their hearts.

For God ever turns, relenting,

to whom He will, and God

is All Knowing, All Wise.

16Or do you think

you’ll simply be left [untried]

without God finding out

those among you

who strive in His cause,

who take as allies none but God,

His Prophet, and the believers?

God is Aware of all that you do.

SECTION 3

17It is not for the polytheists

to maintain God’s places of worship

while attesting to their own unbelief.

The deeds of these people are vain—

they shall stay in the fire forever.°

18God’s places of worship

should be maintained only by those

who believe in God and the last day,

who are steadfast in prayer,

who give due charity,

and fear none but God.

It is they who are rightly guided.

19Do you think that giving water to pilgrims

and maintaining the sacred mosque

are on the same level as the deeds

of those who believe in God

and the last day, and strive

in the cause of God? These are not

the same in the eyes of God—

for God does not guide

people who do wrong.

20As for those who believed,

and left their homes,

and strove in the cause of God

with their wealth and their persons—

they shall have the highest rank

in the eyes of God, and it is they

who shall flourish.

21Their Lord gives them joyous news

of His mercy, His good pleasure,

and gardens for them with lasting bliss,

22residing there forever—

the greatest reward is with God.

23You who believe, do not take

your fathers and brothers as allies

if they opt for disbelief over faith;

those who turn to them do wrong.

24Declare, Prophet, “If your fathers,

sons, brothers, wives, relatives,

the wealth you’ve acquired,

the trade in which you fear decline,

the homes in which you delight—

if these are dearer to you than God

and His messenger, and striving

in His cause— then wait—until God

brings about His judgment. For God

does not guide disobedient people.

SECTION 4

25God has helped you

on many plains of battle,

and on the day of Hunayn;°

you were cheered

by your swelling numbers,

but they were of no help to you.

For all its breadth, the earth

seemed to close tight around you,

and you turned in flight.

26Then God sent down His calm

on the messenger and believers,

and He sent down forces that

you did not see, punishing those

who disbelieved. This is the reward

of the disbelievers.

27And, after this, God will turn,

in His mercy, to whom He will—

God is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

28You who believe:

the polytheists are unclean,

so don’t let them approach

the sacred mosque after this,

their final year.

And if you fear poverty,

God shall soon enrich you

from His bounty, if He wishes—

God is All Knowing, All Wise.

29Fight those among the people

of the Book who do not believe

in God and the last day,

who do not forbid what God

and His messenger have forbidden,

and do not acknowledge

the religion of truth—until

they are subdued and

agree to pay the jizya tax.°

SECTION 5

30The Jews say,

“Ezra is God’s son,”°

and the Christians say,

“The messiah is God’s son.”

They say this with their own mouths,

but are merely rehearsing what

disbelievers before them said.

May God confound them!

How deluded they are!°

31They take their rabbis and monks

as lords, as well as the messiah,

son of Mary—besides the One God.

Yet they were commanded to worship

none but the One God. There is no god

but Him. Glorified is He, far above

the partners they ascribe to Him.

32With their mouths they would

extinguish the Light of God;

but God will only allow

His Light to be perfected,

though the disbelievers detest it.

33It is He who sent His messenger

with guidance, the religion of truth,

to make it prevail over all religion,

though the polytheists detest it.

34You who believe—

many of the rabbis and monks

wrongfully devour people’s wealth,

and bar people from God’s path.

You should warn those

who hoard gold and silver,

instead of spending it in God’s cause,

of a painful punishment.

35On the day when

that gold and silver

is heated in the fire of hell,

and their foreheads, sides, and backs

are branded with it, they will be told,

“This is what you hoarded

for yourselves—now,

taste what you hoarded.”

36God has decreed twelve months,

ordained in God’s Book, on the day

He created the heavens and earth.

Of these, four are sacred;° this

is the upright religion. So do not

wrong yourselves during them;

but fight the polytheists all together

as they fight you all together—

know that God is with the righteous.°

37Deferring the sacred months

is a further act of unbelief.°

Those who disbelieve

are led astray by doing this:

they deem it lawful one year

then forbid it another year

to conform to the number of months

deemed sacred by God,

but in doing this, they deem lawful

what God has forbidden.

Their wicked deeds seem

pleasing to them—

God does not guide

people who disbelieve.

SECTION 6

38Believers, what’s wrong with you—

when told, “Go forward and fight

in God’s cause,” you seem weighed

down to the ground?° Do you prefer

the life of this world to the hereafter?

Enjoyment of this life is a trifle

compared with the hereafter.

39Unless you do go forward,

He will punish you severely

and put others in your place,

for you can do no harm to Him—

God has Power over all things.

40Even if you don’t help the Prophet,

God helped him when unbelievers

drove him out [with Abu Bakr].

When the two hid in a cave,

the Prophet told his companion,

“Don’t grieve—God is with us.”

And God sent His calm upon him,

and strengthened him with forces

that you could not see;

He humbled the disbelievers’ words,

and the Word of God was exalted—

for God is Almighty, All Wise.°

41Advance, lightly or heavily armed,

and strive, with your wealth and lives

in God’s cause; that is better for you

if only you knew.

42They would have followed you,

if some gain had been within easy reach,

and the journey brief—but

the distance seemed too far for them.

They’ll swear by God, “If we could,

we’d come out with you,”

but they condemn themselves,°

for God knows they are lying.

SECTION 7

43Prophet, may God pardon you;

why did you exempt them from fighting

before it was made clear to you

which ones were telling the truth

and which ones were lying?

44Those who believe in God

and the last day do not ask you

to exempt them from striving

with their wealth and their lives.

And God Knows those

who were mindful of Him.°

45Only those who don’t believe

in God and the last day

ask you for exemption—those

whose hearts are doubtful, wavering

back and forth, in their doubt.

46Had they wanted to go and fight

with you, they would have prepared.

But God would not countenance

their going out, so He made them

lag behind, and they were told, “Stay,

with the others who stay behind.”

47Had they come out with you,

they would only

have wrought confusion,

actively sowing discord

in your midst—and some among you

would have listened to them—

God has full Knowledge

of those who do wrong.

48Indeed, they had sought before

to sow discord, and to overturn

your plans°—until the truth emerged,

and God’s command was revealed,

though they loathed it.

49Some of them say,

“Exempt me from fighting,

and don’t drag me into trial.”

Have they not fallen

already into trial?

Hell shall encompass

the disbelievers.

50If something good comes to you,

this grieves them; but if some trouble

comes your way, they say smugly,

“Well, we already took precautions,”

and they turn away, exulting.

51Say, “Nothing shall happen to us

beyond what God has decreed for us;

He is our Protector—so let believers

put their trust in God.”

52Say, “What do you expect for us

beyond one of the two best outcomes

[—martyrdom or victory]?

What we expect for you

is God’s punishment, either

from Himself or at our hands.

So, wait—we are waiting with you.”°

53Say, “Whether you give to charity

willingly or unwillingly,

it will never be accepted of you,

for you are disobedient people.”

54Nothing stops their spending

from being accepted except

that they disbelieve in God

and His messenger,

perform their prayer slothfully,

and give to charity grudgingly.

55Don’t be dazzled by their wealth

or their children. God intends

to punish them by both of these

in the life of this world,

and to let their souls take leave

while they disbelieve.

56They swear by God

that they are with you, the believers,

but they are not—

for they are cowardly people.

57If they could find a refuge,

or some cave or a place to hide,

they would bolt to it in wild panic.

58And some of them upbraid you

about the giving of alms;

if they receive a share of them,

they’re appeased; if not, they seethe.

59If only they had been content

with what God and His messenger

had given them; if they had said,

“God suffices for us;

God and His messenger

will give us of His bounty—

we turn in hope to God alone.”

SECTION 8

60Alms° are only for

the poor, the needy,

those who administer them,

those whose hearts

are to be won,

the freeing of slaves,

those in debt,

those in the cause of God,

and travelers.

This is an obligation

imposed by God—

God is All Knowing, All Wise.

61Some of them hurt the Prophet,

saying “He listens to anything.”

Say, “He listens to what

is good for you;

he believes in God,

has faith in the believers,

and is a mercy to those of you

who believe.”

Those who hurt the Prophet,

shall face painful torment.

62They swear by God before you

just to please you;

but it is God and His messenger

—who have greater claim—

that they should please

if they are true believers.

63Don’t they know that those

who oppose God and His messenger

shall feel the fire of hell—where

they shall stay forever.

That is the supreme disgrace.

64The hypocrites fear

that a sura will be revealed

exposing what’s in their hearts.

Say, “By all means, mock!

For God will bring to pass

exactly what you fear.”

65If you ask them about this,

they’ll be sure to say,

“We were just talking lightly,

amusing ourselves.”

Say, “Was it God, His signs,

and His messenger

that you were mocking?

66“Don’t offer excuses—

you sank from belief into disbelief.

Even if We pardon some of you,

We shall punish others,

for they were sinners.”

SECTION 9

67The hypocrites, men and women,

are all alike: they urge what is wrong,

forbid what is right,

and are tightfisted.

They have forgotten God,

so He has forgotten them—

the hypocrites are rebellious.

68God has promised the fire of hell

to the hypocrites, men and women,

as well as the disbelievers—

where they will stay forever.

It is fitting° for them.

God has cursed them, and

they shall face enduring torment.

69You are just like those before you;

but they were stronger,

with more wealth and children.

They enjoyed their lot

as did you and those before you.

And you indulge in idle talk

just like them. Their deeds

will come to nothing,

in this world and the hereafter,

and they will be the losers.

70Have they not heard the story

of those before them?

Of the people of Noah, ʿAd,

Thamud, Abraham, Midian,

and the fallen cities?

Their messengers came to them

with clear signs—

it was not God who wronged them,

but they who wronged themselves.

71The believers, men and women,

are allies of one another.

They enjoin what is right

and forbid what is wrong;

they are steadfast in prayer,

and give duly to charity;

they obey God and His messenger.

They are the ones on whom

God shall have mercy—

God is Almighty, All Wise.

72God has promised gardens

to the believing men and women,

with rivers flowing beneath,

abiding there forever,

residing in splendid homes

in gardens of lasting bliss.

But greater than this

is the good pleasure of God—

that is the supreme triumph.

SECTION 10

73Prophet, strive against

the unbelievers and the hypocrites,

and deal firmly with them;

their home shall be hell, an evil end.

74They swear by God

that they said nothing,

but they did—

they uttered words of disbelief,

and they did disbelieve, having

[pretended to] submit to God’s will.

And they vainly plotted [harm

to the Prophet]. This revenge

was their only response after

God and His messenger had

enriched them from God’s bounty.°

If they turn to repent,

that will be better for them;

but if they turn away,

God will give them severe torment

in this world and the hereafter,

and they shall have

no protector or helper on the earth.

75Some of them pledged to God,

“If He gives to us from His bounty,

we’ll be sure to give to charity

and we will be righteous.”

76But when He did give them

from His bounty, they were miserly with it,

and turned away.

77He lodged hypocrisy in their hearts,

by way of requital, until the day they meet Him—

for they broke their promise to God

and would always lie.

78Don’t they know

that God knows their secrets

and secret counsels,

that He Knows the unseen?

79Some people reproach believers

who give freely to charity

as well as believers who can give

no more than what they toil for

—they mock them—

but God will mock them,

and they shall face severe torment.

80Prophet, whether you ask

forgiveness for them or not,

[it is all the same]—

even if you ask seventy times,

God will not forgive them,

for they denied God

and His messenger,

and God does not forgive

people who are disobedient.

SECTION 11

81Those who were left behind

[in the Tabuk mission]

were happy to stay back,°

in defiance of God’s messenger,

for they scorned to strive

with their wealth and lives

in the cause of God, saying,

“Don’t advance in this heat.”

Say, the fire of hell

is fiercer in its heat”—if only

they could understand.

82So let them laugh a little;

they will weep a lot—the reward

they’ll reap for all their deeds.

83Prophet, if God brings you again

to any group of them, and they ask

your permission to come out

and fight alongside you, say,

“You shall never come out with me,

and you shall never fight the enemy

by my side. For you preferred

to sit idle the first time—so stay now

with the others who stayed behind.”

84And don’t ever pray

for any of them who died,

nor stand at their graveside.

They denied God

and His messenger,

and were disobedient

when they died.

85Don’t be dazzled by their wealth

or their children. God intends

to punish them by both of these

in the life of this world,

and to let their souls take leave

while they disbelieve.

86When a sura is revealed

exhorting them, “Believe in God,

and strive alongside His messenger,”

the wealthy among them ask you

to exempt them, “Leave us—

with those who stay back.”

87They prefer to be

with those who stay back;

their hearts are sealed

so they don’t understand.

88As for the messenger

and those who believe with him,

striving with their wealth, their lives—

the best things shall be theirs;

they are the ones who will flourish.

89God has prepared gardens

for them, with rivers flowing beneath,

to live there forever—

that is the supreme triumph.

SECTION 12

90Bedouin Arabs° came also,

making excuses, seeking exemption;

those who lied to God and

His messenger also stayed behind.

Severe torment shall strike

the disbelievers among them.

91There is no blame on those

who can’t fight if they are weak,

or sick, or don’t have the means

to spend anything—

as long as they are true

to God and His messenger;

nor is there cause to blame

those who do good—

for God is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

92Nor is there blame

on those who came to you

asking for mounts to convey them,

and whom you told,

“I can find no mounts for you.”

They turned away, their eyes

streaming with tears of grief

because they had no means

to [join the battle].

93Blame falls only on those

who ask you to exempt them

in spite of their wealth,

and prefer to stay with

the others who stay behind.

God has sealed their hearts,

so they are void of knowledge.

94When you return [from fighting],

they’ll offer their excuses to you.

Say, “Don’t offer excuses.

We won’t believe you.

God has informed us about you.

God and His messenger

will observe your deeds,

and you will be returned

to the Knower of the unseen

and the seen—

and He will inform you

of all you have done.”

95When you return [from fighting],

they’ll swear by God to you—

so you might leave them alone.

So, leave them alone.

They are defiled, and their home

shall be hell—the reward

they reap for all they have done.

96They swear to you,

in order to please you;

but even if you

were pleased with them,

God is displeased

with disobedient people.

97The Bedouin Arabs are the worst

of any in disbelief and hypocrisy,

and the least likely to recognize

the limits revealed by God

to His messenger—

God is All Knowing, All Wise.

98Some of the Bedouin Arabs consider

what they spend in God’s cause

as a loss, and wait for misfortune

to befall you. It is on them

that ill fortune shall fall—

God is All Hearing, All Knowing.

99But others among the Bedouin Arabs

believe in God and the last day,

and consider what they spend

as a means of bringing them

nearer to God and the prayers

of the messenger. It is indeed

such a means for them.

God will bring them into His mercy—

God is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

SECTION 13

100God is well pleased

with the forerunners°—the first

emigrants and helpers, and those

who followed them in good deeds,

and they are pleased with Him.

He has prepared gardens for them,

with rivers flowing beneath,

to live there for eternity—

that is the supreme triumph.

101Some Bedouin Arabs around you

are hypocrites, as are some people

of Medina. They persist in hypocrisy.

Prophet, you do not know them—

We do—We shall punish them twice,

then they shall be brought again

to face great punishment

[in the hereafter].

102But others among them

have acknowledged their wrongs,

having mingled good deeds with bad.

Perhaps God will turn to them,

relenting. God is Forgiving,

Ever Merciful.

103Accept some gifts for charity

from their wealth, so that you might

purge and purify them;

and pray for them.

Your prayers will comfort them—

God is All Hearing, All Knowing.

104Don’t they know that God

is the One who accepts repentance

from His servants, and their charity—

that God is the One Who is

Ever Relenting, Ever Merciful?

105Say, Prophet, “Do good deeds—

God, His messenger, and believers

will see your deeds;

and you will be brought back

to the Knower of the unseen

and the seen,

and He will inform you

of all you have done.”

106There are others for whom

God’s decree is pending, whether

He will punish them

or turn to them, relenting—

God is All Knowing, All Wise.

107Some people set up a mosque

just to wreak harm, disbelief,

and division among believers,

using it as a base for those

who warred before against God

and His messenger. They will swear,

“We only wanted what was best”—

but God bears witness

that they are liars.°

108Prophet, never stand to pray there.

It’s more fitting that you stand

[in prayer] in a mosque founded

from the first day

on mindfulness of God—

where people like to purify themselves;

God likes those who seek purity.

109Who, then, is better—

someone who founds their edifice

on mindfulness of God

and His good pleasure,

or someone who founds it

at the brink of a precipice

about to collapse, which crumbles,

with them, into the fire of hell?

God does not guide

a people who do wrong.

110The edifice they have founded

will never cease to breed doubt

in their hearts, until their hearts

are hewn to pieces—

God is All Knowing, All Wise.

SECTION 14

111God has made a trade

with the believers:

their lives and their wealth—

for the gardens of paradise.

They fight in the cause of God,

to kill and be killed.

His promise is true—in the Torah,

the Gospel, and the Quran.

Who is truer to his promise than God?

So rejoice in the trade you made—

it is the supreme triumph.

112Give joyous news

to the believers—

those who turn to God, repenting,

those who worship Him,

who praise Him,

who go out [to fight for Him],

those who bow

and prostrate themselves,

those who enjoin what is right,

and forbid what is wrong,

and those who observe

the limits set by God.

113It is not for the Prophet

or those who believe to ask

forgiveness for the polytheists

—even if they are near of kin—

once it is clear to them that

they shall be inmates of hellfire.

114Abraham did ask forgiveness for his father,

only because he had made him a promise.

But when it was clear to him that his father

was an enemy of God, he disowned him—

Abraham was tenderhearted, forbearing.

115God will not let people go astray

after guiding them,

without making clear to them

what they should fear to do.

God Knows all things.

116God holds dominion

over the heavens and the earth;

He gives life, and He brings death;

and besides God, you have no

protector or helper.

117God turned, in mercy,

to the Prophet, and the emigrants

and helpers who followed him

in the hour of difficulty, though

some of their hearts almost wavered.

Then He turned to them, in mercy.

He is Kind to them, Ever Merciful.

118[He turned, in mercy, also]

to the three who were left behind,°

when the earth, for all its breadth

closed in around them, and

their own souls closed in upon them,

until they were sure there was no

refuge from God except with Him.

Then He turned to them, that they

might turn to Him in repentance.

God is Ever Relenting,

Ever Merciful.

SECTION 15

119You who believe,

be mindful of God,

and stand with those

who are truthful.

120The people of Medina

and the neighboring Bedouin Arabs

should not have stayed behind,

failing to follow God’s messenger;

nor should they have placed

their own lives before his—

for any thirst they suffer,

any fatigue, any hunger

in the cause of God,

any step they take

to antagonize the disbelievers,

any harm they inflict on an enemy—

each of these is recorded

as a good deed on their behalf.

God will not overlook

the reward of those who do good.

121Whether they spend little or much

in God’s cause, or traverse a valley,

it will be recorded on their behalf;

God will reward them

for the best of their deeds.

122Nor should the believers

all go out to fight together. If a group

from each force should venture out,

to gain understanding of the faith,

they might exhort the others

when they return to them,

so that they might take heed.

SECTION 16

123You who believe, fight

the unbelievers who lie close to you,

and let them find you standing firm;

know that God is with those

who are mindful of Him.

124Whenever a sura is revealed,

some of the hypocrites taunt,

“Which of you has it increased in faith?”

The faith of those who believe

has indeed increased,

and they rejoice.

125But for those with diseased hearts,

it adds vileness to their vileness,

and they shall die as disbelievers.

126Don’t they see that they

are tried every year, once or twice?

Yet they don’t repent,

nor do they take heed.

127Whenever a sura is revealed,

they stare at one another, saying,

“Does anyone see you?”

Then they turn away.

God has turned their hearts away,

for they are people

void of understanding.

128A messenger has come to you

from your own people.

He grieves over your suffering,

cares for you, and is kind,

merciful to the believers.°

129But if they turn away,

say, “God suffices for me;

there is no god but Him,

and in Him I place my trust;

for He is Lord of the mighty throne.”

SURA10

Jonah (Yunus)

A late Meccan sura of 109 verses, this is the first of numerous suras named after one of the many Abrahamic prophets recognized and lauded in Islam. Though Jonah is cited (v. 98), other prophets are also prominent, including Noah, Moses, and Aaron. The final 11 verses (vv. 99–109) are addressed directly to the Prophet Muhammad.

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

1Alif. Lam. Ra.°

These are the verses

of the Wise Book.

2Are people surprised

that We inspired one of them°

to warn humankind,

and to give joyous news

to those who believe,

that they have a firm footing

with their Lord?

The unbelievers say,

“This is a brazen sorcerer.”

3Your Lord is God,

Who created the heavens

and the earth in six days,

then stationed Himself

on the throne, administering

all things. None can intercede

without His leave.

This is God, your Lord,

so worship Him.

Will you not take heed?

4All of you will return to Him.

The promise of God is true.

It is He who produced creation,

then renewed it, that He might

justly reward those who believe

and do good deeds.

But those who disbelieve

shall taste a boiling potion

and painful punishment,

for their persistent disbelief.

5It is He who made the sun

radiant and the moon

a softer light,

ordaining phases for it

so you might know

the number of years

and the measure of time.°

God created all this

only with true purpose.

He explains His signs

for a people who know.

6In the revolving cycle

of night and day,

and in all that God created

in the heavens and the earth,

are signs for people

who are mindful of God.

7As for those who don’t

expect to meet with Us,

who are pleased and content

with the life of this world,

and those who are heedless

of Our signs—

8they shall have the fire

as their home—

for all they have done.

9But those who believe

and do good deeds,

their Lord will guide them

for their faith;

beneath them will flow rivers

in gardens of bliss.

10Their refrain there will be

“Glory to You, O God,”

and their greeting there

will be “Peace.”

Their refrain will close with

“All praise be to God,

Lord of the universe.”

11If God were to hasten for people

the evil [they reap] just as they

hasten after [worldly] good,

their decreed term

would already have expired.

But We let those who

don’t expect to meet Us

wander blindly

in their transgression.

12When harm befalls someone,

they call to Us—reclining,°

or sitting, or standing.

But when we remove the harm,

they move on as if

they had never called on Us.

This is how the profligates’ deeds

are made to seem pleasing to them.

13We destroyed generations

before you, when they did wrong,

when messengers came to them

with clear signs,

and they would not believe.

This is how We requite sinful people.

14Then We made you

their successors on the earth,

so We might see what you would do.

15But when Our clear signs

are recited to them,

those who don’t expect to meet Us

say, “Bring us a recitation

other than this, or change it.”

Say, “It is not for me to change it

of my own accord; I follow

only what is revealed to me.

If I disobeyed my Lord, I would

fear punishment on the great day.”

16Say, “If God had wished it,

I would not have recited it to you,

nor would He make it known to you.

I was actually among you° a lifetime

before revelation came.

Won’t you understand?”

17Who does greater wrong

than someone who invents lies

about God or denies His signs?

Sinners will never flourish.

18Besides God, they worship things

that can neither hurt nor profit them,

yet they say, “These are

our intercessors with God.” Say,

“Do you presume to tell God

that there is something

He does not know

in the heavens and on the earth?

Glory be to Him—

May He be exalted far above

what they associate with Him.”

19Humankind was one community,

until they differed among themselves.

Had your Lord not already decreed

[a deferred punishment for them,]°

a judgment would have been passed

concerning their differences.°

20And they say,

“Why is no sign sent down to him

from his Lord?”

Tell them, “The unseen is known

to God alone.

So, wait—and I will be waiting

with you.”

21When We let people taste mercy

after affliction strikes them,

see how they begin to scheme

against Our signs. Say,

“God is swifter in scheming.”

Our messengers are recording

all that you scheme.

22It is He who lets you journey

on land and sea,

when you are in ships that sail

with a fair wind, which brings joy.

Then comes a storming wind,

waves lashing from every side,

and they imagine they’ll be engulfed.

They cry out to God, sincere

to Him in faith,

“If You save us from this,

we’ll be truly grateful.”

23But once he saves them,

they transgress on the earth

against all that is right.

Humankind, you transgress

against yourselves—

delighting in the life of the world,

but you will be returned to Us,

and We shall show you

all that you have done.

24The life of the world

is merely like the rain

We send down from the sky,

absorbed by earth’s greenery,

from which humans

and animals eat;

once the earth is bedecked

in its gilded beauty,

and its people think they

have power over it,

Our command reaches it,

by night or day,

and We turn it into

a bare harvest,

as if just yesterday

it had never flourished.

This is how We explain Our signs

for a people who reflect.

25God calls [all people]

to the house of peace

and guides whom He will

to a straight path.

26Those who do what is good

shall have what is good, and more;

neither darkness nor shame

shall cover their faces.

They shall inhabit

the garden—forever.°

27But those who did evil

shall reap a reward of equal evil:

they shall be covered with shame,

with no defender against God—

as if their faces were covered

with fragments from the

depth of night’s darkness.

They shall be inmates

of the fire—forever.

28And on the day

we gather them all together,

We shall say to those

who joined other gods with Us,

“Stay in your place,

you and your gods.”

And We shall separate

the one from the other.

And those gods will say,

“It was not us whom

you worshipped.

29“God will suffice as witness

between ourselves and you,

that we were unaware

of your worship of us.”

30There, each of the souls

will be tried for its past deeds;

and they will be returned

to God, their true Master.

And the gods they invented

will abandon them.

31Say, “Who gives you sustenance

from the sky and earth?” or

“Who controls hearing and sight?

Who brings the living

from the dead, and the dead

from the living?

Who regulates all affairs?”

They will say, “God.”

Tell them, “Will you not then

be mindful of God?”

32This is God, your Lord, the Truth.

What is there beyond truth, but error?

So how can you be turned away?

33And so the Word of your Lord

has proven true against those who

disobey—they won’t believe.

34Ask, “Can any of the gods

whom you join with God

initiate the creation,

and then renew it?

Say, “It is God alone

who initiates creation,

and renews it. So how

can you be deluded?”

35Ask, “Can any of the gods

whom you join with God

guide anyone to truth?”

Say, “It is God

Who guides to truth.

Is One Who guides to truth

not worthier to be followed

than one who cannot guide

without being guided?

What is it with you?

How do you judge?”

36And most of them follow

nothing but opinion.

Opinion cannot prevail

at all against truth.

God is Aware of what they do.

37This Quran could not

be conceived by anyone but God.

It confirms what came before it,

and it explains the scripture

that is free of all doubt,

from the Lord of the universe.

38Or do they say,

“He [Muhammad] invented it”?

Say to them,

“Then bring a sura like it,

and call on whomever you can

besides God,

if you are speaking the truth.”

39No—they deny it,

whose knowledge

they cannot compass,°

yet its explication

has not come to them.

Those before them

also denied.

Observe, then, the fate

of the wrongdoers.

40Some of them believe in it,

and others do not—

your Lord knows best

those who wreak mischief.

41And if they deny you, say,

“My actions belong to me,

and yours to you.

You will not answer for what I do,

nor I for what you do.”

42Some of them seem

to listen to you.

But can you make

the deaf listen,

if they won’t use reason?

43Some of them seem

to observe you.

But can you guide the blind

if they won’t see?

44God does not wrong

human beings at all;

it is humans who

wrong themselves.

45On the day, He will gather them,

as if they had stayed but an hour

of the day; they’ll know one another.

Those who denied the meeting

with God will be lost,

for they were not guided.

46Prophet, whether We let you see

some of the punishment

We promised them while you live,

or cause you to die before that,

they shall return to Us;

God shall be Witness

to all they have done.

47A messenger is sent

to every community, and when

a messenger comes to them,

they shall be judged fairly

and shall not be wronged.

48They ask,

“When shall the promise be fulfilled,

if what you say is true?”

49Say, “I have no power over

any harm or good to myself

beyond what God wills.

Every nation has its appointed term.

When their term is due, they can

neither delay it nor advance it—

not even by an hour.”

50Say, “Do you see,

if His punishment came to you

by night or by day—

which part of it would the sinners

seek to hasten?”

51“Will you believe in it

only when it comes?

Now? Even though [before]

you sought to hasten it?”

52Then the wrongdoers will be told,

“Taste the eternal punishment.

Are you requited for anything

other than what you reaped?”

53They ask you, Prophet, “Is it true?”

Say, “Yes, by my Lord, it is true,

and you cannot escape.”

54If every soul that has sinned

possessed all that is on the earth,

it would give it all to ransom itself.

When they saw the punishment

they would repent inwardly—

yet they will be judged with justice,

and they will not be wronged.

55All that is in the heavens

and earth belongs to God.

The promise of God is true—

yet most people don’t know it.

56It is He Who gives life

and He Who brings death—

to Him you will be returned.

57People, a warning

has come to you from your Lord,

and healing for what is in your hearts,

as well as guidance and mercy

for those who believe.

58Say, “Let them rejoice

in the bounty of God,

and in His mercy—

these are better than the goods

they accumulate.”

59Ask, “Have you seen the provision

that God has sent down for you?

Yet you deem some of it

forbidden, some lawful.”

Ask, “Has God given you permission

for this, or are you inventing

things about God?”

60As for those who invent lies

about God—what do they think

will happen on the day of resurrection?

God is Full of Grace to humankind,

but most of them are ungrateful.

61There is no circumstance

you might be in,

no part of the Quran you recite,

no deed that you do,

that We do not witness—whenever

you engage in it.

Nothing escapes your Lord,

not the weight of an atom

in earth or in heaven,

nor anything smaller,

nor larger—all are recorded

in a clear Book.

62But those who ally themselves

with God shall have no fear,

nor shall they grieve—

63those who believe

and are mindful of God.

64There is joyous news for them

in the life of this world,

and in the hereafter.

There is no changing

the words of God—

the supreme triumph.

65Don’t let their words grieve you;

all power belongs to God—

the Hearing, the Knowing.

66All those in the heavens

and all those on earth

undoubtedly belong to God.

And what do they follow,

those who call upon others

besides God?

They follow nothing

but opinion,

and they do nothing

but guess.

67It is He Who made for you

the night, in which you might rest,

and the day, which gives you sight.

In this are signs for people who hear.

68They say, “God has a son.”

Praise Him: He is Self-Sufficient—

to Him belongs

all that is in the heavens

and all that is on the earth.

You have no sanction

for saying this.

Would you say about God

what you do not know?

69Say, “Those who invent lies

about God will never prosper.”

70Their span of enjoyment

in this world is brief—then

they will return to Us

and We shall make them taste

the severest torment

for their persistent disbelief.

71Tell them the story of Noah.

He said to his people,

“My people, if it vexes you

that I remain among you,

and remind you of the signs of God,

then I place my trust in God.

So form your plan, openly,

with your other gods.

Then inflict it upon me—

without respite.

72“But if you turn away, know that

I have asked no reward of you.

My reward is with God alone;

and I have been commanded

to submit my will to God.”

73Still, they denied him,

but We delivered him,

and those with him, in the ark,

making them heirs to the land,

and We drowned those

who denied Our signs—

observe, then, the outcome

of those who were warned.

74After him We sent messengers

to their respective peoples,

who brought them clear signs,

but they refused to believe

what they had already denied—

see how We seal up the hearts

of the transgressors.

75After them

We sent Moses and Aaron

to Pharaoh and his chiefs

with Our signs.

But they were too proud—

a nation of sinners.

76When the truth came to them

from Us, they said, “Plain sorcery!”

77Moses asked, “Is this what you say

about the truth, when it comes to you?

Sorcery? Sorcerers have no success.”

78They said, “Have you come

to turn us away from the faith

of our forefathers,

so that you two might gain

stature in the land?

We don’t believe you.”

79And Pharaoh said, “Bring

every expert sorcerer to me.”

80When the sorcerers came,

Moses said to them,

“Throw down whatever

you want to throw!”

81When they had thrown,

Moses told them,

“Everything you come up with

is sorcery—God will nullify it.

God will not rectify the deeds

of those who wreak mischief.

82“And God proves the truth

by His words, though

the sinners may loathe it.”

83But, apart from some youths,

none of his people believed Moses

for fear that Pharaoh and his nobles

might persecute them—

for Pharaoh was domineering

through the land, given to excess.

84Moses said, “My people,

if you believe in God,

put your trust in Him,

if you really submit to His will.

85They said, “We trust in God—

Our Lord, don’t let us be oppressed

by an unjust people,

86“and deliver us

through Your mercy

from this unbelieving people.”

87We inspired Moses and his brother

with these words,

“Settle your people in homes

in Egypt, and make your homes

sanctuaries for worship.°

Be steadfast in prayer,

and give joyous news to

those who believe.”

88Moses entreated,

“Our Lord, you have endowed

Pharaoh and his nobles

with splendor and wealth

in the life of the world—

and they lead people astray

from Your path.

Our Lord, wipe out their wealth

and harden their hearts,

so that they don’t believe

until they see

the painful punishment.”

89God said, “Your prayers

are answered, so remain steadfast,

both of you, and don’t follow

the path of those who don’t know.”

90We took the children of Israel

across the sea.

Pharaoh and his armies, rebellious

and belligerent, pursued them.

Eventually, when he was drowning,

Pharaoh cried out,

“I believe that there is no god

but the One God in Whom

the children of Israel believe,

and I submit to His will.”

91“Now? When before

you were always disobedient,

and wrought mischief?

92“Yet this day We shall

preserve your body—as a sign

for those who succeed you.

Yet most of humankind

are heedless of Our signs.”

93We settled the children of Israel

in a congenial venue, and gave them

good things to sustain them.

Only when knowledge came to them

did they differ among themselves.

Your Lord shall judge between them

on the day of resurrection

concerning the things they disputed.

94So, Prophet, if you are in doubt

about what We have revealed to you,

ask those who have been

reading the Book before you.

The truth has come to you

from your Lord,

so don’t be unsure,

95nor deny the signs of God—then

you would be among those in loss.

96Those on whom

your Lord’s sentence has passed

will not believe,

97even if every single sign

comes their way

until they are face-to-face

with the painful torment.

98Why is it that

not a single town believed,

and benefited from its belief,

except the people of Jonah?

When they believed,

We erased for them the

punishment of disgrace

in the life of this world,

and We granted them

enjoyment for a while.

99If it had been your Lord’s wish,

everyone on earth would believe.

But would you, Prophet,

compel people to believe?

100No soul can believe, except

by God’s leave; He despoils

those who won’t use reason.

101Tell them, “Observe all

that is in the heavens and earth.”

But neither signs nor those who warn

can help a people who don’t believe.

102Do they wait, then, only

to meet a fate like those

who passed away before them?

Say, “Wait, then—

I will be waiting with you.”

103In the end, We shall save

Our messengers and those

who believe. It is for Us

to save the believers.°

104Say, “People, if you are still

in doubt about my religion—

know that I do not worship

those you worship besides God,

but I worship the One God,

Who will cause you to die.

And I am commanded

to be a believer.

105“And [I was commanded],

‘Set your sight° toward

the religion of the upright

and do not be a polytheist’

106“and do not call upon

any besides God, on those

who can neither profit nor harm you—

for you would be doing wrong.”

107If God brings adversity to you,

none can remove it but He;

and if He intends good for you,

none can withhold His favor.

He bestows His bounty

on whichever of His servants He will,

for He is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

108Say, “People, the truth

has come to you from your Lord.

Whoever accepts guidance

does so for their own good,°

and whoever strays,

does so to their own loss°—

and I am not your custodian.”

109So, Prophet, follow

what is revealed to you,

and be patient until God

delivers His judgment—for He

is the Most Excellent of Judges.

SURA 11

Hud (Hud)

Named after an Arabian, non-Abrahamic prophet, linked to the tribe of ʿAd (v. 50), this late Meccan sura of 123 verses begins and ends with addresses to the Prophet Muhammad. It includes accounts of Noah, Salih, Abraham, Lot, Shuʿayb, as well as brief mentions of Moses and Pharaoh (vv. 96–99).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1Alif. Lam. Ra.°

This is a Book whose verses

are determined and explained°

by the One Who is

All Wise, All Aware,

2to urge you to worship

none but the One God.

Say, Prophet,

“I have come from Him,

to warn you and to bring

joyous news.

3“Ask forgiveness of your Lord,

Then turn to him repenting.

He will grant you

gracious enjoyment of life

for a certain time,

and bestow His grace

on those worthy of grace.

But if you turn away,

I fear for you the torment

of a momentous day.°

4“You will return to God,

Who has Power over all things.”

5See, how they fold up their hearts,

to hide their feelings from Him.

But even when they cover themselves

with their clothes, He knows

what they conceal, and

what they reveal. He Knows

what their hearts enclose.

6There is no creature on earth

that God does not provide for.

He knows its home and its last abode:

all is recorded in a clear Book.

7It is He who created

the heavens and earth in six days

—with His throne over the waters—

that He might try you, to see

which of you is best in deeds.

But if you were to say to them,

“You shall be raised up after death,”

the disbelievers would say,

“This is nothing but plain sorcery.”

8If We defer their punishment

for a definite term, they will taunt,

“What holds it back?”

But on the day it comes to them,

nothing shall avert it from them,

and it shall besiege them on all sides—

the very thing they used to mock.

SECTION 2

9If We let humans taste Our mercy,

then withdraw it from them,

they become hopeless, thankless.

10But if We let them taste Our favor,

after hardship has touched them,

they say, “Evils are gone from me,”

and they become joyful, boastful.

11But those who show patience

and do good deeds

shall be shown forgiveness

and a great reward.

12You might be inclined to forgo

part of the message revealed to you,

and to let your heart be constrained

by their questioning,

“Why is no treasure sent to him,” or

“Why is there no angel with him?”

But you are here merely to warn—

and God is Guardian over all things.

13Or they exclaim, “He forged it.”

Say, “Then bring ten similar verses,

all forged, and call upon what [gods]

you can other than the One God,

if you are speaking the truth.”

14“If [your gods] don’t answer you,

you should know that this message

is sent down with God’s knowledge,

and that there is no God but Him.

So, will you submit to Him?”

15As for those who desire

the life of this world and its lure—

We shall recompense in full

their deeds in it,

and they will not be denied

their due in it.

16The hereafter holds for them

nothing but fire—there, their works

shall be rendered vain, and

all that they did shall be worthless.

17[Can they really be likened

to] those who have a clear sign

from their Lord, recited by

a witness from Him,

before which the Book of Moses

came as a guide and mercy?

Those people believe in it,

but the sects who deny it

are fated for the fire.°

So have no doubt about it—

it is the truth from your Lord.

Yet most people won’t believe.

18Who does more wrong than those

who forge a lie about God? They

will be brought before their Lord,

and the witnesses will say,

“These are the ones

who lied about their Lord.”

See, the curse of God

is upon the wrongdoers,

19those who bar people

from the path of God,

seeking to make it crooked,

and who deny the hereafter.

20They will not escape on earth,

with no protectors besides God;

their punishment shall be doubled—

those who could not hear,

and would not see.

21They are the ones who

have lost themselves

and the gods they invented

have gone from them.°

22Without doubt, they

will be the ones who lose most

in the hereafter.

23Those who believe, do good deeds,

and humble themselves before their Lord

shall live in the garden—forever.

24These two groups are like

the blind and deaf alongside

the seeing and hearing—

are the two equal?

Will you not, then, take heed?

SECTION 3

25We sent Noah to his people, to say,

“I am here to warn you plainly,

26“not to worship any but God.

I fear for you the punishment

of a painful day.”

27But the leading disbelievers

among his people said,

“We see you as merely human like ourselves,

and we see only the lowest of our folk

following you, those rash in their opinion;

and we see in you no merit above ours.

In fact, we think you’re a liar.”

28He replied, “My people, consider:

if I had clear proof from my Lord,

and He granted me His mercy

—though you were blind to this—

could we compel you to accept it

despite your dislike of it?

29“Also, my people,

I ask of you no wealth,

and I seek no reward

except from God.

I will not drive away

those who believe—

they shall meet their Lord,

but I see that you

are an ignorant people.

30“Moreover, my people,

who would help me against God,

if I did drive them away?

Will you not, then, take heed?

31“I don’t say to you that

I have the treasures of God,

or that I know what is hidden,

or that I am an angel.

Nor do I say that God will not

grant good to those you despise

—God knows best

what is in their souls—

[if I said such things]

I would be doing wrong.”

32They said, “Noah, you have

argued and argued with us.

Now bring down upon us

[the torment] you threatened us with,

if you are speaking the truth.”

33He said, “Only God will bring it upon you,

if He wishes; and you shall not escape.

34“Though I wish to advise you,

my advice would not profit you,

if God wished to lead you astray.

He is your Lord—and to Him

you will be returned.”

35Or do they say,

“He has forged the message”?

Say, “Had I forged it, my sin

would be upon me, but

I am free of the sins you incur.”°

SECTION 4

36It was revealed to Noah,

“None of your people will believe

beyond those who already believe,

so don’t grieve over what they do.”

37“Build an ark, under Our eyes,

inspired by Us,

and plead with me no further

on behalf of those who do wrong—

for they shall be drowned.”

38He began building the ark

and whenever the chiefs

among his people passed by,

they would mock him.

He said, “Just as you mock us now,

so we shall mock you.

39“For soon you shall know

who shall face a punishment

that shames them—those on whom

a lasting punishment shall fall.”

40Then, when Our command came,

and earth’s fountains overflowed,°

We said, “Load the ark

with a pair of each kind,

and your family

(except those on whom

judgment has been passed)

and those who believe.”

Yet few believed with him.

41So Noah said, “Board the ark.

Let it sail and let it anchor in the name of God—

my Lord is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.”

42So the ark sailed with them

on the waves towering like mountains

and Noah cried out to his son,

who was apart, stranded,

“My son, board with us,

don’t stay with the unbelievers.”

43His son replied,

“I’ll find some mountain

to save me from the water.”

Noah warned, “This day,

no one can save anyone

from the command of God,

except those to whom

he shows mercy.”

A wave came between them,

and his son was among

those who were drowned.

44Then a voice said,

“Earth, swallow up your waters,

and sky, withhold your rain.”

Then the waters subsided,

and the command was fulfilled.

The ark came to rest on Mount Judi.°

And a voice said, “Gone are the people

who did wrong.”

45And Noah called upon his Lord, saying,

“Lord, my son was one of my family,

though your promise is true,

for you are the Most Just of Judges.”

46He replied, “Noah, actually,

he was not of your family—

his deeds were unrighteous.

So do not question me about things

beyond your knowledge—

I caution you against such ignorance.”

47Noah replied, “My Lord,

I seek refuge in You

from asking You about things

beyond my knowledge,

and unless You forgive me

and have mercy on me,

I too will be among the losers.”

48A voice came, “Noah,

come down from the ark,

with Our peace and blessings

on you and on the nations

to arise from those with you.

As for other nations,

We shall grant them contentment

for a while, then Our painful torment

will reach them.”

49These are the chronicles

of the unseen world that

We revealed to you, Prophet,

which neither you nor your people

knew before. So, have patience,

for the outcome will favor those°

who are mindful of God.

SECTION 5

50To the people of ʿAd

We sent their brother° Hud,

who said, “My people, worship God,

for you have no other god but Him—

your gods are merely invented.°

51“My people, I ask of you

no reward for this.

My only reward is from Him

who fashioned me.

So, won’t you use reason?

52“And, my people,

ask forgiveness of your Lord,

then turn to Him.

He will send abundance of rain upon you,

pouring from the sky;

He will add strength to your strength,

so do not turn back as sinners.”

53They said,

“Hud, you’ve brought us no clear proof,

and we are not ones to abandon our gods

at your word—we don’t believe you.

54“All we can say is that perhaps

some of our gods have harmed you.”

He responded, “I call upon God

—and you also—to witness

that I dissociate myself

from the gods you associate°

55“with Him. So plot against me,

all of you, and give me no quarter.

56“I trust in God,

my Lord and your Lord.

There is no creature

that He does not hold

by the forelock—

the path of my Lord is straight.

57“If you turn away, I have,

for my part, conveyed the message

with which I was sent to you;

and my Lord will replace you

with another people; and you

cannot harm Him at all.

My Lord is Watchful

over all things.”

58And when Our command came to pass,

We saved Hud and those

who believed with him, through Our mercy—

We saved them from a stern punishment.

59These were the people of ʿAd—

they rejected the signs of their Lord,

and disobeyed His prophets,

and followed the commands

of every obdurate tyrant.

60Shadowed by a curse

in this world and

on the day of resurrection—

See, the people of ʿAd

denied their Lord.

See, the ʿAd are gone,

the people of Hud!

SECTION 6

61And to the people of Thamud

We sent their brother Salih,

who said, “My people, worship God,

for you have no other god but Him.

It is God Who brought you forth

from the earth and settled you there.

So ask forgiveness of Him and

turn to Him. My Lord is

Ever Near, Responsive.”

62They said, “Salih,

before now, you were our hope.

Do you now forbid us to worship

what our fathers worshipped?

We are in doubt, in distrust,

about what you call us to.”

63He said, “My people, can you see—

if I have a clear sign from my Lord,

and He has shown me His mercy—

who will help me against God

if I disobey Him?

You would increase only my loss.

64“And, my people,

this is the she-camel of God,

a sign for you.

So let her pasture on God’s earth

and do not harm her,

else punishment shall soon

overcome you.”

65But they hamstrung her.

So he said, “Enjoy yourselves

in your homes for three days only—

this promise shall not prove false.”

66And when Our command came to pass,

We saved Salih and those who believed with him,

through Our mercy, from the shame of that day.

Your Lord is Powerful, Almighty.

67The fearsome blast

overcame the wrongdoers,

who lay, fallen, face-down,

in their homes

68as if they had never

lived and flourished there.

See, the people of Thamud

denied their Lord.

See, the people of Thamud

are gone.

SECTION 7

69And Our messengers came

to Abraham with joyous news,

and a greeting of “Peace.”

“Peace,” he responded,

and did not delay

in offering them a roasted calf.

70But when he saw that

they did not reach for the food,

he found this strange, and began

to fear them. But they said,

“Don’t be afraid,

for we have been sent

against the people of Lot.”

71And his wife, standing there, laughed.

But we gave her joyous news,

of a son Isaac, and after him, Jacob.

72She said, “Alas for me,

how shall I, an old woman,

bear a child, and my husband here

an old man? That would be

an amazing thing.”

73They said,

“Are you amazed at God’s command?

God’s mercy and His blessings

be upon you, people of the house.

He is the Praiseworthy, Glorious.”

74When the fear had passed from Abraham,

and the joyous news reached him,

he began to plead with Us

for the people of Lot.

75Abraham was forbearing, pitying,

turning always to God in repentance.

76“Abraham, turn away from this.

The command of your Lord

has come to pass, and punishment

comes for them—that

cannot be turned back.”

77When Our messengers came to Lot,

he was vexed for them,

and felt powerless to protect them,

saying, “This is a harsh day.”

78And his people came

rushing toward him, those who

before this had performed evil deeds.

He said, “My people, here

are my daughters for you to marry;

they will be a purer choice for you.°

Be mindful of God, then,

and do not disgrace me

before my guests. Is there not

a right-minded man among you?”

79They said, “You know well

we have no right to your daughters,

and you know well what we want.”

80He replied, “If only I had power

over you, or could find myself some

forceful support [to resist you].”

81The strangers said, “Lot,

we are messengers from your Lord.

They shall not reach you.

Go with your family, while

night is still here, and let

none of you look back—

except your wife—what strikes

the rest will strike her.

The appointed hour is

morning. Isn’t morning

almost here?”

82When Our command

came to pass, We turned their town

upside down, and rained upon

it stones of baked clay,

layer upon layer,

83marked as being from your Lord,°

and never far from the wrongdoers.

SECTION 8

84And to the people of Midian

We sent their brother Shuʿayb,

who said, “My people, worship God,

for you have no other god but Him.

And do not fall short in measure

and balance. I see you now

in prosperity, but I fear for you

the punishment of a day

that shall encompass all.

85“And, my people, be just

in measure and balance,

and do not withhold from people

things that are their due,

nor do evil in the land,

sowing corruption.

86“What rests with God

is better for you, if only you believe.

But I am not your keeper.”

87They said, “Shuʿayb,

do your prayers tell you

that we should abandon what

our forefathers worshipped,

or that we should not do

as we please with our wealth?

You—you who are so

forbearing and right-minded!”

88He replied, “My people,

do you see—if I have a clear sign

from my Lord, who has Himself

given me a good provision—

[should I still not guide you?]

I don’t wish to be inconsistent

by doing what I forbid you to do.

I want only your betterment,°

as far as I am able, and my success

can come only from God.

In Him I trust, and to Him I turn.

89“And, my people,

don’t let your opposing me

make you sin, else

there might fall upon you

what fell upon the people of Noah,

or of Hud, or of Salih.

Nor is the fate of Lot’s people

far from you.

90“But ask forgiveness of your Lord,

then turn to Him, for my Lord

is Ever Merciful, Most Loving.”

91They said, “Shuʿayb,

we don’t understand much

of what you say, and we see

how weak you are among us.

Were it not for your family,

we would stone you, for you

have no power over us.”

92He said, “My people,

Do you imagine that my family

has more power over you than God?

Have you put Him behind you?

My Lord Encompasses

all that you do.

93“And, my people,

do whatever you can,

and I shall do what I can.

Soon, you will know who

will meet humiliating punishment

and who is a liar. Be watchful,

for I will be watching with you.”

94And when Our command

came to pass, We saved Shuʿayb

and those who believed with him,

through Our mercy,

but the wrongdoers

were struck by a fearsome blast,

and morning found them

fallen face-down in their homes,

95as if they had never

lived and flourished there.

See, the people of Madyan

are gone, just as the people

of Thamud are gone.

SECTION 9

96And we sent Moses,

with Our signs and clear authority,

97to Pharaoh and his chiefs,

but they followed the command

of Pharaoh—a command

that was not righteous.

98He will go before his people

on the day of resurrection,

and lead them into the fire—

wretched is the end

to which they will be led.

99And they shall be shadowed

by a curse in this life

and on the day of resurrection—

wretched is the gift

they will be given.

100These are among the chronicles of cities

that We narrate to you, Prophet.

Some of them still stand, others are mown down.

101We did not wrong them,

but they wronged themselves.

The gods on whom they called

besides the One God

did not help them at all.

And when the command

of your Lord came, their gods

brought them nothing but ruin.°

102This is the punishment

of your Lord when He punishes

communities who do wrong—

His punishment is painful, severe.

103In this is a sign

for those who fear

punishment of the hereafter.

This is a day on which

humankind shall be gathered,

a day that shall be witnessed.

104And We shall delay it only

for a limited term.

105The day it comes,

no soul shall speak

except by His leave.

Among them

some shall be wretched,

others joyous.

106The wretched shall be

in fire, sighing and wailing,

107where they will reside

as long as the heavens and earth abide,

except as your Lord wishes.

Your Lord Accomplishes

all that He intends.°

108And the joyous shall be

in the garden, where they will reside

as long as the heavens and earth abide,°

except as your Lord wishes—

an enduring gift.

109So be in no doubt

about what these people worship:

they worship only what

their forefathers worshipped before.

And We shall repay their portion

in full, undiminished.

SECTION 10

110We gave the Book to Moses,

but disputes arose over it,

and if a Word from your Lord

had not gone already forth,

[to defer their judgment]

their judgment would have come.

Yet they remain in doubt over it,

mired in mistrust.

111Your Lord shall requite them

in full for their deeds.

He is Aware of all that they do.

112Stand firm, then,

as you are commanded,

you and those with you

who turn toward God,

and do not transgress.

He Sees all that you do.

113And do not lean

toward those who do wrong

for fear the fire might reach you,

for you would have no protectors

besides God, nor

would you be helped.

114Be steadfast in prayer

at the two ends of the day

and the approach of night.

Good always banishes evil—

this is a reminder

for those who remember.

115And be patient, for God

will not withhold the reward

of those who do good.

116In the generations before you,

why were there not people

with a vestige [of good sense]

to prohibit mischief on the earth—

except the few whom We saved?

But the wrongdoers indulged

in the luxuries bestowed on them

and became sinners.

117And your Lord would not

destroy communities unjustly

if their people were righteous.°

118Had your Lord wished,

He could have made humankind

one community; but [He wished

otherwise, and] they will not cease

their quarreling,

119except those to whom

your Lord has shown mercy;

and for this He created them—

that the words of your Lord

might be fulfilled,

“I will fill hell with jinn

and humankind, all together.”

120All We narrate to you, Prophet,

of the chronicles of the messengers

is to strengthen your heart;

these accounts bring truth to you,

as well as lessons, and a reminder

for those who believe.

121Tell those who don’t believe,

“Do whatever you can,

and we shall do what we can.

122“And wait, for

we too are awaiting

[judgment].”

123To God belong the unseen realms

of the heavens and the earth,

and to Him all matters are referred.

So worship Him, and trust in Him,

for your Lord is not unmindful

of what you do.

SURA 12

Joseph (Yusuf)

The third consecutive sura named after a prophet, this late Meccan sura of 111 verses is devoted in its entirety to the story of the prophet Joseph. This is the only sura consisting almost entirely of narrative. At once poetic and compelling, it has parallels but no direct link to the biblical story of Joseph.

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1Alif. Lam. Ra.°

These are the verses

of the clear Book.

2We have sent it

as an Arabic Quran,

so you will understand.

3We narrate to you

the most sublime of narratives

in this Quran

that we reveal to you.

Before this, you were unaware

[of those stories].

4When Joseph said to his father,

“My father, I saw, in a dream,

eleven stars, the sun and moon—

I saw them bowing down

before me,”

5he replied, “My son, don’t tell

your brothers about this dream,

or they might scheme against you—

Satan is an open enemy

to humankind.

6“This is how your Lord

will choose you, and teach you

the deeper meaning of events,

and perfect His favor to you

and the family of Jacob,

as He perfected it before,

to both your fathers,

Abraham and Isaac—your Lord

is All Knowing, All Wise.”

SECTION 2

7In the story of Joseph

and his brothers are signs

for those who inquire.

8His brothers said,

“Joseph and his brother

are dearer to father than us,

though we are more in number;°

our father is obviously wrong.

9“Kill Joseph or cast him out

to some far land,

then your father will

turn his attention° to you alone;

you can always be righteous

afterward.”°

10Another one of them said,

“Don’t kill Joseph; if you must

act on this, throw him down

to the well’s dark depth, so

some caravan will pick him up.”

11They implored, “Father,

why won’t you trust us with Joseph?

For we only have goodwill for him.

12“Send him with us tomorrow,

so he’ll enjoy himself and play;

we’ll be sure to guard him well.”

13Jacob said, “It grieves me

to see you take him, for I fear

the wolf might eat him

while you’re not minding him.”

14They replied, “If the wolf ate him

—despite our large number—

we would indeed be losers.”

15So they took him,

and they all agreed

to throw him down

to the well’s dark depth.

But We inspired him, “In time,

you will apprise them

of this deed of theirs

when they don’t know [you].”°

16They came to their father

in the evening, weeping.

17They said, “Father,

we went racing, and left

Joseph with our things; then

the wolf devoured him.

You won’t believe us,

even though we speak the truth.”

18They brought out his shirt, soiled

with false blood. “No!” he cried,

“Your minds have enticed

you to some misdeed.°

Yet patience is a fine thing,°

and I invoke the help of God

against what you plead.”°

19A caravan came, travelers, who

sent their water carrier to the well,

and he lowered his bucket.

“What good luck,” he cried,

“Here’s a boy!”

And they stowed him

in their merchandise—

God was Aware of what they did.

20They sold him for a low price,

a few silver coins,°

in such low regard did they hold him.

SECTION 3

21The man who bought him

—an Egyptian—told his wife,

“Make his lodging comfortable;

perhaps he’ll profit us

or we’ll adopt him as a son.”

And so We settled Joseph in the land,

that We might teach him

the deeper meaning of events.

And so God prevails

In His affairs; but most

people don’t know.

22When Joseph reached his prime,

We endowed him with

wisdom and knowledge—

this is how We reward those

who do good.

23The woman in whose house

he stayed tried to seduce him;

she secured the doors and said, “Come here!”

“God forbid!” he said. “He is my master;

he gave me a comfortable home.

Those who do wrong cannot prosper.”

24She lusted after him,

and he would have lusted after her,

had he not seen a token from his Lord;

so We kept him away from evil and indecency,

for he was one of Our chosen servants.

25They both raced for the door,

and she tore his shirt from behind;

they found her husband by the door.

“What penalty can there be,”

she cried, “for someone who

contrived harm against your wife,

but prison or torture?”

26He said, “It was she

who tried to seduce me.”

Someone from her family

proposed to use as evidence:°

“If his shirt is torn from the front,

Then she speaks the truth

and he is a liar.

27“But if his shirt is torn from behind,

then she is lying,

and he is speaking the truth.”

28So when her husband saw his shirt

torn from behind, he declared,

“This is your women’s guile,

what great guile you possess.

29“Joseph, let this pass,

and wife, beg forgiveness

for your sin; you

are most certainly at fault.”

SECTION 4

30Women gossiped in the city,

“The governor’s wife tried

to seduce her manservant

—love for him has stormed her heart—

we see her clearly straying.”

31When she heard their gossip,

she sent for them and prepared

a banquet for them.

She gave each of them a knife,

and said to Joseph,

“Come before them!”

When they saw him,

they so marveled at him,

they cut their hands, remarking,

“Glory to God! This is no mortal—

this is nothing but a noble angel!”

32She said, “This is the man

on whose account you reproved me!

Yes, I tried to seduce him

but he refrained.

Yet, if he doesn’t do what I command,

he’ll be thrown into jail, disgraced.”

33He said, “My Lord,

prison is more appealing to me

than the deeds they call me to;

unless you turn their guile

away from me,

I might succumb to them,

in ignorance.”

34Then his Lord answered him

and turned their guile

away from him.

He is All Hearing, All Knowing.

35Even after they had seen the signs

of his virtue, it seemed to them,

they should imprison him a while

[to quell gossip].

SECTION 5

36Two young men entered the prison

with him. One of them said,

“I dreamt I was pressing wine.”

The other, “I dreamt I was carrying

some bread on my head,

which birds were pecking.

Tell us the deeper meaning—

we can see you’re a virtuous person.”°

37He said, “Yes, I’ll inform you

of the dreams’ deeper meaning

even before your food comes

to sustain you. This is part

of what my Lord has taught me.

I reject the creed of a people

who don’t believe in God

and who deny the hereafter.

38“And I follow the creed

of my forefathers, Abraham,

Isaac, and Jacob; it was not for us

to join any other gods

with God. This is due

to God’s grace upon us,

and upon humankind,

though most of them

are ungrateful.

39“My fellow prisoners,

which is better: diverse lords

[differing among themselves],

or the One God, the Unique,

the Omnipotent?

40“You worship nothing

besides Him but names—invented

by you and your fathers—for which

God has revealed no sanction.

Judgment belongs

to none but God.

He commands you to worship

none but Him.

This is the right religion,

but most of humankind

do not know.

41“Fellow prisoners, one of you

will serve his lord with wine;

the other will be crucified,

and birds will peck at his head.

This is what is decreed

in the matter on which

you both inquired.”°

42And he said to the one

he thought would go free,

“Mention me to your lord.”

But Satan made him forget,

so Joseph remained in prison

for several years more.

SECTION 6

43The king said, “I saw,

in a dream, seven fat cows,

which seven lean ones devoured;

and seven ears of corn, green,

with seven others, withered.

Counselors, explain my dream to me,

if you can interpret dreams.”

44They said, “[A medley of]

confusing dreams—we are not versed

in the reading of dreams.”

45Of the two prisoners,

the one who was freed

now remembered, after all this time,

and said, “I shall disclose

its deeper meaning to you.

Dispatch me [to visit Joseph].”

46[On arriving, he asked,]

“Joseph, you who are truthful,

explain [the meaning of] this to us:

seven fat cows,

which seven lean ones devoured;

and seven ears of corn, green,

with seven others, withered—

explain, so I may return

to let the people know.”

47He replied, “You will sow,

as usual, for seven years,

and what you reap, you will store,

leaving it in the ear,

all but a little, from which

you will eat.

48“After that shall come

seven harsh years

which shall consume

what you have prepared for them,

all but a little, which

you will preserve.

49“After that shall come

a year in which the people

have abundant rain

and press grapes.”

SECTION 7

50Then the king said,

“Bring him to me.”

But when the envoy came

to Joseph, Joseph said:

“Return to your lord, and ask him

what was in the minds of the women

who cut their hands.

My Lord is Aware of their guile.”

51The king said to the women,

“What do you have to say about

your intent to seduce Joseph.”

They said, “Glory to God,

we know nothing bad about him.”

The governor’s wife cried,

“Now the truth is out:

It was I who tried to seduce him,

and he, without doubt,

is telling the truth.”

52[Joseph said,]°

“By this, my master may know

that I never betrayed him

in his absence, and that God

does not guide the guile

of those who are treacherous.

53“Nor do I absolve my own soul;

the soul is always prone to evil—

unless my Lord shows mercy.

My Lord is Forgiving,

Ever Merciful.”

54And the king said,

“Bring him to me, so I may

keep him in my personal service.”°

When he had spoken with him,

he said, “Today, we confer on you

high status and trust.”

55Joseph said, “Let me oversee

the granaries of the land—

I will be a prudent custodian.”

56So We settled Joseph

in the land, to live

wherever he wished.

We bestow Our mercy

on whom We will,

and We do not withhold the reward

of those who do good.

57But the reward of the hereafter

is better, for those who believe

and are mindful of God.

SECTION 8

58Joseph’s brothers arrived,

and came before him;

he recognized them,

but they did not know him.

59When he had provided them

with supplies, he said, “Bring to me

your other brother,° who is with

your father. Do you not see

that [I trade fairly], giving full measure,

and that I am a most gracious host?

60“But if you don’t bring him to me,

you’ll have no further measure

of corn from me, nor

shall you come near me.”

61They replied, “We’ll try to get

his father’s consent for him—

we’ll be sure to do it.”°

62Joseph told his servants,

“Place the goods they bartered

back in their saddlebags,

so they’ll recognize them

when they return to their people—

then they might come back.”

63And when they returned

to their father, they said,

“Father, we’ve been denied

any further measure of corn;

send our brother with us,

so we can procure our measure;

we’ll be sure to protect him.”

64He said, “Shall I trust you

with him as I trusted you before

with his brother?

Yet God is the Best of Protectors,

and He is the Most Merciful

of the merciful.”

65When they opened their baggage,

they found their goods

returned to them. They said,

“Father, what more can we want?

Our goods here are returned to us:

we’ll get food for our household,

we’ll protect our brother;

and we’ll get an extra camel-load

of grain, an easy load!”

66Jacob answered, “I’ll never

send him with you, until you pledge

to me—by God—that you’ll bring him

to me, unless you’re somehow ensnared.”

When they made their pledge,

he said, “God is Custodian

over all that we say.”

67He continued, “My sons,

don’t enter by one gate,

but various gates;

yet I can’t help you at all

against [the Will of] God.

Judgment is from God alone:

I trust in Him—let everyone

trust in Him.”

68And when they entered

in the way their father

had directed, this did not help them

at all against [the Will of] God,

for it was just a need in Jacob,

which he gratified.

For he possessed knowledge

that We taught him.

But most people do not know.

SECTION 9

69When they came before Joseph,

he drew his brother to him, saying,

“I am your own brother!

So don’t grieve over

what they’ve been doing.”

70And while he was

preparing their supplies,

he planted a drinking cup

in his brother’s saddlebag.

Then a town crier cried aloud,

“You, in the caravan!

You are thieves!”

71Turning toward them, they said,

“What are you missing?”

72He said, “We’re missing

the chalice of the king;

whoever brings it will get

a camel-load, I pledge.”

73They said, “By God!

You well know, we haven’t come

to make mischief in the realm,

nor are we thieves!”

74He replied,

“Then what penalty

should there be for this,

if you are lying?”

75They said, “As penalty,

the person who’s found with it

in his saddlebag should himself

be detained. That’s how

we punish wrongdoers.”

76So Joseph began with their bags,

before searching his brother’s bag.

At length, he lifted it out

of his brother’s bag.

We contrived this for Joseph,

else he could not detain his brother

within the law of the king,

without God’s will.

We raise in station whom We will;

yet above all those who know

is the All Knowing.

77They said, “If he has stolen,

well, he has a brother who stole

before him.” But Joseph said

—to himself, not disclosing

anything to them—

“You are in the worst situation,

and God knows best the truth

of what you claim.”

78They said, “Governor,

he has a father who’s very old;

so take one of us in his place;

for we can see that

you’re a virtuous person.”

79He responded, “God forbid

that we detain any but the one

caught with our property—

that would be wrong.”

SECTION 10

80Losing hope of persuading him,

they conferred in private.

The eldest spoke, “Don’t you know

your father took a pledge from you,

in the name of God—and before this,

you failed in your duty with Joseph?

I won’t leave this land until my father

gives me leave or God decrees it so—

He is the Most Excellent of Judges.

81“[As for the rest of you],

go back to your father, and say,

‘Father of ours, your son

has been stealing—we can tell you

only we what we witnessed;

we could not prevent

something so unforeseen.

82“ ‘Ask anyone in the town

where we were,

and the caravan we came with—

we’re telling the truth.’ ”

83[When they said this

to their father,] Jacob replied,

“No, your minds have enticed you

to some misdeed.

But patience is a fine thing;

perhaps God will bring them

all back to me. For He is

the Knowing, the Wise.”

84And he turned away

from them, and sighed:

“How great is my grief

over Joseph!” His eyes

grew white in sorrow,

and he grieved inside.

85They said, “By God,

will you not cease

to remember Joseph

until you reach

the fatal edge of disease,

or pass away?”

86He said, “I complain

only to God of my grief,

my sorrow,

and I know from God

what you do not know.

87“My sons, go to inquire

after Joseph and his brother,

and don’t despair of God’s grace.

None but disbelievers

despair of God’s grace.”

88When they came before Joseph,

they entreated, “Governor,

our family was struck by adversity.

We bring but meager wares,

yet remit a full measure to us,

show charity to us, for God

rewards those who are charitable.”

89He asked, “Do you know

what you did with Joseph

and his brother,

in your ignorance?”

90They remarked,

“You are Joseph, really?”

“I am Joseph, and

this is my brother:

God has been Gracious to us.

He does not overlook

the reward of those

who are pious and patient,

those who do good.”

91They said, “By God!

God has favored you over us,

and we are in the wrong.”

92He said, “Let no reproach

weigh upon you this day.

May God forgive you,

for He is the Most Merciful

of the merciful.

93“Go, take this shirt of mine,

and throw it over my father’s face:

his eyes will light up with sight—

then come back with

your entire family.”

SECTION 11

94After the caravan left,

their father said, “I detect

the scent of Joseph—though you

might think me senile.”

95[Those with him] said, “By God,

you still harbor your old delusion.”

96Then the person who came

with good news threw the shirt

over Jacob’s face, and he regained

his vision. He proclaimed,

“Did I not say to you

that I know from God

what you do not know?”

97They implored, “Father,

ask forgiveness for our sins,

for we were at fault.”

98He replied, “Soon I shall ask

my Lord to forgive you,

for He is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.”

99When they came before Joseph,

he embraced his parents, saying,

“Enter into Egypt, in safety,

if this is the will of God.”

100And he raised his parents,

both, on the throne, and

all of them fell down,

bowing before him.

“My dear father, here is

the deeper meaning

of my dream of long ago:

My Lord has brought it to pass.

He was good to me

when He brought me

out of prison

and brought you

out of the desert,

after Satan had sown

discord between me

and my brothers.

My Lord is Subtle

in all that He wills.

He is All Knowing, All Wise.

101“My Lord, you have given me

authority, and you have taught me

the deeper meaning of events.

Maker of the heavens and earth,

You are my Protector, in this world

and the hereafter. Receive me,

as one who submits to Your will,

and unite me with the righteous.”

102This is from the chronicles

of the unseen, which we reveal

to you.° You, Prophet, were not

with them when they all concocted

their [abominable] plot.

103Most of humankind

will not believe,

however ardently you strive.

104And you do not seek reward

from them for this. This is no less

than a reminder to all the worlds.

SECTION 12

105And how many signs

in the heavens and earth

do they pass by,

turning away.

106Most of them don’t believe in God

without joining other gods with Him.

107Do they feel safe, then,

from the enveloping calamity

of God’s punishment, or

from the sudden descending

of the hour, while they

are unaware?

108Say, “This is my way;

I call to God, with clear vision,

I, and whoever follows me.

Glory be to God, that I am

not one of those who join

other gods with Him.”

109And We sent before you

only men whom we inspired,

from the people of the cities.

Did they not travel the earth,

and behold the fate

of those before them?

The home of the hereafter

is finer for those who are

mindful of God.

Will you not, then, use reason?

110When messengers despaired,

thinking they had been denied,

Our help came to them;

We saved whom We will.

But Our wrath will never be

turned from a wicked people.

111In their stories, there is

a lesson for people of insight.

This is not an invented tale,

but it confirms what came before,

an exposition of all things,

a guide and a mercy

for people who believe.

SURA 13

Thunder (Al-Raʿd)

Uncertain in its dating, but probably late Meccan, with some additions from the Medinan period, this sura takes its name from v. 13. “Thunder” focuses on divine guidance, consequential for those who accept but also for those who deny it. Confirmation of prophetic agency recurs through its 43 verses, with Muhammad reassured that the Book common to all prophets was revealed to him in Arabic (v. 37).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1Alif. Lam. Mim. Ra.°

These are the verses of the Book.

What was revealed to you

from your Lord is truth,

but most people don’t believe.

2It is God who raised up the heavens

with no visible pillars;

then He set Himself upon the throne.

He controlled the sun and moon, each

sailing in its orbit for a certain term.

He orders all phenomena,

and explains the signs,

that you might be certain

of meeting your Lord.

3It is He who spread out the earth,

set upon it sturdy mountains and rivers,

created fruit of every kind, in pairs.

He veils the day with night. In all this

are signs for people who think.

4In the earth are neighboring tracts

and gardens of vineyards, with

sown fields, as well as date palms,

some with clusters, some without,

all watered by the same rain,

yet We make some finer to taste

than others. In all this

are signs for people who reason.

5Prophet, if you’re amazed at all,

you’ll be amazed by what they say,

“After we are dust, shall we be

raised again as a new creation?”

These are the people

who deny their Lord;

they shall bear iron collars

around their necks;

they shall be inmates

of the fire—forever.

6They challenge you

to bring on their punishment,

rather than any reward, even though

many examples of punishment

have passed before them.

Your Lord is Full of Forgiveness

toward people, despite their wrongs.

Yet God is Severe in Requital.

7And those who disbelieve ask,

“Why hasn’t a sign been sent down

to him from his Lord?”

You are only here to warn,

and every people has a guide.

SECTION 2

8God knows what each female bears,

and how much their womb

contracts or expands; with Him,

all things exist in due proportion.

9Knowing the unseen and the seen;

He is Great, Most Exalted.

10It is the same whether any of you

speaks secretly or openly, whether

they hide beneath the cover of night

or walk about freely during the day.

11Each person has a train of angels

before them and behind them,

guarding them by God’s command.

God never changes a people’s state

until they change what is in themselves.

When God intends ill for a people,

there is no turning it back.

Besides Him, they have no protector.

12It is He who shows you

the lightning, arousing fear and hope,

and He raises the clouds,

heavy with rain.

13The thunder resounds in His praise,

as do the angels, in awe of Him;

and He sends the thunderbolts

to strike whom He will.

Yet still they dispute about God—

He Who is Supreme in Strategy.

14True prayer is to Him alone.

As for those who pray to others

besides Him, those gods will not

answer them at all, any more than

someone stretching out his hand

toward water to make it reach

his mouth: it will never get there.

The prayer of disbelievers

is nothing but delusion.°

15All beings in the heavens and earth

bow down to God, willing or unwilling,

as do their shadows,

morning and evening.

16Ask, Prophet, “Who is the Lord

of the heavens and the earth?”

Answer, “God.”

Ask, “Do you take other gods

than Him as protectors—who can

neither profit nor harm even

themselves?”

And ask, “Are the blind

and the seeing alike?

Or, is darkness the same as light?”

Do they join other gods with God

who have created, in their eyes,

a creation like His? Then say,

“God is Creator of all things—

He is the One, Omnipotent.”

17He sends down water from the sky,

flowing through valleys,

each to its own depth, and the torrents

bear away the rising foam,

just as foam erupts when heating ore

to forge ornaments and utensils.

This is how God exhibits

truth and falsehood:

the froth passes away, worthless,

but what profits humankind

remains in the earth.

This is how God coins parables.

18Those who respond to their Lord

shall have all that is good; but those

who don’t respond—they would give

as ransom all that is in the earth, and

as much more, if they owned it—

theirs shall be a terrible reckoning,

and their home shall be hell,

a wretched place of rest.

SECTION 3

19Is someone who knows the truth

of your Lord’s revelation to you

the same as someone who is blind?

Only those with insight take heed,

20those who fulfill their trust

with God, and do not fail

in their pledge,

21those who join together what

God has commanded to be joined,

those who fear their Lord,

and hold in awe

the terrible reckoning;

22and those who are patient,

seeking the Face of their Lord,

who are steadfast in prayer,

who spend in charity, both

secretly and openly,

from what We have given them,

who repel evil with good.

Theirs, in the end, shall be

the everlasting home,

23eternal gardens, which they

shall enter, along with the righteous

among their ancestors, spouses,

and descendants; the angels

shall greet them at every gate:

24“Peace be with you,

for you showed patience.

How excellent is your

everlasting home!”

25But those who break God’s trust

after giving their pledge,

and who sever what God

commanded to be joined,

and who sow corruption

on the earth—they shall be cursed,

and theirs shall be a wretched home.

26God enlarges or constricts

His provision for whom He will.

People delight in the life of the world;

yet this life is but a fleeting fancy

when set beside the hereafter.

SECTION 4

27Unbelievers say, “Why is no sign

sent down to him from his Lord?”

Say, “God lets stray whom He will,

and He guides to Himself those

who turn to Him in repentance,

28“those who believe,

whose hearts find rest

in remembrance of God—

it is only in remembering God

that hearts find rest;

29“those who believe

and do good deeds

shall have bliss,

and will return

to a beautiful place.”

30We have sent you to a people

—before whom many peoples

passed away—that you might recite

to them what We inspired in you;

but they denied the All Merciful.

Say, “He is my Lord—

there is no god but Him.

In Him I trust, and to Him I return.”

31If there were a Quran by which

mountains could be moved,

or the earth cleaved apart,

or the dead made to speak,

[this would be it].

God’s command rules in all things.

Don’t the believers realize

that God could have guided

all humankind, had He willed?

As for the unbelievers,

calamity will never cease

to strike them for their deeds,

or lie close to their homes,

God’s promise is fulfilled—

God never fails in His promise.

SECTION 5

32Messengers before you, Prophet,

were mocked, though I gave respite

to the unbelievers. Finally,

I seized them—

how Severe was My Requital!

33Is He Who stands over

every soul, noting its deeds

[like the other gods they worship]?

Yet they join other gods with God.

Say, “Name them,” or “Can you

inform Him of something

He does not know on earth?

Or is this a mere show of words?”

The schemes of the unbelievers

are made to seem pleasing to them,

and they are barred from the path.

And those whom God leaves to stray

shall have no guide.

34They shall face torment

in the life of this world;

but harsher is the torment

of the hereafter.

And they shall have none

to defend them against God.

35This is the parable of the garden

—promised to those mindful of God—

rivers flow beneath it,

and its food is eternal,

as is its shade. This is the fate

of those mindful of God; the fate

of disbelievers is fire.

36Those to whom We gave the Book

rejoice in what is revealed to you;

but some factions deny part of it.

Say, “I was commanded only

to worship God, and not to join

other gods with Him. To Him I call,

and to Him is my return.”

37We revealed the Quran to render

judgment in the Arabic tongue;

were you to follow their desires, after

the knowledge that has come to you,

there would be none to protect you

against God, or defend you.

SECTION 6

38We sent messengers before you,

and gave them wives and children.

But it was not for any messenger

to bring a sign without God’s leave.

There has been a Book for every age.°

39God annuls or confirms

what He will; and with Him

is the origin of the Book.

40Whether We show you part

of the punishment We promised them

or cause you to die beforehand,

your part is to convey the message—

Ours is the reckoning.

41Don’t they see how We came

to scale back the borders

of their land? When God judges,

none can undo His judgment;

and He is Swift in Reckoning.

42Those before them also schemed;

but the ultimate scheme is God’s.

He knows what each soul earns;

and the unbelievers shall soon know

who finally has the [best] home.

43The unbelievers say,

“You are no messenger.”

Say, “God suffices as a Witness

between me and you—and those

with knowledge of the Book.”

SURA 14

Abraham (Ibrahim)

Among the last of the Meccan revelations, this sura is named after its central focus, the “Prayer of Abraham” (vv. 35–41). It totals 52 verses, opening with reference to Moses along with Noah, ʿAd and Thamud, then ending with the threat of torment to wrongdoers (vv. 42–52).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1Alif. Lam. Ra.°

This is a Book We revealed to you,

that you might bring humankind

from darkness into light,

with their Lord’s assent,

to the path of the Almighty,

the Praiseworthy—

2God, to Whom belongs

all that is in the heavens and earth.

The unbelievers shall know

the sorrow of severe torment°—

3those who prefer the life

of this world to the hereafter,

and bar people from God’s path,

seeking to make it crooked—

they have gone far astray.

4We never sent a messenger

who did not speak the language

of his people, to make things

clear to them. But God

leaves to stray whom He will

and guides whom He will,

for He is Almighty, All Wise.

5We sent Moses with Our signs,

saying, “Bring out your people

from darkness into light, and

remind them of the days of God.”

In this are signs for all

who are patient and grateful.

6Then Moses said to his people,

“Remember God’s favor to you when

He saved you from Pharaoh’s people,

who inflicted dire torments on you,

killing your sons, and sparing

only your women—a terrible trial

from your Lord.”

SECTION 2

7When your Lord declared,

“If you are thankful,

I will grant you increase,

but if you are ungrateful,

My punishment will be severe”—

8Moses said, “If you are ungrateful,

you and all those on the earth,

know that God is Self-Sufficient,

Praiseworthy.”

9Haven’t you heard the story

of those who came before you,

the people of Noah, ʿAd, and Thamud,°

and those who came after them?

None but God knows about them all.

Messengers came to them with clear proofs,

But, biting their hands [out of spite],°

they cried, “We don’t believe in the message

sent with you, and we have grave doubts

about what you’re calling us to do.”

10Their messengers asked,

“Can there be doubt about God,

Creator of the heavens and the earth?

He calls you, that He might

forgive you for your sins, and

give you respite for a decreed time.”

They answered, “You’re just a human,

like us—you want to divert us from

what our fathers worshipped—

bring us some clear sanction for this.”

11Their messengers answered,

“Yes, we’re just humans, like you;

but God grants His grace

to whom He will of His servants.

And we can’t bring you sanction

without His leave—

so let all who believe trust in God.

12“Why should we not trust in God

Who guided us to this path of ours?

And we will bear with patience

whatever harm you inflict on us—

So let all who trust, trust in God.”°

SECTION 3

13Unbelievers told their messengers,

“Be sure that we’ll drive you

from our land, if you don’t return

to our creed.” But their Lord

revealed to the messengers,

“Be sure that We

will destroy the wrongdoers.

14“And We’ll leave you [believers]

living in the land after them.

This is the reward for those

who fear they will stand before Me,

and those who fear My threat.”

15° [The messengers]

prayed for victory,° and

every stubborn tyrant came to grief.

16Ahead of [each of them] lies hell,

and they will drink putrid water.°

17They will try to gulp it down

but shall scarcely swallow it.

Death will close in on them

from every side, though

they will not die—still ahead of them

lies severe torment.

18Here is a parable

of those who deny their Lord:

their deeds are ashes that the wind

blows wildly on a stormy day;

they have no power at all

over anything they’ve gained—

this is to go far astray.

19Do you not see that God

created the heavens and the earth

with true purpose?° If He wishes,

He can remove you and replace

you with a new creation.

20This would hardly be

a huge task for God.

21They will all be exposed together

before God; then the weak will say

to those who were in power,

“We followed you, but can you now

help us against God’s punishment

in any way?”

They’ll reply, “Had God guided us,

we would have guided you.”

It’s the same now, whether we rage

or endure with patience—

we have no escape.”

SECTION 4

22When all is decided, Satan will say,

“God made you a promise that was true;

I too made a promise, but I failed you.

I had no authority over you; all I could do

was to call you—yet you responded to me.

So don’t blame me—blame yourselves.

I can’t help you, nor can you help me.

In fact, I denounce how you partnered me

with God before. The wrongdoers

shall face a painful punishment.”

23Those who believed

and did good deeds

will be ushered into gardens,

beneath which rivers flow,

to live there forever,

by their Lord’s leave.

There, they’ll be greeted

with “Peace.”

24Do you not see how God

coins a parable: a good word

is like a good tree, with roots

anchored firm, while its branches

soar into the sky?

25It yields its fruit in every season

by its Lord’s leave. In this way

God coins parables for humankind,

that they might be reminded.

26And a bad word

is like a bad tree—

uprooted from the face

of the earth, unstable.

27God will anchor those who believe

with the Word that stands firm,

in this worldly life and the hereafter.

But He will let the wrongdoers stray.

God does all that He will.

SECTION 5

28Prophet, do you not see those

who bartered God’s favor for disbelief,

and brought their people to settle

in the house of perdition,

29hell, where they will burn—

an evil home?

30And they have set up idols

as equal to God, to mislead people

from His path.

Say, “Enjoy [your time here]

but your path leads to the fire.”

31Tell My believing servants

to be steadfast in prayer,

and to spend in charity

—both secretly and openly—

from what We have given them,

before the coming of a day that

brooks neither trade nor friendship.

32It is God Who created

the heavens and the earth,

Who sends down rain from the sky,

bringing forth fruits to sustain you.

He subdued to your use

the ships° that sail the ocean

by His command, and subdued

to you the rivers too.

33And He subdued to your use

the sun and moon, both sailing

steadfast in their orbits;

and He subdued to you

both night and day.

34And He has given you

all that you asked of Him.

If you tried to count the favors

of God, you could never

number them. Humankind

is truly unjust, ungrateful.

SECTION 6

35Remember when Abraham said,

“My Lord, make this town secure,

and keep me and my sons

from worshipping idols.

36“My Lord, those idols

have led many people astray.

Whoever follows me is with me;

as for those who disobey me—

You are Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

37“Our Lord, I have settled some

of my offspring in an arid valley,

near your sacred house, so that

they might be steadfast in prayer, our Lord.

So, turn people’s hearts toward them,

and sustain them with fruit, so that

they might be grateful.

38“Our Lord, you know

what we conceal and what we reveal,

for nothing whatsoever

on earth or in heaven

is hidden from God.

39“All praise be to God, Who granted

Ishmael and Isaac to me in my old age—

My Lord is the One Who Hears prayer.°

40“My Lord, make me steadfast

in prayer, and my offspring too—

our Lord, accept my prayer.

41“Our Lord, grant forgiveness

to me, my parents, and the believers

on the day the reckoning comes.”

SECTION 7

42Do not think, Prophet, that God

ignores the deeds of those who do wrong;

He merely grants them respite

till a day when their eyes

will stare [in horror],

43racing forward, their heads

craned back, their gaze fixed rigid,°

and their hearts void.

44So warn the people of a day

when Our torment will fall on them.

Then, the wrongdoers will say,

“Our Lord, grant us respite,

if only for a short while: we’ll

answer your call, and we’ll follow

the messengers.” They will be told,

“But didn’t you always swear

that your [power] would never fade?

45“And you lived in the houses

of those who wronged themselves,

though you were clearly shown

how We dealt with them—

Did We not give examples for you?”

46Yes, they contrived their plot,

but God has the measure of their plot—

even if their plot could move mountains.

47So, Prophet, do not think that God

will fail in His promise to His messengers;

God is Almighty, Lord of Requital.

48One day, when this earth

becomes another earth,

this heaven, another heaven,

with people all exposed before God,

the One, Omnipotent,

49you, Prophet, will see the sinners

bound together in chains,

50in garments of tar, their faces

covered by fire—

51so that God might reward

each soul for what it has reaped—

God is Swift in Reckoning.

52Here is a message for humankind,

to be warned by it, and to know

that He is the One God, so those

with insight might be reminded.

SURA 15

The Rocky Plain (Al-Hijr)

From the middle Meccan period, this sura of 99 short verses takes its name from a place just north of Medina, where the Thamud tribe lived (vv. 80–84). Several passages extol nature and creation but also warn of punishment (vv. 49–84). Among its unusual features is a notable reference to the initial sura, Sura al-Fatiha, as “the seven much-recited verses” (v. 87).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1Alif. Lam. Ra.°

These are the verses of the Book,

a clear Quran.

2Those who disbelieve may soon wish

they had yielded to God’s will.

3Leave them to eat

and please themselves,

beguiled by hope; soon

they will come to know.

4We never destroy any town

without decreeing for it a fixed term.°

5No community can hasten

its term or delay it.

6They scoff, “You—the one

this message is revealed to—

you are truly mad.°

7“Why don’t you bring the angels

to us, if you’re speaking the truth?”

8We send down the angels

only to bring the truth—and then

there would be no reprieve

[for those who disbelieve].

9It is We who revealed the message,

and it is We Who watch over it.

10We sent messengers before you

to former communities,

11but they mocked every messenger

who came to them.°

12And so We let it slip

into the hearts of sinners

13that they would deny the message—

the practice of former peoples.°

14And even if We opened for them

a gate to heaven, and they rose

through it, higher still and higher,

15they would only say, “Our eyes

are dazzled—yes, we’re bewitched.”

SECTION 2

16We have laid stars out in the sky

in their ordered constellations,

sublime to all who gaze on them,

17and We guard them against

every accursed devil.°

18Though any devil who eavesdrops

shall be chased by a luminous flame.°

19And We have laid out the earth,

set sturdy mountains upon it,

and brought forth on it

all things in due proportion.

20And We placed in it provision

for you and also for those

outside your care.

21The treasures of all things

rest with Us, and We send them

down only in due measure.

22We send the fructifying winds, and

water from the sky for you to drink,

though you cannot store it.

23It is We who give life,

and We who bring death, and We

shall inherit all things.

24We know those who go first among you

and We know those who lag behind.

25It is your Lord who will

gather them together; He

is the All Wise, All Knowing.

SECTION 3

26We created humankind

from dried clay,

molded from dark mud.

27and before that We created jinn

from a scorching fire.

28Your Lord said to the angels,

“I shall create a human from dried clay,

molded from dark mud.”

29“Once I have proportioned him,

and breathed My spirit into him—

fall down and bow before him.”°

30So the angels all bowed down,

31except Iblis, who refused to bow

with the others.

32God demanded, “Iblis, why

did you not bow with the others?”

33Iblis retorted, “I will not bow

to a human, whom you created from

dried clay, molded from dark mud.”

34God answered, “Go out, then,

from here, for you are surely cursed.

35“And the curse shall stay with you

until the day of reckoning.”

36Iblis implored, “My Lord,

grant me respite, till the day when

all are raised up from the dead.”

37“You shall have respite,” said God,

38“until the appointed day.”

39Iblis said, “My Lord,

because you have left me to stray,

I will entice them on the earth,

and lead them astray—all,

40“except those among your servants

who are chosen.”

41God affirmed,

“This is a straight path to Me

[for those who are chosen].

42“You shall have no authority

over My servants, except those

who err, who choose to follow you.”

43And hell is the end

promised for all of them.

44It has seven gates,

each assigned its share of them.

SECTION 4

45Those who fear God shall be

amid gardens and fountains;

46[They shall hear the greeting],

“Enter in peace and safety.”

47And We will purge their hearts

of rancor, and they will be kin,°

arrayed on couches, face-to-face.

48No fatigue shall reach them there,

nor will they be made to leave.

49Let My servants know that I am

Forgiving, Ever Merciful,

50and that My punishment

is a most painful punishment.

51And let them know about

the guests of Abraham.

52When they came to him,

saying, “Peace,” he said,

“We’re afraid of you.”

53They said, “Don’t be afraid;

we bring you good news—of a son,

to be endowed with knowledge.”

54He answered, “Do you bring

such good news, when old age

is already upon me?

What kind of news is this?”°

55They said, “We bring you

good news that is true,

so don’t despair.”

56Abraham replied,

“Who but those who’ve gone astray

despair of their Lord’s mercy?”

57Then he inquired,

“So, what is your mission,

you messengers?”

58They said, “We have been sent

to a people who are sinful,

59“except the family of Lot,

of whom We shall save all

60“but his wife. We decreed

that she would be with those

who stayed behind.”

SECTION 5

61When the messengers came

to the family of Lot,

62he said, “You people

are unknown to us.”

63They responded, “True,

but We have brought you

the [very punishment

the sinners] doubted.

64“We have brought you the truth,

and we are being truthful.

65“So, leave, with your family,

in the dead of night,

and stay behind them,

and let none of you look back,

but keep going to where

you are commanded.”

66And We made known to him

Our decree: the last of those people

would be wiped out by morning.

67The people of the town

came by, exulting.°

68Lot cautioned them,

“These people are my guests,

so don’t shame me.

69“Be mindful of God,

and don’t disgrace me.”

70The townspeople said,

“Didn’t we forbid you from hosting

or protecting anyone?”°

71He said, “Here are my daughters,

if you would behave [acceptably].”°

72By your very life, Prophet,

they stumbled blindly in their stupor.

73But the thunderous blast

struck them at dawn,

74and We turned [their town]

upside down, and rained upon them

stones of hardened clay.

75In this are signs

for the discerning.

76[And its ruins haunt]

a road that is still there.

77In this is a sign

for those who believe.

78And the forest dwellers

were also wrongdoers,°

79We requited them also.

Both lie on an open road,

for all to see.

SECTION 6

80The natives of al-Hijr°

also denied the messengers.

81We sent them Our signs,

but they always turned

away from them.

82They carved their houses

out of the mountains—

seeming secure.

83But the thunderous blast

shook them in the morning,

84And the deeds they had done

were of no help to them.

85We did not create the heavens

and the earth, and all between them,

without true purpose.

And the hour is surely coming,

so show them, Prophet,

gracious forbearance.

86For your Lord is the Creator,

the All Knowing.

87We have given you

the seven much-recited verses

and the exalted Quran.°

88Don’t strain both your eyes

gazing at what We have given

some people to enjoy [while it lasts];

nor grieve over them;

but lower your wing° [in mercy]

over the believers,

89and say, “I am someone

who gives clear warning.”

90Just as We sent warning

to those who sought division,

91dividing the Quran

into discrete segments.

92By your Lord, We shall

question them all

93for their deeds.

94So proclaim openly what you

have been commanded to say,

and turn away from those

who join other gods with God.

95We offer ample defense for you

against those who mock,

96those who devise, besides God,

some other god—soon

they will come to know.

97We well know how your heart

is stressed by what they say.

98So glorify your Lord with praise,

and join those who bow low to Him.

99And worship your Lord until

[death in its] certainty comes to you.°

SURA 16

The Bee (Al-Nahl)

From the late Meccan period, though the final verses may be Medinan, this sura of 128 verses lauds creation from heavens and earth to humankind and cattle, extending to oceans, mountains, and stars (vv. 3–16). Simultaneously it warns of a painful punishment for disbelievers and promises an eternal reward for believers (vv. 106–28). The title comes from a tribute to the bee, the epitome of divine disclosure through nature, in vv. 68–69.

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1What God has decreed is coming,

so do not seek to hasten it.

Glory be to Him, exalted above

the gods they join with Him.

2He sends down the angels, inspired

by His command,° to whichever

of His servants He will, “Warn them:

There is no god but Me, so fear Me.”

3He created the heavens and earth

with true purpose; He is exalted above

the gods they join with Him.

4He created human beings

from a tiny globule—yet see

how openly defiant they are!

5He created cattle for you,

giving you warmth and other uses;

you consume them for food,

6and you sense a beauty in them

when you bring them home [at dusk]

and herd them to pasture [at dawn].

7And they bear your loads to lands

you could not reach without hardship.

Your Lord is Most Kind, Ever Merciful.

8And He gave you horses,

mules, and donkeys, to ride

as well as for their beauty,°

and He created other things

beyond your knowledge.

9God shows the right path,

but some paths lead away from this.

Had He wished,

He would have guided you all.

SECTION 2

10It is He who sends down water

from the sky, which you drink,

which also brings greenery

for your livestock to graze.°

11With it He brings forth for you

corn, olives, date palms, and vines,

and all variety of fruit. In this

is a sign for those who think.

12And He subdues to your use

night and day, sun and moon.

And the constellations are subdued

by His command. In this

is a sign for those who reason.

13And He has multiplied

all things for you on earth,

in varying colors. In this

is a sign for those who take heed.

14It is He Who subdued the sea

so you might consume its fish, all fresh,

and bring up from its depth ornaments

to wear. And you gaze upon the ships

that plow its waves so you might

seek the bounty of God, and give thanks.

15And He has cast upon the earth

sturdy mountains, to stop it quaking

beneath you; and rivers and paths

so you might be guided,

16as well as landmarks.

By the stars too, people are guided.

17Is One who creates the same

as one who cannot create?

Won’t you, then, take heed?

18If you tried to count

the favors of God, you could

never number them. God

is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

19And God knows

what you conceal

and what you reveal.

20Those on whom they call

besides God can create nothing;

they themselves are created—

21dead, without any life;

nor can they even sense

when they might be resurrected.

SECTION 3

22Your God is One God. But those

who don’t believe in the hereafter

refuse the truth in their hearts,

and they are full of pride.

23No doubt, God knows

what they conceal

and what they reveal,

and He dislikes those

who are full of pride.

24When they are asked,

“What has your Lord revealed?”

they scoff in reply,

“Tales of the ancients.”

25So let them bear, on the day

of resurrection, the full weight

of their own burdens, as well as

the burdens of those they led astray

—without any knowledge—

a harrowing burden to bear.°

SECTION 4

26Those before them also schemed,

but God assailed the very foundations

of their building; the roof crashed

down upon them, and His wrath

struck them from places

they could not conceive.

27Then, on the day of resurrection,

He will shame them, saying,

“Where are My partners—the gods

for whose sake you opposed [Me]?”

Those with knowledge will say,

“Today, shame and misery

shall shroud the disbelievers.”

28Those whose souls the angels

take while wronging themselves

will profess submission:

“We didn’t do any evil.”

They will be answered,

“But you did—God Knows well

all that you have done.

29“Enter, then, the gates of hell,

to stay there forever—an evil home

for those who were proud.”

30When those who are

mindful of God are asked,

“What has your Lord revealed?”

they will answer, “All that is good.”

Those who do good will reap good

in this world, yet the home

of the hereafter will be better still.

Excellent is the home of those

who are mindful of God.

31They shall enter eternal gardens,

beneath which rivers flow. There

they shall have all that they desire—

this is how God rewards those

who are mindful of Him.

32Those whose souls the angels

take while in a state of goodness—

the angels will say to them,

“Peace be with you; enter the garden,

a reward for all that you did.”

33Are the unbelievers waiting

for the angels to come to them, or for

your Lord to command [their doom]?

This is what those before them did—

it is not God who wrongs them

but they who wrong themselves.

34They were struck by the evil

of their own deeds, and besieged

by what they used to mock.

SECTION 5

35The polytheists say,

“If God had wished it,

We would have worshipped nothing

besides Him, we and our ancestors;

and would have forbidden nothing

without his leave.” This is what

those before them did.

What is the task of the messengers

but to convey the message clearly?

36We sent messengers

to every people, saying,

“Worship the One God,

and shun the false gods.”

And among them were some

that God guided, and some

deserving to go astray.

Travel, then, across the earth

and observe the fate

of those who denied.

37Even if you want them

to be guided, God will not guide

those who mislead others,

and there will be none to help them.

38They swear their strongest oaths

by God, that God won’t raise the dead

—yes, He will; His promise is true,

but most people don’t know it—

39to make clear to them the things

they dispute, and to make unbelievers

realize they were lying.

40When We intend something,

We merely say, “Be!”—and it is!

SECTION 6

41To those who were wronged and

left their homes in God’s cause,

We’ll give a good home in this world;

yet the reward of the hereafter

is greater—if only they knew.

42They are the ones who practice

patience, and trust in their Lord.

43And We only sent before you

men whom We inspired

—ask those who possess the message

if you yourselves don’t know—

44with clear signs and scriptures;

and We revealed the message to you,

Prophet, for you to explain to people

what We sent down to them

so they might reflect.

45Can those who devise

wicked schemes feel sure

that God won’t make the earth

swallow them up, or that His wrath

won’t strike them from places

they cannot conceive,

46or take them suddenly

as they come and go

—for they cannot thwart God—

47or take them by slow attrition?

Yet your Lord is Most Kind,

Ever Merciful.

48Don’t they see the things

that God created—

how their very shadows incline

to right and left,

bowing humbly before God?

49All in the heavens and all on earth

bow to God, living creatures

and the angels—

for they are not proud.

50They all fear their Lord, Who

is high above them, and they do

as they are commanded.

SECTION 7

51God has said,

“Do not worship two gods—

He is the One, the only God,

so fear Me alone.”

52To Him belongs all

that is in the heavens and earth;

to Him everlasting worship is due.

Why would you fear any but God?

53Whatever blessings you have

are from God alone,

and when misfortune strikes you,

you cry to Him alone for help.

54Yet, when He relieves your misfortune,

some of you join other gods with God,

55ungrateful for what He has given.

Enjoy your brief time, for soon

you shall come to know.

56And they consecrate a portion

of what We have given them

to idols, things they don’t know.

By God, you will be asked

about the things you fabricated.

57They ascribe daughters to God

—may He be glorified—

but for themselves they want sons.°

58When any of them gets news

of the birth of a girl, his face darkens

as he fills with inward gloom.

59Out of shame, he hides himself

away from people,

on account of his bad news.

Should he keep her, to his ignominy,

or bury her alive in the sand?°

How wicked is their judgment.

60Those who don’t believe

in the hereafter are an allegory

of evil, whereas God is an allegory

of what is Most High,°

for He is Almighty, All Wise.

SECTION 8

61If God took people to task

for their wrongs, He would leave

not one living creature on earth, but

he reprieves them for a given term.

Once that term ends,

they cannot delay it, nor hasten it—

not by one hour.

62They ascribe to God

what they themselves dislike,°

and their tongues mouth the lie

that the best things° are for them.

Without doubt, the fire is for them—

in fact, they’ll be hurried there.

63By God, We sent messengers to peoples

before you, but Satan made

their [wicked] deeds seem fair to them;

he is still their ally today—

but they shall face a painful torment.

64We revealed the Book to you

only for you to clarify for them

the things they dispute, and as a guide

and mercy to people who believe.

65And God sends down rain

from the sky, bringing life

to the dead earth.° In this

is a sign for those who hear.

SECTION 9

66In the uses of cattle, too,

there is a precept for you:

We give you drink from their bellies

—between excrement and blood—

pure milk, sweet to those who drink.

67And from the fruit of date palm

and vine, you harvest wine

as well as wholesome food. In this

is a sign for those who reason.

68Your Lord inspired the bee,

“Build your hives in the hills,

in trees, and in human dwellings.

69“So eat of all kinds of fruits,

and follow the paths made smooth

by your Lord.” From their bellies

issues a drink of varying hues,

able to heal people. In this

is a sign for those who think.

70It is God Who created you

and will cause you to die,

making some of you regress

to an abject state of old age,

knowing nothing—after knowing.

God is All Knowing, All Powerful.

SECTION 10

71God has favored some of you

with greater provision than others.

Those with more would not reallocate

their share to their slaves,

so as to make them equal. Will they

deny, then, the blessings of God?

72God has made spouses for you,

from yourselves, and from them, children

and grandchildren,

and He has provided you

with all that is good.

Would they still believe in falsehood

and deny the blessings of God?

73And would they worship others

instead of God—who have no power

to provide them with anything

from the heavens or the earth,

and are incapable?

74Do not coin any likeness of God:

God has Knowledge—you do not.°

75God coins a parable: a slave,

who is owned, with no power

over anything; and a man to whom

We have given ample provision,

who spends in charity both secretly

and openly. How can these be equal?

All praise be to God.

Yet most of them do not know.

76God coins a parable of two men:

one dumb, with no power to do

anything, is a burden to his keeper—

however he directs him,

he brings no good. Is he

equal to one who enjoins justice

and is set on a straight path?

SECTION 11

77To God belongs all that is unseen

in the heavens and the earth.

The hour of judgment° will come

like the blinking of an eye—

or more swiftly.

God has Power over all things.

78It is God Who brought you

from the wombs of your mothers,

knowing nothing; and He gave you

hearing, and sight, and hearts,

that you might give thanks.

79Do they not see the birds,

poised in their skyward flight?

Nothing bears them up except God.

In this are signs

for people who believe.

80It is God Who made your homes

a place of rest, and made for you,

from the skins of animals, tents

that you find light to bear

when you travel and make camp;

and from their wool, fur, and hair,

you derive furnishings

and supplies to last a while.

81It is God Who gave you shade,

among the things He created,

and He gave you shelters

in the mountains, and clothes

to shield you from the heat,

as well as armor to shield you

in your warfare. In these ways,

He perfects His favor to you,

that you might submit to His will.

82But if they turn away,

your task is only to convey

the message clearly.°

83They recognize God’s favors yet

deny them, for most of them

are ungrateful.

SECTION 12

84One day We shall raise up

a witness among every people—then

the unbelievers won’t be allowed

to make excuses or make amends.

85When the wrongdoers see

the punishment,

it will not be lightened for them,

nor will they be shown respite.

86When the polytheists see the gods

they joined with God, they’ll say,

“Our Lord, these are the gods

we invoked instead of You.”

The gods will throw their words

back at them, “You are liars.”

87On that day, they shall willingly

submit to God, and the false gods

they invented will abandon them.

88We shall heap torment

on torment upon those who

disbelieved and barred people

from the path of God,

for their breeding of mischief.

89One day We shall raise up within

every people a witness against them,°

and We shall bring you, Prophet,

as a witness against these people.

We have revealed to you the Book

that clarifies all things—and gives

guidance, mercy, and joyous news

to those who submit to God’s will.

SECTION 13

90God commands justice, goodness,

and generosity to kin. He also forbids

indecency, wrong, and oppression.

He instructs that you might take heed.

91So fulfill your pledge to God

once you have made it,

and don’t break your oaths

after swearing them, for you

have made God your surety.

God knows all that you do.

92And don’t—like a woman who

untwists the yarn she has spun firm°—

indulge your oaths to deceive

one another, if one group happens

to outnumber another—

for God will test you by this.

And on the day of resurrection

He will make clear to you

the issues you dispute.

93Had God wished, He could have

made you one community;

but He leaves to stray whom He will,

and He guides whom He will;

and you shall undoubtedly be asked

about all that you did.

94Don’t indulge your oaths

to deceive one another, else

someone’s foot might slip,

though it was firmly fixed,

and you might taste the evil outcome

of your barring people from God’s path,

and face great punishment.

95And don’t barter God’s pledge

for a paltry price, for what God has

is better for you, if only you knew.

96Whatever you have is ephemeral

but what God has is enduring;

and We shall reward those

who practice patience

for the best of their deeds.

97Whoever does good

—whether man or woman—

and is a true believer,

We will grant them a good life,

and We will reward them

for the best of their deeds.

98When you read the Quran,

seek refuge in God

from Satan—the accursed.°

99He has no sway over those

who believe and trust in their Lord.

100His sway is only over those

who embrace him as an ally,

and those who, on his account,

join other gods with God.

SECTION 14

101When We displace one verse

with another—and God knows best

what He reveals—they say,

“You’re nothing but a forger.”

But most of them have no knowledge.°

102Say, “The holy spirit°

has revealed it [in stages]

from your Lord, bearing truth,

to strengthen those who believe,

and as guidance and joyous news

for those who submit to God’s will.”

103We know well that they say,

“It’s a mere mortal who teaches him.”

But the person they mean

speaks a foreign tongue°,

while this is clear Arabic.

104As for those who don’t believe

in the signs of God—God will not

guide them, and they shall face

a painful punishment.

105Only those who don’t believe

invent lies about the signs of God;

they are the ones who lie.

106Those who deny God

after having faith—unless compelled,

while their hearts kept faith—

those who open their hearts

to unbelief, shall incur God’s wrath,

and they shall face great torment.

107For they preferred the life

of this world to the hereafter,

and God does not guide

a people who disbelieve.

108They are the ones

whose hearts, hearing, and sight

God has sealed,

for they are heedless.

109Without doubt, they are the ones

who will lose in the hereafter.

110But to those who left their homes

after being oppressed, and then strove

in God’s cause with patience,

your Lord will be Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

SECTION 15

111One day, each soul

shall come, pleading for itself,

and each soul shall be paid

in full for what it did,

and none shall be wronged.

112God coins a parable:

there was a town, secure and content,

with ample supplies from all places;

yet it became ungrateful

for God’s favors, so He let it

taste the ravages of hunger and fear

for the things its people did.

113A messenger, one of their own,

came to them, but they deemed him

a fraud—so punishment struck them

even as they indulged in wrongdoing.

114So eat of the lawful and good

things God has provided for you,

and be grateful for God’s favor,

if it is Him that you worship.

115He has forbidden for you only

carrion, blood, the flesh of swine,

and animals killed by invoking

anything other than God’s name.

But if someone is compelled

by hunger, without willful

disobedience or excess, then God

is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.°

116Don’t let your tongues say falsely,

“This is lawful, and this forbidden,”

so as to invent falsehoods about God.

Those who fabricate such lies

shall not prosper—

117their enjoyment is but brief,

for they shall face painful torment.

118Prophet, We forbade for the Jews

the things We cited to you earlier,°

for We never wronged them

but they wronged themselves.

119But to those who do wrong

through ignorance, and then repent

and amend themselves, your Lord

is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

SECTION 16

120Abraham was a nation in himself:

devoted to God, upright,

and he was not a polytheist.

121He was grateful for the favors

of God, Who chose him and

guided him to a straight path.

122We gave him good in this world,

and he will be among the righteous

in the hereafter.

123Then We inspired you, Prophet,

“Follow the creed of Abraham,

the upright, who was not a polytheist.”

124The [day of the] Sabbath

was decreed only for those

who disputed over it; and

your Lord will judge between them,

on the day of resurrection,

in the things they dispute.

125Call people to the path

of your Lord with wisdom

and exemplary instruction,

and argue with them

in exemplary fashion.

Your Lord knows best

who has strayed from His path,

and who is rightly guided.

126If you must respond to aggression,

retaliate only in like measure—

but it will be better for you

if you show patience.°

127So, Prophet, practice patience—

your patience comes only from God;°

don’t grieve over them,

and don’t distress yourself

over the things they plot.

128For God is with those

who are mindful of Him,

and those who do good.

SURA 17

The Night Journey (Al-Israʾ)

From the middle Meccan period, this sura takes its name from the initial verse, depicting Muhammad’s journey from Mecca to Jerusalem to heaven and back. Whether as a dream or physical happening, that event (known as the miʿraj, or the Prophet’s Ascent) has brought acclaim to this sura of 111 verses, though it also contains stories about Israelites as well as the fall of Iblis (vv. 61–65). It further underscores that the Quran was revealed in stages (v. 106), inviting believers to call on God with His Beautiful Names (v. 110).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1Glory be to the One

Who took His servant

on a journey by night

from the sacred mosque

to the farthest mosque,°

whose precincts We blessed

that We might show him

some of Our signs. He alone

is the All Hearing,

All Seeing.

2We gave Moses the Book,°

and made it a guide

for the children of Israel, saying,

“Do not entrust your affairs

to anyone but Me,

3“you descendants of those

We carried in the ark with Noah;

he was a grateful servant.”

4And in the Book We forewarned

the children of Israel:

“Twice you will breed

corruption in the land, and reach

the height of pride.”°

5When the first of the warnings

came to pass, We sent against you

Our servants who had great force;

they entered the inmost precincts

of your homes—the warning

was fulfilled.

6Then We gave back to you victory

over them, and We reinforced you

with wealth and offspring,

multiplying you.

7If you do good, you do good

for yourselves; and if you do evil,

it is for yourselves. And when

the second warning came to pass,

[We sent your enemies]

to distress your countenances

and to enter your place of worship

as they did the first time, and

utterly destroy whatever

they had conquered.

8It may be that your Lord

may yet show you mercy, but

should you turn back,

We shall turn back.

We have made hell

a prison for disbelievers.

9This Quran guides to what

is most right and brings joyous news

to believers who do good deeds—

that they shall have a great reward,

10and that We have prepared

a harrowing punishment

for those who don’t believe,

in the hereafter.

SECTION 2

11Yet humans pray for evil,

as avidly as they pray for good—

they are always in haste.

12We made night and day two signs.

We effaced the sign of night,

and gave light to the sign of day,

that you might seek

the bounty of your Lord,

and know the number of years

and the science of calculation.

We have explained all things in detail.°

13We have fastened

every man’s fate

around his own neck;°

on the day of resurrection

We shall bring out

for him a record,

which he shall find

wide open.

14He will be told,

“Read your record. Your own soul

suffices this day as a reckoning

against you.”

15Whoever receives guidance

is guided for his own good; and

whoever goes astray, strays to his

own harm. And no soul shall bear

another’s burden. Nor do We punish

until We have sent a messenger to warn.

16When We intend to destroy a town,

We command its wealthy citizens

to obey; but they stubbornly disobey,

so sentence is passed upon them—

and We destroy them utterly.

17How many generations

did We destroy after Noah?

For your Lord is fully Aware

and Sees the sins of His servants.

18Whoever desires this fleeting life,

We hasten whatever We will in it

for them—for whomever We wish;

in the end, We commit them

to hell, in which they will burn,

disgraced, rejected.

19As for those who desire

the hereafter and duly strive for it

as believers—they are the ones

whose striving will be commended.

20To each of these,

We extend the gift of your Lord,

a gift unbounded—

21see, how We have favored

some over others. Yet the hereafter

is higher in rank,

and higher also in favor.

22Do not set up another god

besides the One God, or you will

be left disgraced, forsaken.

SECTION 3

23Your Lord has decreed

that you worship Him Alone,

and that you be kind to parents.

Whether one or both of them

reach old age with you, do not say,

“For shame!” to them, or spurn them,

but speak to them with kind words.

24And lower over them both

the wing of humility, with mercy,°

and say, “My Lord, show mercy

to them, as they nurtured me

when I was young.”

25Your Lord knows best

what is in your hearts.

If you are righteous,

He is Ever Forgiving of those

who turn to Him.

26And render to relatives

their due, as well as to the needy

and the traveler; and do not

spend wastefully.

27Spendthrifts are brothers

of Satan;° and Satan

is ever ungrateful to his Lord.

28If you must turn from [beggars],

hoping, by your Lord’s mercy,

[to help them later], at least

speak to them a gentle word.

29Don’t let your hand be bound

[tightfisted] to your neck; nor

extend it fully, else you might end up

blameworthy, impoverished.

30Your Lord extends or restricts

provision for whom He will.

He is Ever Aware, Observant

of His servants.°

SECTION 4

31And do not kill your children

through fear of poverty. We provide

for them as We do for you.

Killing them is a great sin.

32Nor venture near adultery

for it is an indecency,

an evil way.

33And do not take life, which

God has made sacred, except

for a rightful cause.

We have authorized the heir

of anyone killed wrongfully

[to exact retribution], but they should

not be excessive in taking life,

for they are already aided.°

34Nor venture near

an orphan’s property

except with the best intent,

until they reach maturity.

And fulfill every pledge,

for every pledge

will be scrutinized.

35Give full measure when you

measure; weigh with a true balance:

that is better and fairer in the end.

36And do not follow blindly

things you have no knowledge of—

your hearing, sight, and heart

shall all be questioned.

37Do not walk brazenly on the earth,

for you cannot pierce [its depth]

nor reach the height of mountains.

38All of this is evil,

odious to your Lord.

39This is some of the wisdom

your Lord has revealed to you;

do not set up any other god with God,

or you will be cast into hell,

rebuked, rejected.

40Idolaters, has your Lord

chosen for you sons, and

taken for Himself daughters

among the angels?°

What you utter is monstrous.

SECTION 5

41We have offered explanation

in this Quran, that they might heed,

but it makes them turn further away.

42Say, “If there were other gods

with Him, as they claim,

they would surely have sought

a way to [overcome]

the Owner of the throne.”

43May He be glorified and exalted

far above what they proclaim!

44He is glorified

by the seven heavens and the earth,

and all within them,

for there is nothing

that does not glorify Him with praise,

though you may not grasp

their mode of glorifying—

He is Forbearing, Forgiving.

45When you recite the Quran,

We place an unseen veil

between you and those who

don’t believe in the hereafter.

46And We have placed shrouds over

their hearts, lest they understand it,

and deafness in their ears.

And when you talk of your Lord

as the only God, in the Quran,

they turn their backs, averse.

47We know best

what the wrongdoers hear

when they hear you,

and the wrongdoers say in private,

“You follow nothing

but a man bewitched.”

48See what similes they coin

about you! But they are astray,

and cannot find the right way.

49And they ask,

“When we are bones and dust,

will we really be raised up

as a new creation?”

50Answer, “Yes—even

if you were stones or iron,

51“or anything else in creation

that your hearts imagine to be even

harder to bring back to life.”°

They will ask,

“Who will bring us back?”

Answer, “He Who created you

the first time.”

They will shake their heads at you,

asking, “And when will that be?”

Answer, “Perhaps soon,

52“on a day when He calls you—

you will answer by praising Him,

and you will imagine

that you stayed [on the earth]

for only a short while.”

SECTION 6

53Tell My servants to speak only

the most exemplary words.°

Satan brews discord among them—

always a sworn enemy of humankind.

54Your Lord knows you best—

if He will, He will show you mercy,

and if He will, He will punish you.

We have not sent you, Prophet,

as their custodian.

55And your Lord knows best

all that is in the heavens and earth.

He favored some prophets

over others—to David

We gave the Psalms.

56Say, “Call upon those you claim

to be gods besides Him—

they have no power

to remove your misfortunes

or to avert them.”

57Those on whom they call

themselves seek a way to their

Lord; which of them is closer?

They hope for His mercy,

and fear His punishment—

your Lord’s punishment

is always to be feared.

58There is no [evil] town

that We shall not destroy

before the day of resurrection

or punish severely—this

is inscribed in the Book.

59Nothing constrains Us

from sending signs except that

former peoples denied them.

We gave the people of Thamud°

a she-camel as a visible token,

but they wronged her.

We send signs only to warn.

60Prophet, remember when

We told you that your Lord

Encompasses humankind,

We granted you the vision

We showed you° only as a trial

for people, like the cursed tree

mentioned in the Quran.°

We warn them, yet this only

increases their transgression.

SECTION 7

61And when We said to the angels,

“Bow down before Adam,”

they bowed down except Iblis,

who said, “Shall I bow to one

whom you made of clay?”

62He added, “Do You see this one

that you have honored above me?

If you grant me reprieve

until the day of resurrection,

I will hold sway over all but a few

of his descendants.”

63God said, “Go out!

If any of them follow you,

hell shall be your reward

[and theirs]—an ample reward.

64“Rouse those you can

with your voice, assault them

with your cavalry and infantry,

share in their wealth and children,

and make promises to them.

But Satan promises them

only delusion.”

65You have no power over my servants—

your Lord suffices as their custodian.

66It is your Lord Who lets your ships

sail smoothly upon the sea

that you might seek His bounty—

He is Ever Merciful to you.

67When you meet distress at sea,

the gods you call on besides Him°

abandon you. But when He delivers you

to land, you turn away.

Humankind is ever ungrateful.

68Can you feel sure that He

won’t make the earth swallow you

when back on land,

or send a hailstorm against you,

so that you find yourselves

with none to protect you?

69Or can you be sure that He

won’t drive you back out to sea

again, and send a hurricane

against you, a gale storm

to drown you for your

ingratitude? Then you would find

none to help you against Us.

70We have honored the children

of Adam; We have carried them

over land and sea, and provided them

with good things, and favored them

over many others We have created.

SECTION 8

71On the day We call together

all human beings, with their leaders,

those who are given their book

in their right hand will read it

[with joy], and will not be wronged

by as much as the hair on a date seed.

72But those who were blind

in this world will be blind

in the hereafter, and even further

astray from the path.

73Unbelievers almost tempted you

away from Our revelation to you,

hoping that you might

invent something else about Us°—

they would then have

embraced you as a friend.

74Had We not strengthened

your resolve, you might have

inclined to them a little.

75We would then have made you

taste a double torment—in this life,

and after death. You would then find

none to help you against Us.

76Though they were about

to uproot you from the land,

to expel you from it,°

they would not then have been able

to stay there after you

for more than a short while.

77[This was Our] way°

with the messengers We sent

before you, and you will find

no change in Our way.

SECTION 9

78You should perform prayer

from the declining of the sun

until the darkening of night,

and recite the Quran at dawn—

a recitation ever witnessed

[by the angels].°

79And in the night, arise to pray,

further, of your own accord,

that your Lord might raise you

to a station of praise.°

80Say, “My Lord,

let me enter by a gate of truth

and leave by a gate of truth°—

grant me Your own

supportive authority.”°

81Also proclaim, “Truth has come

and falsehood has perished—

falsehood will always perish.”

82We reveal in the Quran

what is a healing and a mercy

to believers; yet for wrongdoers,

it merely increases their loss.

83When We grant favor

to humankind, they turn

proudly away, drawing aside;

yet when evil befalls them,

they slide into despair.

84Say, “Each person acts

according to their own disposition;

but your Lord knows best

who is rightly guided.°

SECTION 10

85They ask you about the spirit.

Say, “The spirit comes

by command of my Lord°—

only a small portion

of knowledge is granted you.”

86If we wished, We could take away

what We have revealed to you;

you would then find in this issue

no protector against Us,°

87without your Lord’s mercy—

His favor to you is great.

88Say, “Even if all humankind

and all jinn gathered together

to produce the like of this Quran,

they could not do so, however much

they helped one another.”

89And We have explained

to humankind in this Quran

every kind of parable,

yet most of them refuse

to be anything but ungrateful.

90They say, “We will

never believe you, unless

you make for us a spring

flowing out from the earth,

91“or you have a garden,

with date palms and grapes,

and cause rivers

to burst forth within it,

92“or you cause the sky

to fall in fragments upon us,

—as you have claimed°—

or you bring before us

God and the angels,°

93“or you have a house adorned

with gold, or ascend to the sky—

but we’ll never believe you ascended

unless you bring down to us a book

that we might read.”

Say, “Glory be to my Lord.

Am I not merely

a mortal, a messenger?”

SECTION 11

94When guidance came to people,

nothing stopped them from believing

except their saying, “Has God sent

a mere mortal as a messenger?”

95Say, “If the earth were full of

angels walking nonchalantly about,

We would have sent an angel to them

as a messenger from heaven.”

96Say, “God suffices as

a Witness between me and you;

He is Ever Aware, Observant

of His servants.”

97Those whom God guides

are rightly guided.

As for those He allows to stray—

you’ll find no protectors for them

beyond God.

And We shall gather them

on the day of resurrection

fallen on their faces,

blind, dumb, and deaf.

Hell shall be their home,

and whenever the blaze of fire

subsides, We shall warm it.

98That is their reward, for they

rejected Our signs, saying,

“When we become bones and dust,

will we really be raised up

as a new creation?”

99Don’t they see that God,

Who created the heavens and earth,

has Power to create their like anew?

He has assigned a fixed term

—beyond doubt—for them,

but the wrongdoers refuse

to be anything but ungrateful.

100Say, “If you possessed

the treasures of my Lord’s mercy,

you would withhold them

fearful of expending them,

for humankind is ever miserly.”

SECTION 12

101We gave Moses nine clear signs°

—ask the Children of Israel.

When he came to the Egyptians,

Pharaoh exclaimed to him,

“Moses, I believe you’re bewitched.”

102Moses replied,

“You well know that only

the Lord of the heavens and earth

could reveal these things as proof;

and I believe that you, Pharaoh,

shall meet destruction.”

103So he intended to drive them

from the land; but We drowned him

and all those with him.

104Afterward, We told

the children of Israel:

“Live in the land,” but when

the promise of the hereafter comes,

We will bring you together

in a mingled assembly.°

105We sent down the Quran

with the truth—and with the truth

it has come down;

and We sent you, Prophet,

only to convey joyous news

and to warn people.

106We have divided the Quran

into parts so you might recite it

to people at intervals, and

We have revealed it in stages.

107Say, “Whether you believe in it

or not, those given knowledge

before it was revealed

fall down on their faces,°

bowing, when it is recited to them.”

108They say, “Glory be to our Lord!

Our Lord’s promise is fulfilled.”

109They fall on their faces, in tears,

and it deepens their humility.

110Say, “Call upon God

or call upon the All Merciful—

however you call him,

His are the Most Beautiful Names.°

And do not intone your prayer

loudly nor too softly

but seek a middle way

between these.”

111Say, “Praise be to God

Who takes no son, and

Who has no partner in dominion,

Who needs no protector

against abasement,

and magnify Him—magnify

His Measureless Magnitude.”°

SURA 18

The Cave (Al-Kahf)

From the middle Meccan period, it derives its name, “The Cave,” from vv. 9–26. That segment provides the natural backdrop for the first of three stories woven together in this sura of 110 verses that have inspired commentary and speculation through the ages. All three of these mysterious episodes occur only here in the Quran: the cave sleepers (vv. 9–26) is followed by Moses’ encounter with a sly stranger at the meeting of waters (vv. 61–83), after which the two-horned figure, perhaps Alexander, builds a (mountain) barrier against Gog and Magog (vv. 84–99).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1All praise be to God,

Who revealed the Book

to His servant, and made it

free of deviation,°

2unerringly straight,° to warn

of His stern punishment

and to give joyous news to those

who believe and do good works

that theirs will be a rich° reward,

3[the garden] where

they will stay forever.

4and to warn those who say,

“God has taken a son.”

5They have no knowledge

of this, nor had their forefathers.

It’s a monstrous assertion

that they mouth: they utter

nothing but falsehood.

6Prophet, you might consume yourself

with grief, because of them,

if they don’t believe this message.

7We have adorned the earth

with all that exists on it

in order to test which of them

are best in their deeds.

8And We shall turn

all that exists on it

into barren dust.

SECTION 2

9Prophet, do you think

the companions of the cave°

and the inscription it bears

were a wonder among Our signs?

10The youths sought shelter

in the cave, and they implored,

“Our Lord, grant us Your mercy

and resolve our dilemma

in a fitting manner.”

11So We sealed their ears

[with sleep] in the cave

for several years.

12Then We woke them,

so We might know

which of the two parties°

could best calculate

how long they had stayed.

13We narrate to you their story

as it was:° those youths believed

in their Lord, and We increased

Our guidance for them.

14We strengthened their hearts

when they stood up and affirmed,

“Our Lord is the Lord

of the heavens and the earth;

never will we call

on other gods than Him,

for we would be voicing

a gross falsehood.

15“Our people have taken

gods other than Him: why don’t they

bring forth a clear sanction for these?

Who does more wrong than those

who invent lies about God?”

16“Since you have recoiled

from them and what they worship

besides God, seek shelter in the cave” [said the chief youth].

“Your Lord will shower you

with His mercy

and ease your plight.”

17You might have seen

the sun, when she rose,

declining away, to the right

of their cave; and when she set,

veering away, to their left

while they lay in the open space

between its walls. This

is among the signs of God:

those whom God guides

are rightly guided; as for

those left astray, you will never

find a protector to guide them

to the right way.

18You might have thought them

awake though they were sleeping:

we turned them on their right sides

and left sides, their dog stretching

his two paws at the entrance.

If you had seen them,

you would have fled

from them in terror.

19Then We roused them, so

they might question one another.

One of them asked, “How long

have you been here?” Some said,

“A day or part of a day.” Others,

“Your Lord knows best how long.

Now one of you go with money

to the city to find the best food

for your sustenance.

But let him take care

to let no one know about you.

20“If they recognize you,

they’ll stone you or bring you

back to their creed, and then

you will not flourish—ever.”

21We informed people about them,

to let them know that God’s promise

is true, that there is no doubt

about the impending hour.

Yet people argued about

the sleepers. Some said,

“Erect a building over them.

Their Lord knows best about them.”

Those who prevailed in the matter

said, “We shall build over them

a place of worship.”

22Some say they were three,

and the dog the fourth

of them; others say they were five,

with the dog a sixth—

guessing, without knowing;°

still others say they were seven,

with the dog as eighth.

Say, “My Lord knows best

how many they were;

only a few actually know

about them.” So don’t argue

over them without tangible proof

nor consult any of these people

about them.

23Do not say about anything,

“I shall do it tomorrow,”

24without adding, “if God is willing.”°

If you forget, remember your Lord,

and say, “I hope my Lord guides me

closer to righteousness than this.”

25And they stayed in their cave

for three hundred years, some say,

while some figured nine more.°

26Say, “God knows best

how long they stayed.

His are the secrets of the heavens

and the earth—

how clearly He Sees,

how clearly He Hears.

They have no protector but Him,

He shares His judgment with none.”°

27Recite what was revealed to you

from the Book of your Lord—

there is no changing His words,

and you will find no refuge

beyond Him.

28Content yourself with

those who call on their Lord

morning and evening,

yearning for His Face;

and do not look beyond them,

yearning for the luster

of worldly life,

nor obey anyone whose heart

We have made heedless

of Our remembrance,

anyone who follows

his own desires, unbridled.

29And say, “The truth

is from your Lord,”

so let him who will, believe,

and let him who will, deny.

We have prepared a fire

for wrongdoers, whose walls

will enshroud them; and

should they cry for relief,

they will be relieved

with water like molten brass

searing their faces

—a damnable draught—

and an evil abode.°

30As for those who believe

and do good deeds—We shall not

overlook their reward.°

31They will have eternal gardens,

with rivers flowing beneath.

There they will be adorned

in bracelets of gold,

and they will wear

robes of green, of fine silk

and rich brocade;

they will recline there

on raised couches—

a blessèd reward,

an excellent home.

SECTION 3

32Coin for them a parable

of two men—for one of them

We made two vineyards,

bordering them with date palms;

and between them, We placed

fields of crops.

33Each of the two gardens

yielded its fruit, unfailing

in any respect.

And We made a river flow

between them.°

34So he had abundant fruit.

While talking with his companion,

he boasted, “I have more wealth

than you, and a greater following.”

35So he entered his garden

and wronged himself, saying,

“I do not think that this

will ever perish,

36“Nor do I think that the hour

will come; and even if I were

brought back to my Lord,

I would certainly find there

something better than this.”

37Talking with him, his companion

retorted, “Do you deny the One

Who created you from dust,

from a droplet of sperm,

then fashioned you into a man?

38“As for me,

He is God, my Lord,

and I set up no one as partner

with my Lord.

39“Why did you not say,

as you entered your garden,

‘As God wills’?° There is

no power except God.

Though you see that I have

less in wealth and children,

40“perhaps my Lord will grant me

something better than your garden,

and will send upon it

a reckoning from the sky,

turning it to sodden dust.

41“or its water might sink

beneath the ground so you

never find it.”

42And his fruit was beset with ruin,

and he began wringing his hands

over what he had invested in it—

it was collapsed on its trellises.

And he lamented, “If only

I had set up no other god

as partners with my Lord.”

43He had no company

to help him, besides God,

nor could he help himself.

44[In such crisis], protection

comes from God alone—the True.°

He grants the best in reward,

and the best outcome.

SECTION 4

45Coin for them a simile

of the life of this world—

it is like rain which We send

down from the sky,

which mixes with earth’s greenery,

which then becomes dry stubble,

which the winds disperse.

God alone is Capable

of all things.°

46The life of this world allures

with wealth and children,

but good works which endure

gain a better reward

from your Lord, and secure

a better hope.

47One day We shall displace

the mountains

and you will see the earth

as a leveled plain

and We shall gather

all humankind together,

leaving no one behind.

48They will be marshaled

before your Lord in ranks

and it will be said,

“You have come to Us

just as We created you

at first. Yet you supposed

We would not fulfill

Our promised meeting

with you.”

49The Book of their deeds

will be placed before them,

and you will see the sinners

in terror, on account of

what it holds. They will say,

“Alas for us, what a Book this is—

it leaves nothing, small or great,

out of its account.”

They will find presented there

all that they did. And your Lord

will wrong no one.

50When We said to the angels,

“Bow down before Adam,” they all

bowed down except Iblis.

He was one of the jinn,°

and he disobeyed the command

of his Lord. Will you then take him

and his progeny as protectors

instead of Me, though they

are your enemies?

What a wretched bargain

for wrongdoers!

51I did not make them

witness to the creation

of the heavens and the earth,

or their own creation.

I am not One to

take as aides of Mine

those who misguide.

52One day He will say,

“Call on the gods you claimed

to be My partners.”

And they will call on them,

but those gods will not answer;

and We shall place between them

a deathly chasm.

53Seeing the fire, the sinners

shall realize they are to fall into it—

they shall find no refuge from it.

54We have expounded in this Quran

parables of every kind for people;

but humankind is most contentious.°

55Once guidance has come to them,

what prevents people from

believing and seeking forgiveness

from their Lord except

that [they wait for] the fate

of their ancestors to visit them

or that their punishment

visit them face-to-face?

56We send the messengers

only to bring joyous news

and to warn people. But those

who refuse to believe dispute it,

using falsehood to impugn

the truth, even as they mock

My signs and warnings.

57And who does greater wrong

than one who is reminded

of the signs of his Lord,

yet turns away from them,

forgetting what his two hands

have done?° We have cast

mantles over their hearts

—so they will not grasp the Quran—

and deafness within their ears.

If you call them to guidance,

they will not be guided—ever.

58But your Lord is Forgiving,

Full of Mercy. If He took them

to account for what they earned,

he would hasten their punishment.

But they have their appointed time,

then they will find no refuge.

59These cities We destroyed

when they did wrong;

and We set an appointed time

for their desolation.

SECTION 5

60Moses said to his servant,

“I won’t stop until I reach

the convergence of the two seas,

even if I must go on

for many years.”

61But when they reached

the convergence of

the two seas,° they forgot

about their fish, which bore

its own course through the sea.

62When they journeyed farther,

Moses said to his servant,

“Bring our meal for us,

for this journey of ours

has tired us out.”

63The servant replied, “Did you see?

When we sheltered under the rock,

I forgot the fish—it was only Satan

who made me forget to mention it,

and it made its way

wondrously into the sea.”

64Moses said, “That is the place

we were seeking.” So they went back,

retracing their footsteps.

65And they came across

one of Our servants, on whom

We had bestowed Our Mercy,

and whom we had taught

from Our Knowledge.°

66Moses said to him,

“May I follow you,

so that you might teach me

what you have been taught

of right guidance?”

67The man said,

“Really, you will never be able

to bear with me patiently.

68“And how could you be patient

about something that’s beyond

your knowledge?”

69Moses said, “You’ll find

that I’m patient, if it is God’s wish,

and I won’t disobey you

in anything.”

70The man said, “If you

would follow me, then

don’t ask about anything

until I broach it

in my discourse with you.”

71So they both went on

and° when they embarked in the boat,

the man pierced a hole in it.

Moses demanded, “Did you bore this hole°

to drown the passengers?

What a strange thing to do!”

72He replied, “Did I not say that

you could not bear with me patiently?”

73Moses implored,

“Don’t take me to task for forgetting,

nor be hard on me by making my task

more difficult.”

74So they both went on

and when they met a youth,

the man killed him. Moses asked,

“How could you kill an innocent person

who had harmed no one?

What a terrible thing you’ve done!”

75He replied, “Did I not say that

you could not bear with me patiently?”

76Moses said, “If I question you

on any issue after this,

then spurn my company—

you’ve had [enough] excuse

[to part] from me.”

77So they both went on

and, when they came

to the people of a town,

they asked them for food,

but the people refused them

any welcome. They found there

a wall about to fall down,

but Moses’ companion

set it upright. Moses said,

“If you’d wanted, you could have

charged them for doing this.”

78He replied, “Here is where you

and I must part. Now let me tell you

the deeper meaning° of the things

you could not endure with patience.

79“The boat belonged to

needy people, who worked at sea.

I meant to disable it,

for behind them was a king

seizing every [usable] boat by force.

80“As for the youth, his parents

were both believers, and we feared

he would overwhelm them by

transgressing and disbelieving.

81“So we wished for their Lord to

bring them another son in his place,

purer and more affectionate.°

82“And the wall, well, it belonged

to two youths, orphans, in the city.

Beneath it was a buried treasure

which was theirs.

Their father was a righteous person,

so your Lord intended that

when they reached their maturity,

they should unearth their treasure,

a mercy from Him. So I did not

do this of my own accord. This

is the deeper meaning of the things

you could not endure with patience.”

SECTION 6

83They ask you, Prophet, about Dhu al-Qarnayn.°

Say, “I’ll recite to you a chronicle about him.”

84We established [his power]

on the earth, and We granted him

a path toward every end.

85He followed a certain path,

86and when he reached

the region of the setting sun

to find it setting in a muddy spring,

and found a community near it,

We said, “Dhu al-Qarnayn,

you can either punish them

or treat them well.”

87He said, “We shall punish

whoever does wrong, then

he shall be returned to his Lord,

Who will give him a punishment

even more terrible.

88“But those who believe

and do good deeds

shall have a fine reward,

and we will command them

to do what is easy for them.”

89Then he continued on the path,

90and, when he reached

the region of the rising sun,

he found it rising

on a community to whom

We had given no shelter from it.

91In this way, Our Knowledge

Encompassed everything about him.°

92Then he continued on the path,

93and, when he reached

a pass between two mountains,

he found, beside them, a community

that could scarcely grasp his speech.

94They said, “Dhu al-Qarnayn,

Gog and Magog are workers

of mischief in the land.°

If we paid you a tribute,

would you build a barrier

between us and them?”

95He replied,

“My Lord has empowered me

with something better;

but lend me some strong help,

and I will build a strong rampart

between you and them.

96“Bring me bars of iron.”

Then, when he had filled the chasm

between the two mountainsides,

he said, “Blow with your bellows,”

and when he had made it glow red as fire,

he said, “Bring me molten brass

to pour over it.”

97So Gog and Magog

were unable to scale the rampart

or tunnel through it.

98He said,

“This is a mercy from my Lord.

But when the promise

of my Lord comes to pass,

He will reduce the rampart

to level dust; and His promise

is always true.”

99On that day, We will leave them

surging against one another like waves.

The trumpet will sound, and

We shall gather them all together.

100And on that day We shall lay

hell itself, spread out wide,

before the unbelievers—

101those whose eyes

were veiled against

remembrance of Me,

those who could not hear.

102Do those who disbelieve

suppose they can take my servants

as protectors instead of Me?

We have prepared hell

for disbelievers as their home.

SECTION 7

103Prophet, say to them,

“Shall we inform you

of those whose deeds

will bring them the most loss,

104“those whose labors have

been wasted in the life of the world,

even as they supposed

they were doing good?

105“Those who deny

the signs of their Lord

and [their] meeting with Him—

their works shall be in vain,

and We will accord them

no weight on the day

of resurrection.”

106This will be their requital—

hell—for they disbelieved, mocking

My signs and My messengers.

107Those who believe

and do good deeds shall have

the gardens of paradise

as their home.

108They will abide there

forever, desiring no change.

109Say, “If the sea were ink

for the words of my Lord,

the sea would run dry

before the words, even if

We brought another sea just like it.”°

110Say, “I am but a human being

like you; it has been revealed to me

that your God is One God,

so let whoever yearns to meet Him

do good works, and join

none with Him in worship.”

SURA 19

Mary (Maryam)

A middle Meccan sura, this relates the birth of John and Jesus, highlighting their lives and missions as God’s ordained prophets. Its 98 verses provide both comparison and contrast with biblical narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Remarkably, it is the sole sura named after a woman, and Mary looms as the major female figure in the Quran, her central role in the divine plan extolled in vv. 16–33, and Jesus’ role as God’s servant, not His son, reinforced toward the end (vv. 88–95).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1Kaf. Ha. Ya. ʿAin Sad.°

2This is a reminder

of your Lord’s mercy

toward His servant Zachariah,

3when he called to his Lord secretly,

4“My Lord, my bones are now frail,

and my hair is ablaze with gray,

yet never has my prayer to You,

my Lord, been in vain.

5“I fear what my kin will do after me,°

for my wife is barren.

So grant me an heir—through Your grace.

6“to bear my legacy°

as well as that of Jacob’s family;

and let him, my Lord, be well pleasing.”

7[God replied,]

“Zachariah, We give you

joyous news of a son,

whose name will be John,°

a name we gave to none before him.”

8“My Lord,° how can I have a son,

when my wife is barren

and I am withering with extreme age?”

9He replied, “These are the words

of Your Lord: ‘It is easy for Me.

I created you before°—

when you were nothing.’ ”

10Zachariah said,

“My Lord, give me a sign.”

“Your sign is this—

you will not speak to people

for three straight nights.”°

11So he ventured out to his people

from his sanctuary, urging them

by gestures,° to glorify God

morning and evening.

12“John,” We said,

“Hold firmly to the Book,”

and We endowed him

as a child with sound judgment,

13and with tenderness, and purity,

from Our grace.

He was mindful of God,

14solicitous of his parents, and

never imperious° or disobedient.

15Peace be with him

the day he was born,

the day he dies,

and the day

he will be raised alive.

SECTION 2

16And mention in the Book

the story of Mary,

when she withdrew from her people

to a place in the East.

17She veiled herself from them.

Then We sent Our spirit,

appearing to her

in the perfect form of a man.

18She said, “I seek refuge from you

with the All Merciful—withdraw°

if you fear Him.”

19He said, “I am just a messenger

from your Lord

Who grants you a pure son.”

20“How shall I have a son,” she said,

“for no man has touched me,

and I have not been unchaste?”

21He replied, “This is how it will be:

your Lord has said, ‘It is easy for Me;

We will make him a sign

for humankind, and a mercy from

Our grace. It is a thing ordained.’ ”

22So she conceived him,

and withdrew with him

to a place far away.

23And the pains of labor drove her

to the trunk of a date palm. She cried,

“I wish I had died before this,

forgotten, and unknown!”

24But a voice called to her

from beneath, “Don’t grieve—

your Lord has set a stream

underneath you.

25“Shake the trunk of the date palm

toward you, to make fresh, ripe dates

fall upon you.

26“So eat and drink; be comforted,

and if you see anyone, say,

‘I have vowed to the All Merciful

that I shall fast, and today

I shall speak with no one.’ ”

27Then she came, carrying him,

to her people. They said, “Mary,

you’ve done something scandalous.°

28“Sister of Aaron, your father

was not a wicked man,

nor was your mother unchaste.”

29Then she pointed to the child;°

they asked, “How can we talk

with a child in its cradle?”

30He said, “I am a servant of God;

He has given me the Book,

and has made me a prophet.

31“He blessed me

wherever I may be,

and enjoined upon me

prayer and charity

as long as I live.

32“He made me solicitous

toward my mother, and neither

imperious nor wretched.

33“Peace be with me

the day I was born,

the day I die,

and the day

I will be raised alive.”

34This was Jesus, son of Mary,

this is the true statement°—

about which they dispute.

35It is not for God to bear a child.

Glory be to Him: when He decrees

something, He merely says to it,

“Be”—and it is.

36God is my Lord and your Lord,

so worship Him—

this is the straight path.

37But the sects differed

among themselves; what anguish

will come to those who disbelieve

from the witnessing°

of a momentous day.

38How keenly they will hear,

how keenly they will see,

on the day they come to Us.

But today the wrongdoers

are clearly astray.

39Warn them of the day of remorse,

when things will finally be decided

while they are heedless,

and do not believe.

40It is We who will inherit the earth,

and all those upon it—

to Us they will be returned.

SECTION 3

41And mention in the Book

the story of Abraham—

he was a man of truth, a prophet.

42He said to his father,

“Father, why do you worship

what can neither hear nor see,

and cannot profit you at all?

43“Father, knowledge has come

to me which you do not have.°

So follow me—I will guide you

to an even path.

44“Father, do not worship Satan,

for Satan is disobedient

to the All Merciful.

45“Father, I fear that punishment

from the All Merciful will strike you

and you’ll become an ally of Satan.”

46His father replied,

“Do you turn away from my gods,

Abraham? If you don’t stop,

I shall stone you.

Now keep away from me!”

47Abraham said,

“Peace be with you; I shall ask

my Lord to forgive you, for He

has been Ever Gracious to me.

48“But I will turn away from you

and what you call upon besides God,

and I will call upon my Lord.

I trust that my prayer to my Lord

will not be in vain.”

49So when he turned away

from them and those they

worshipped besides God,

We granted him Isaac and Jacob

as sons, and We made

each of them a prophet.

50We granted Our mercy to them,

and gave them high renown for truth.°

SECTION 4

51And mention in the Book

the story of Moses—he was chosen,

a messenger, and a prophet.°

52We called him from the right slope

of Mount Sinai, and We drew him

close for private converse.

53And through Our Mercy

We granted him

his brother Aaron as a prophet.

54And mention in the Book

the story of Ishmael—

he was true to his promise,

a messenger, a prophet.

55He would always enjoin

his people to perform prayer

and charity, and he was always

pleasing to his Lord.

56And mention in the Book

the story of Idris°—

he was a man of truth, a prophet:

57And We raised him

to an exalted station.

58These were among the prophets

God favored, from Adam’s progeny,

whom We carried in Noah’s ark,

as well as from the descendants

of Abraham and Israel, and from those

whom We guided and chose.

When verses of the All Merciful

were recited to them, they would

fall, prostrating themselves, in tears.

59But there came after them

people who neglected prayer

and followed their own desires.

Soon, they will meet perdition.

60Except those who repent,

and believe, and do good deeds.

These will enter the garden

and will not be wronged

in any way—

61eternal gardens, which

the All Merciful has promised

to His servants, in the unseen.

His promise, inexorable,

shall come to pass.

62There, they will not hear

vain discourse—only “Peace.”

And there, they will be provided for,

morning and evening.

63This is the garden

We shall bequeath

to our servants

who were mindful of Us.

64[The angels say,]

“We descend only

by command of your Lord.

To Him belongs

what lies before us,

what lies behind us, and

what lies between.

Your Lord is never forgetful.

65“Lord of the heavens and earth,

and of all that lies between them—

so worship Him, be steadfast

in His worship. Do you know

any who is worthy of His name?”

SECTION 5

66Humans say, “Once dead,

shall we be brought to life?”

67But don’t humans recall

that We created them before,

when they were nothing?

68By your Lord, then,

We shall gather them,

and the devils, [dragging them]

around hell, on their knees.

69Then We shall drag out

from each sect those who

most stubbornly opposed

the All Merciful.

70For We know best

those who most deserve

to burn there.

71And there is not one of you

who will not come to it—

a decree from your Lord

destined to pass.

72But We shall deliver those

who were mindful of God,

and We shall leave

the wrongdoers there,

on their knees.

73When Our clear signs

are recited to them,

the unbelievers taunt those

who believe, “Which of our two

parties is in a better position,

and has superior companions?”

74Yet how many generations

before them have We destroyed—

who were grander in possessions

as well as in outward pomp?

75Say, “The Most Merciful prolongs

the straying of those who stray,

until they see the punishment

promised them, either here

or in the coming hour.

Then they will know

who is in the worse position

and is weaker in force.”

76God increases guidance

for those who would be guided.

Enduring good deeds

are the best rewards

in the eyes of your Lord,

and best in their recompense.

77Have you then seen

the person who denies Our signs,

yet says, “I shall certainly

be given wealth and children?”

78Has he fathomed the unseen,

or secured an agreement

with the All Merciful?

79No—We shall record

what he says, and We shall

prolong his punishment.

80We shall inherit

all that he talks of,

and he shall come

before Us alone.

81Yet they have taken

gods other than God

to empower them.

82However, those gods

will reject their worship,

and become their adversaries.

SECTION 6

83Do you not see—

We have sent devils

against the unbelievers,

inciting them to sin?

84So make no haste against them,

for We are but counting their term.°

85On the day We gather

the God-fearing to the All Merciful,

as an assembly,

86and drive the sinners to hell,

like thirsty cows [to water],

87none shall have power

of intercession, except

those who secure an agreement

with the All Merciful.

88They say, “The All Merciful

has conceived a child.”

89Assuredly, you speak

of something monstrous—

90at which the heavens might be

cleaved asunder, and the earth

burst into pieces, and the mountains

collapse in complete ruin—

91that they deem the All Merciful

to have a child,

92for it is not seemly

for the All Merciful

to conceive a child.

93There is none in the heavens

and earth who will not come

before the All Merciful

as a servant.

94He has taken account of each,

and counted them, every single one.

95And each one of them

will come before Him, alone,

on the day of resurrection.

96the All Merciful will bestow

love on those

who believed and did good works.

97We have made the Quran

easy, in your own tongue,

so that you might use it

to give joyous news

to those who fear God,

and warn a stubborn people.

98And how many generations

have we destroyed before them—

can you trace even one of them

or hear from them

even a whisper?

SURA 20

Ta Ha (Ta Ha)

Dating from the middle Meccan period, this is the first sura to take its name from the initial and perplexing letters that mark it, as they do twenty-eight other suras in the Quran. Its 135 verses begin with the story of Moses (vv. 9–99), then the account of Adam and Eve (the latter unnamed—vv. 115–24), and end with encouragement to Muhammad to endure, pray, be steadfast, watch, and wait (vv. 130–35).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1Ta Ha.°

2We have not revealed

the Quran to you

to bring you distress,

3but rather as a reminder

to those who fear God,

4a revelation from the One

Who created the earth

and the exalted heavens,

5the All Merciful, firmly poised

upon the throne.

6To Him belongs

all that is in the heavens

and all that is on the earth,

all between them,

and all beneath the soil.

7[Whatever is in your heart]

whether you speak it aloud [or not],

He knows what is secret

and what is most hidden.

8God—there is no god but He.

To Him belong

the Most Beautiful Names.

9Have you heard the story of Moses?

10When he saw a fire,

he said to his family,

“Stay here. I glimpsed a fire—

perhaps I can bring you

a burning brand from it

or find some guidance there.”

11When he drew near,

he was called, “Moses,

12“I am your Lord,

so remove your sandals,

for you are in

the sacred valley of Tuwa.°

13“And I have chosen you—

so listen closely

to what is now revealed.

14“I am the One God—

there is no god but Me,

so worship Me, and

be steadfast in prayer,

remembering Me.

15“The hour is coming

—though I choose to conceal it—

so that every soul may receive

the reward of its endeavor.

16“So don’t let those

who disbelieve in its coming,

and follow their own desires,

divert you from it,

bringing you to ruin.

17“And what is this

in your right hand, Moses?”

18Moses replied, “This is my staff—

I lean on it, and with it

I beat down leaves for my sheep,

and I have other uses for it.”

19God said,

“Throw it down, Moses.”

20He threw it down, and see,

it became a snake, darting quickly.

21God said, “Take hold of it

and don’t be afraid—

We shall restore it to its former state.

22“And place your hand under your arm:

it will come out gleaming white, though

unharmed—another sign—

23“so that We might show you

some of our greatest signs.

24“Go now to Pharaoh,

for he has done wrong.”

SECTION 2

25Moses implored, “My Lord,

enlarge my heart,°

26“make my task easy for me,

27“and remove the slur in my speech,°

28“so that they understand my words,

29“and give me someone to help,

from my family,

30“my brother Aaron—

31“fortify my strength through him,

32“and let him share my task,

33“so that we may glorify You,

34“and remember you, constantly,

35“for You always Watch over us.”

36God said, “You are granted

your request, Moses.

37“Indeed, We bestowed on you

a favor once before,

38“when We inspired

your mother, saying,

39“ ‘Place the child in the chest,

then cast it into the river;

the river will cast it onto the bank.

He will be adopted by someone

who is an enemy to Me and you.’

But I cast over you My love,

so you would be reared

under My eye.

40“When your sister went out,

she said, ‘Shall I show you

someone who will nurse him?’

Then we returned you

to your mother, to let her eyes

rejoice and not grieve.

And you killed a man, but

We delivered you from any distress,

and We tried you with other tests.

Then you stayed some years

with the people of Midian, and

came at the ordained hour, Moses.°

41“For I have chosen you

to serve Me.

42“Go, you and your brother,

with My signs, and do not relent

in your remembrance of Me.

43“Go, both of you, to Pharaoh,

for he has done wrong.

44“But speak mildly with him,

so he might take heed

or be filled with fear [of God].

45Moses and Aaron said,

“Our Lord, we’re afraid that

he’ll be harsh with us or

transgress [still more].”

46God said, “Don’t be afraid.

I am with you both—

I see and hear [all things].

47“So go to him, both of you,

and say, ‘We are messengers

from your Lord, so send with us

the children of Israel and do not

harass them. We come

with a sign from your Lord.

Peace be upon all who

follow right guidance.

48“ ‘It has been revealed to us

that punishment shall fall upon

those who deny and turn away.’ ”

49[Having heard this],

Pharaoh said, “So, Moses,

who is the Lord of you both?”

50He replied, “Our Lord is He

Who gave each thing its form

and guided it.”

51Pharaoh said, “What, then,

[is the status] of former generations?”

52Moses answered, “The knowledge

of that is with my Lord, recorded

in a Book. My Lord does not err,

nor does He forget.”

53It is He who made for you

the earth, spread out like a couch,

and laid out for you paths to travel,

and sent rain from the sky, with which

We have brought forth plants,

in pairs, of distinct kinds,

54so eat, and graze your cattle.

In this are signs for those

with understanding.

SECTION 3

55We created you from the earth,

and to it We shall return you,

and from it We shall bring you again

in another time.

56We showed all Our signs

to Pharaoh, but he denied

and refused them.

57He said, “Have you come

to drive us out of our land

with your magic, Moses?

58“We can certainly bring magic

like this to you: arrange a meeting

between us and you, which

neither we nor you shall fail

to honor, in a neutral place.”

59Moses said, “You shall have

your meeting—on the day

of the festival. And let the people

be assembled when the sun is high.”

60So Pharaoh withdrew.

He put together his plan,

and came back.

61Moses said to him,

“Beware—do not forge

a lie about God, or

He might destroy you with

a severe punishment.

For whoever forges lies

will surely fail.”

62So Pharaoh’s ministers

discussed the matter

among themselves, but

kept their discussion secret.

63They said, “These two

are sorcerers, who intend

to drive you from your land

with their sorcery, and to abolish

your exemplary way of life.

64“So devise your plan

then draw up in a line.

Whoever wins today

is sure to flourish.”

65They said, “Moses,

shall you throw, or shall we

be the first to throw?”

66“No, you throw,” said Moses,

and suddenly—through their magic,

their ropes and their staffs

seemed to him to be moving.

67And Moses felt fear

within himself.

68We told him, “Have no fear,

it is you who will prevail.

69“Throw what’s in your right hand:

it will swallow up what they have

contrived—merely a magician’s trick,

and no magician can flourish,

no matter where he goes.”

70Then the magicians threw

themselves down, prostrating,°

saying, “We believe in the Lord

of Aaron and Moses.”

71Pharaoh bellowed,

“You believed in Him

before I gave you permission!

He must be your leader,

teaching you magic.

I will have your hands and feet

cut off, on opposite sides,

and have you crucified

on the trunks of palm trees,

so that you will know for sure

which of us gives more severe

and lasting punishment.”

72They said, “We shall never

choose you over the clear proofs

that have come to us or the One

Who created us. So decree

as you will—you decree only

for the life of this world.

73“We believe in our Lord,

Who may forgive us our faults

and the magic you made us perform;

for God is more worthy and lasting.”

74Those who come to their Lord

as sinners shall attain hell

where they shall find

neither death nor life.

75But those who come

to Him as believers,

with righteous deeds,

shall attain exalted stations—

76eternal gardens, beneath which

rivers flow, where they shall

live forever—the reward

of those who attain purity.

SECTION 4

77We inspired Moses, saying,

“Travel by night with my servants

and break open a dry path for them

through the sea; have no fear

of being overtaken, nor be afraid.”

78Then Pharaoh pursued them

with his forces, but the sea

overwhelmed and covered them.

79So Pharaoh led his people astray

instead of guiding them.

80Children of Israel,

We delivered you from your enemy,

and We made a covenant with you

on the right slope of Mount Sinai,

and We sent down to you

manna and quail,

81saying, “Eat of the good things

We have provided for you,

but do not transgress in this, or

My Wrath may descend upon you.

Anyone on whom My Wrath descends

is undoubtedly fallen.

82“Yet I am Forgiving—

of those who turn in repentance

and believe and do righteous deeds,

then stay rightly guided.”

83[When Moses was on the mountain,

God said,] “What made you

hasten from your people, Moses?”

84He replied, “They were close

upon my heels—and I hastened

to You, My Lord, to please You.”

85God said, “We tested your people

after you were gone,

but the Samiri has led them astray.”°

86So Moses returned to his people

indignant and aggrieved. He said,

“My people, did your Lord not

make you a splendid promise?

Did the promise seem long

in coming, or did you want

your Lord’s wrath to descend

upon you, since you broke

your promise to me?”

87They said, “We didn’t break

our promise to you of our own accord,

but we were made to carry

the people’s ornaments,°

so we threw them [into the fire],

just as the Samiri did.”

88Then he brought out for them

the image of a calf, which seemed

to make a lowing sound,

so they said, “This is your god,

and the god of Moses,

though he has forgotten.”

89Didn’t they see that it

could not answer them a word,

and had no power either

to harm or profit them?

SECTION 5

90In fact, Aaron had said

to them earlier, “My people,

you are being tested by this, for

your true Lord is the All Merciful,

so follow me, obey my command.”

91And they had retorted,

“We’ll never cease our devotion to it

unless Moses returns to us.”

92Moses asked,

“Aaron, when you saw

they were going astray

what stopped you

93“from following me? Did you

disobey my command?”

94Aaron replied,

“Son of my mother, don’t seize me

by my beard or by my hair.

For I feared that you might say,

‘You have sparked division

among the children of Israel,

and have not respected my word.’ ”

95Moses said, “What, then,

do you have to say, Samiri?”

96He replied, “I saw something in it

that they did not. So I took

a handful of dust from

the messenger’s footprint,

and I threw it [onto the calf].

This is what my soul prompted me to do.”

97Moses said, “Be gone from here.

In all this life you’ll be doomed

to say ‘Do not touch me,’ but

for you there is a promise that

will not fail—look upon your god

to which you’re still devoted.

We will burn it and scatter

its ashes into the sea.”

98Your only god is the One God—

there is no god but Him,

Who embraces all things

in His knowing.

99In this way, We relate to you, Prophet,

the narratives of what came before—

We send a reminder from Our grace.°

100Whoever turns away from it

shall bear a heavy burden

on the day of resurrection,

101remaining under it. How wretched

shall be their burden

on the day of resurrection—

102A day when the trumpet

shall be sounded; a day when

We shall gather the sinners,

blinded, eyes blue with fear,°

103murmuring among themselves,

“You stayed but ten days on earth.”

104We know best what they say,

for those of them who are exemplary

in conduct will say, “You didn’t stay

more than a single day.”°

SECTION 6

105They ask you about the mountains.

Say, “My Lord

shall blast them into fragments.

106“He will leave them leveled as a plain.

107“You shall see there neither peak nor vale.”°

108On that day, they will follow

the caller without deviating.

All voices shall be hushed

before the All Merciful—

you shall hear nothing

but the faintest murmur.

109On that day, no intercession

can help, except from those

allowed by the All Merciful,

whose words please Him.

110He knows what lies behind them

and what lies ahead of them, but

their knowing cannot compass Him.°

111All faces shall be humbled before Him,

the Ever Living, Self-Subsisting;°

those who bear the weight of wrongdoing

shall be in despair.

112But those who have done

righteous deeds and are true believers

shall fear no wrong, nor

be deprived of their due.

113We have revealed a Quran

in Arabic, where We gave varied warnings

to make them mindful of God, or

move them to remembrance of Him.

114Exalted is God, the true King.

And Prophet, don’t be overhasty

reciting the Quran before [each]

revelation to you is completed.

Rather, say, “My Lord,

increase my knowledge.”

115We made a covenant with Adam

in an earlier time, but he forgot;

and We found in him no firm resolve.

SECTION 7

116When We said to the angels,

“Bow down before Adam,” they

bowed. But not Iblis—he refused.

117Then We said, “Adam,

this is an enemy to you

and your wife—so don’t let him

drive you from the garden

and bring you to misery.

118“There is enough in it for you

to be neither hungry, nor naked,

119“nor suffer from thirst,

nor the sun’s heat.”

120But Satan whispered to him,

“Adam, shall I lead you to

the tree of eternal life,

and a kingdom beyond aging?”

121Then they both ate of it, and

their shame was exposed to them.

They began to fasten leaves

from the garden to cover themselves.

In this way, Adam disobeyed

his Lord, and fell into error.

122Later, though, his Lord chose him,

turning to him, and guiding him.

123[At that time], God said, “Go down,

both of you, from the garden,

as enemies to each other. But if

My guidance comes to you, whoever

follows it shall not go astray

nor be brought to misery.

124“But whoever turns away

from My remembrance

shall find a straitened existence,

and We shall raise him up

blind on the day of resurrection.”

125He will say, “My Lord,

why did you raise me up blind,

when I possessed sight before?”

126God will say,

“Just as you forgot Our signs

when they came to you,

so this day

you shall be forgotten.”

127And so We recompense

whoever transgresses, who does not

believe in the signs of their Lord—

and the punishment of the hereafter

is sterner and more lasting.

128Is it not a lesson to them

that We destroyed before them

generations through whose dwellings

they now walk? In this

are signs for people of intellect.

SECTION 8

129Were it not for a decree already

fixed° by your Lord, and a term ordained,

their end would surely have come.

130So, Prophet, bear with what

they say, and glorify your Lord

with praise, before the sun’s rising

and before its setting. Glorify Him

during the hours of night,

and at each end of the day,

that you may find contentment.

131And do not strain your eyes

toward the things We have granted

some of them to enjoy, the splendor

of the life of this world—

that We might test them by these.

For the provision of your Lord

is worthier and more lasting.

132Enjoin your family to pray

and to be steadfast in this.

We do not ask you for sustenance—

It is We Who sustain you.

And the best outcome shall be

for those who are mindful of God.

133But they say, “Why does he not

bring us a sign from his Lord?”

Has not a clear sign come to them

in the earlier scriptures?

134But if We had destroyed them

by a punishment before this,

they would have cried, “Our Lord,

why did you not send a messenger

to us? Then we should have

followed your signs before we were

humbled and disgraced.”

135Say, “Each of us is waiting,

therefore, [watch and] wait—

and you shall know

who has adhered to the level path

and who is rightly guided.”

SURA 21

The Prophets (Al-Anbiyaʾ)

A late Meccan sura, the full roll call of prophets—from Adam to Muhammad—is the focus of its 112 verses. Muhammad becomes the emblematic representative of all prophets with the command “Say” in vv. 4 and 112. After reiterating the Oneness of God, followed by signs of His Power and Providence, the sura cites several prophets, ending with a reference to Mary (vv. 91–94). She is not otherwise heralded as a prophet, although elsewhere (23:50–51) she and Jesus are described as “a sign for all peoples” (v. 91).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1The reckoning of humankind

draws near—yet they remain

heedless, turning away.

2No new message comes to them

from their Lord, without

their listening to it frivolously,

3their hearts distracted.

The wrongdoers hide

their secret murmurings,

“Isn’t this just a human like you?

Would you fall for this sorcery

happening right before your eyes?”

4Say,° “My Lord knows

whatever is spoken

in the heavens and the earth,

for He is All Hearing, All Knowing.”

5They say, “Confused dreams!”

or “He’s making it up,”

or “He’s just a poet!—

Let him bring us a sign

like those sent to peoples of old.”

6The towns We destroyed before them

did not believe. Will they now believe?

7Before you, Prophet, We sent

only men whom We inspired.

You who disbelieve, ask those who

have the message, if you don’t know.

8And We did not give them

bodies that needed no food,

nor were they immortal.

9In the end We fulfilled

Our promise to them,

and saved them with those

We wished to save,

and We destroyed those

who transgressed.

10We have revealed to you

a Book to remind you—

will you not, then, use reason?

SECTION 2

11How many towns We demolished

on account of their wrongdoing,

raising other peoples after them!

12Then, when they sensed Our wrath

coming upon them, see how they fled!

13They were told,

“Don’t flee, but go back

to the comforts you enjoyed

and to your homes, so that

you might be questioned.”

14They said, “Shame on us!

We were wrongdoers.”

15And their cry did not stop

until We turned them into crops,

lopped and burned to ashes.

16We did not create

the heavens and earth

—and all that lies between—

for mere amusement.

17Had We wanted distraction,

We could have found it within Us,

were We so inclined.

18No—We hurl the truth

against falsehood, shattering

its head. See—it vanishes.

And shame on you for what

you ascribe to God.

19To Him belong all who are

in the heavens and the earth,

and those in His presence°

are not too proud to worship Him,

nor do they grow weary.

20They glorify Him

night and day, tirelessly.

21Have they adopted for worship

gods from the earth?

Can these bring back the dead?

22If there were other gods beyond

the One God, in both [the heavens

and the earth], both would be in ruin.

Glory be to God, Lord of the Throne,

far above all that they ascribe to Him.

23He cannot be questioned

for anything He does—

it is they who will be questioned.

24Have they adopted other gods

besides Him? Say, “Bring your proof.

This is the message for those

with me and those before me.”

But most of them don’t know

the truth—they turn away.

25Before you, Prophet,

We sent no messenger

without revealing to him

the truth that there is no god

but Me—so worship only Me.

26They say, “The All Merciful

has begotten a child.”

Glory be to Him—those

are only His honored servants.”°

27They do not speak before He does,

and act only on His command.

28He knows what lies before them,

and what lies behind them;

they can intercede only for those

He approves, for they themselves

stand in awe, in fear of Him.°

29If any of them should claim,

“I am a god besides Him,”

We shall reward them with hell.

That is how We reward wrongdoers.

SECTION 3

30Don’t the unbelievers know

that the heavens and the earth

were joined together

before We divided them?

And We made from water

every living thing.

Will they still not believe?

31We have set upon the earth

firm mountains, to stop it quaking

beneath them, and We have

placed on it wide highways,

so they might find their way.

32And We raised the sky,

a secure canopy, yet still

they turn away from Our signs.

33It is He who created

night and day, sun and moon,

each sailing in its own orbit.°

34We have not granted immortality

to any human before you, Prophet.

If even you are destined to die,

can the disbelievers be immortal?

35Every soul shall taste death;

We test you by evil and good—a trial;

to Us you shall be returned.

36When the unbelievers see you,

they just sneer at you, “Is this the one

who talks about your gods?”

They shun any remembrance

of the All Merciful.

37Humankind was created hasty by nature.

Soon I shall show you My signs,

so don’t ask Me to hasten their coming.

38They demand of you,

“When will this promise be realized,

if you are speaking the truth?”

39If only the unbelievers knew

about the time to come, when,

unable to fend off the fire

from their faces or their backs,

they shall find no help.

40No—the hour will fall upon them

suddenly, confounding them;

unable to hold it back,

they shall find no respite.

41Messengers before you were mocked,

but those who scoffed were besieged

by [the very wrath] they used to mock.

SECTION 4

42Say, “Who can protect you

during the night and the day

from the All Merciful?”

But no—they turn away

from all remembrance of their Lord.

43Do they have gods who can

defend them against Us?

Those gods cannot help themselves,

nor can they be protected from Us.

44We let these men and their fathers

enjoy comforts through a long life.

But don’t they see

how We came upon their land,

to scale back its borders?

Can they then prevail?

45Say, “I am merely warning you

according to the revelation.”

But the deaf will not hear the call

even when they are warned.

46Yet if the mere scent of punishment

reached them from your Lord,

they would cry out, “Shame on us—

we really were wrongdoers.”

47We shall set up a just balance

on the day of resurrection, so that

no soul shall be wronged at all;

and We shall bring into account

even the weight of a mustard seed,

for We are proficient in Reckoning.°

48We gave Moses and Aaron

the criterion of judgment,

a light and a reminder

for those who are mindful of God—

49those who fear their Lord

in the unseen, and hold in awe

the impending hour.

50This Quran that We revealed

is a blessèd reminder—

will you, then, reject it?

51In earlier days, We made Abraham

righteous, knowing him well.

52When he asked his father

and people, “What are these images

to which you’re devoted?”

53They answered, “We found

our ancestors worshipping them.”

54He exclaimed,

“You and your forefathers

have clearly gone astray.”

55They retorted,

“Have you brought us the truth,

or are you joking?”

56He said, “No. Your Lord

is the Lord of the heavens and earth;

it is He Who made them,

and I bear witness to this.

57“And by God, I’m planning

something for your idols,

once you’ve turned your backs!”

58Then he smashed them to pieces,

all except the biggest one—

so that they might come back to it.

59They fumed, “Who has done this

to our gods? Some wrongdoer!”

60People said, “We heard a youth

called Abraham, ranting about them.”

61They urged, “Bring him here, then,

before the eyes of the people,

so they can see for themselves.”

62And they asked, “Was it you

who did this to our gods, Abraham?”

63He answered, “No. It was done

by this one, the biggest of your idols.

Ask the idols—if they can speak.”

64They turned upon

one another,° saying,

“It’s you who are in the wrong!”

65Then they turned about:°

“You know full well

these idols can’t speak.”

66Abraham said, “So, you worship

—instead of God—things that can

neither profit nor harm you?

67“Shame on you and those

you worship instead of God!

Won’t you use reason?”

68They said, “Burn him,

and uphold your gods,

if you want to do something.”°

69We said, “Fire, be cold,

and keep Abraham safe!”

70Then they aimed

to plot against him,

but We made them

the ultimate losers.

71We delivered him and Lot

to the land We blessed

for all peoples.

72We also gave him Isaac and Jacob,

and We made all of them righteous.

73We made them leaders,

to guide people by Our command,

and inspired them to do good deeds,

be steadfast in prayer,

and give in due charity—

they were Our true servants.

74We endowed Lot

with wisdom and knowledge,

and We saved him from the town

that practiced abominations—

they were a wicked,

disobedient people.

75We received him into Our mercy,

for he was one of the righteous.

SECTION 5

76When Noah cried out to Us,

in earlier days, We answered him,

saving him and his family

from the great calamity.

77We helped him against a people

who denied Our signs.

They were a wicked people,

so We drowned them all.

78When David and Solomon

passed judgment concerning a field

into which the sheep of certain people

had strayed by night, We witnessed

their judgment in the matter,

79and gave Solomon

a sound grasp of it,

though We gave to both of them

shrewd judgment and knowledge.

We made the mountains and birds

echo Our glory, along with David.

It was We Who brought about

all these things.

80It was We Who taught him

how to make coats of mail,

to protect you in warfare:

will you, then, give thanks?

81And [We subdued] the wind

to Solomon, so that it flew

by his command to the land

which We had blessed—

for We know all things.

82And We made some of the demons

dive into the sea for him,

and do other work,

while We watched over them.

83When Job cried out to his Lord,

“Misfortune is upon me,

yet You are the Most Merciful

of the merciful,”

84We answered him,

removing his misfortune,

restoring his family to him,

and its like along with them,

as a mercy from Our grace

and a reminder to Our servants.

85And then there were Ishmael, Idris,

and Ezekiel, all steadfast in patience,

86whom We received into Our mercy,

for they were undoubtedly righteous.

87And Jonah strode off in anger,

imagining We had no sway over him.

But then he called out

through the dark depths,

“There is no god but You.

Glory be to You.

It was I who was wrong.”

88So We answered him,

and saved him from distress—

as We save believers.

89When Zachariah called to his Lord,

“My Lord, don’t leave me childless

and alone—though You are doubtless

the best of heirs,”

90We answered him,

and gave him a son, John,

curing his barren wife.

They would always hasten

to do good deeds,

and would call upon Us

in hope and fear,

humbling themselves before Us.

91We breathed Our spirit into Mary°

who preserved her chastity;

We made her and her son

a sign for all peoples.

92This community of yours is one,

and I am your Lord, so worship Me.

93But [subsequent generations]

became divided into sects—

to Us they shall all return.

SECTION 6

94The labor of those

who do good deeds and are believers

shall never be rejected,

and We shall record it on their behalf.

95But no town

that We have wiped out

shall rise again°

96till the people of Gog and Magog°

are unleashed, swarming down

from every slope,

97and the true promise draws near.

Then, the eyes of the disbelievers

will stare in horror, and they will say,

“Shame on us, we were heedless

of this—we did wrong.”

98You polytheists and those

you worship instead of God

shall be fuel for hell—to which

you shall assuredly come.

99If these idols had been gods,

they would not have ended up there;

but there they shall all stay forever.

100There, the disbelievers

shall groan in anguish,

and they shall hear nothing.

101But those to whom

We have promised good things

shall be far removed [from hell];

102they will not hear a whisper

from it, and will live forever

with all that they desire.

103The great horror

shall not grieve them;

angels shall greet them,

“This is your promised day.”

104On that day We shall

roll up the heaven, like a scroll

folding away its writing.

Just as We induced the first creation,

so We shall reproduce it anew—

This is Our promise,

which We shall fulfill.

105In the Psalms, as in earlier scriptures,

We declared, “My righteous servants

shall inherit the earth.”°

106This Quran bears a message

for those who worship God.

107We sent you, Prophet, only

as a mercy to humankind.

108Say, “What has been revealed

to me is that your god is One God—

so will you not submit to His will?

109But if they turn away from you,

say, “I have proclaimed the message

to all of you alike.

But it’s not for me to know

if the judgment promised you

is near or far.

110“It is He Who knows

what is openly spoken,

and what you hide.

111“I do not know if this

is a trial for you—

a brief time of enjoyment.”

112Say,° “My Lord, judge justly—

our Lord, the All Merciful,

Whose help we seek against

the falsehoods you ascribe to Him.”

SURA 22

The Pilgrimage (Al-Hajj)

Both Meccan and Medinan, this sura totals 78 verses. They underscore the antiquity of the Hajj rite going back to Abraham (vv. 25–29) but also herald the ubiquity of hope for all those who believe (v. 17). While reinforcing the need to struggle and strive on behalf of truth (vv. 39ff.), this sura acknowledges that God has “assigned rites of worship for every people to perform” (v. 67). The Prophet’s duty is to remind them (of their rites), but defer until the day of resurrection all matters on which they dispute with him (vv. 68–69).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1Humankind, be mindful of your Lord,

for the trepidation° of the hour

shall be a tremendous thing.

2The day you see that dreadful hour,

every nursing mother shall forget

her child, and every pregnant female

miscarry her fetus, and you’ll see

people seeming to move

in drunken stupor, though not drunk—

so severe will be the wrath of God.

3Yet some people still argue about God,

without knowledge; they follow every

obstinate, rebellious devil.

4As decreed, the devil will lead astray

those who turn to him, guiding them

to the punishment of blazing fire.

5Humankind, if you are in doubt

about the resurrection, know that

We created you from dust, then

from sperm, then a clot of fluid,

and then an embryonic mass,

both formed and unformed—

to make clear to you [Our Power].

We allow what We will

to stay in the womb for a fixed term,

then We bring you out as infants,

to grow and reach maturity.

Some of you die young,

while others reach senility,

bereft of the knowledge they had.

You see the earth barren;

then We send rain to make it stir

and swell, sprouting exquisite

[plants of] all kinds in their pairs.

6For God is the True Reality,°

He Who brings life to the dead,

He Who has Power over all things.

7And the hour is on its way—

let there be no doubt about this,

or that God will raise up

all people from their graves.

8But among the people are some

who argue about God,

without knowledge, or guidance,

or any illuminating Book,

9twisting their necks away

in disdain that they may

lead some people astray

from God’s path.

Disgraced in this world,

We will yet make them taste

the torment of the blaze

on the day of reckoning,

10telling them, “This is for the deeds

you amassed with your own hands,

for God never wrongs His servants.”

SECTION 2

11Some of the people serve God

as if on the verge [of doubt]—

if good fortune falls to them,

they feel content.

But if they are tested,

their faces turn about, reverting—

they have lost both this world and

the hereafter—a distinct loss.

12They call on gods other than God

—who can neither harm nor help them—

and thereby stray far away.

13They call on one more disposed

to harm than help°—a wicked patron,

a wicked companion.

14God will usher those who believe

and do good deeds into gardens,

beneath which rivers flow—

for God does all that He intends.

15Whoever thinks that God

will not help him in either this world

or the hereafter, let him stretch

a rope to the ceiling, [hang himself

from it,] and cut off his life,

to see if his recourse

removes the source of his rage.°

16We reveal the Quran

in clear verses;

God guides whom He will.

17Those who believe,

and the Jews, Sabians, Christians,

Magians,° and polytheists—

God will judge between them

on the day of resurrection,

for God is Witness to all things.

18Do you not see that all things

in the heavens and on the earth

bow down before God—

the sun, moon, stars, mountains,

trees, animals, and many people,

though many deserve to be punished?

No one can raise to honor

those whom God disgraces,

for God does all that He will.

19Both believers and unbelievers

dispute over their Lord.

A robe of fire shall be tailored

for those who deny, and scorching

water poured over their heads,

20melting their insides and skins,

21iron maces restraining them.

22Whenever they venture, in anguish,

to break out, they shall be forced back

and told, “Taste the suffering of fire.”

SECTION 3

23But God will usher those who believe

and do good deeds into gardens

beneath which rivers flow. Bracelets

of gold and pearl shall adorn them,

and their clothes shall be of silk.

24For they were guided

toward virtuous words,

and toward the path

of the Praiseworthy.

25As for the disbelievers, who

bar people from the path of God

and the sacred mosque

(which We made for humankind,

residents and visitors alike),°

the disbelievers who

aim to deviate and do wrong—

We shall make them taste

a painful torment.

SECTION 4

26We entrusted to Abraham the site

of the sacred house, saying,

“Do not join other gods with Me

in worship, and purify My house

for those who circle round it,

those who stand to pray, and those

who bow and prostrate themselves.

27“And proclaim to all people

the duty of pilgrimage.

They will come to you on foot,

and on every kind of swift camel;

they will come out from every

far and deep mountain pass,

28“so they might see some gain

and remember the name of God

on the designated days,

pronounced over the cattle

He has provided for them.

Eat from them, and also

feed those who are destitute, poor.

29“Then let them complete their rites

of cleansing, fulfill their vows,

and circle the ancient house.”°

30This [is how to perform

the pilgrimage]: those who honor

the sacred rites of God

will find this better for them

in the sight of their Lord.

And livestock are lawful to you,

except what is already banned.°

Refrain from the abomination

of worshipping idols, and refrain

from uttering what is false.

31Be upright in faith to God,

never joining other gods with Him;

whoever does this is like a person

who has fallen from the sky

and is plucked away by birds, or

blown by the wind to a far-off place.

32This is how it is—those

who honor the rituals of God°

do so from the piety of their hearts.

33Livestock will yield benefits

for you, for a limited time;

then, their place of sacrifice

shall be near the ancient house.

SECTION 5

34We designated rites of sacrifice

for every community, so they might

remember the name of God over

the livestock he gave to sustain them.

For your God is One God,

so submit to Him alone,

and give joyous news to those

who humble themselves,

35those whose hearts fill with awe

when the name of God is spoken,

who show patience

when adversity strikes them,

those who are steadfast in prayer,

and spend in charity from what

We have given them.

36We have made for you

among the rituals of God

the sacrificial camels and cows;

in them is much good for you.

So, invoke the name of God

over them as they are lined up

for sacrifice. Then, when they

are fallen, lifeless, on their sides,

eat from them, and feed the needy,

those who ask and those who don’t.

Hence We subdued to your use

these sacrificial beasts,

that you might give thanks.

37It is not their meat that reaches God,

nor their blood; what reaches Him

is your piety. Hence He subdued them

to your use, that you might glorify God

for guiding you. So give joyous news

to those who do good deeds.

38God will defend the believers;

He has no love for the traitors

or those who are ungrateful.

SECTION 6

39Permission to fight is given

to those who are attacked,

for they have been wronged.°

And God is All Powerful

in His support of them—

40those driven out of their homes unjustly

—merely for saying, “Our Lord is the One God.”

If God did not restrain some people

by means of others, then monasteries,

churches, synagogues, and mosques

—where the name of God

is remembered often—would be torn down.

God will help those who help His cause,

for God is Supremely Strong, Almighty;

41those who, once We settle them in the land,

are steadfast in prayer, give in charity,

enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong.

With God rests the outcome of all things.

42Prophet, if they deny you,

know that before them

the people of Noah, ʿAd,

and Thamud denied them,

43as did the people

of Abraham and Lot,

44and those of Midian.

Even Moses was denied.

I granted respite

to the unbelievers for a while,

and then I seized them—

how dire was My punishment!

45How many towns did We destroy,

as they fell into wrongdoing?

Their walls fell down with their roofs.

How many wells lie deserted,

how many proud palaces?°

46Have they not journeyed

through the land

with hearts to reason,

and ears to hear?

It is not their eyes that are blind,

but the hearts within their breasts.

47Taunting, they ask you to hasten

the punishment. But God will not fail

in His promise. A day for God is like

a thousand years in your counting.°

48How many were the towns

to which I granted respite,

which fell into wrongdoing?

Afterward, I seized them;

their final destination is to Me.

SECTION 7

49Say to them, “People, I am here

only to give you clear warning:

50“Those who believe

and do good deeds

shall find forgiveness

and rich provision.

51“But those who strive

against Our signs,

vainly opposing [Our might]—

they shall be inmates

of hellfire.”

52We never sent a messenger

or prophet, who aspired [high]

without Satan infusing [doubt]

into his aspiration. But God removes

what Satan infuses, and He

reinforces His signs, for God

is All Knowing, All Wise.

53[God does this] to make

what Satan infuses a trial

for those whose hearts are sick,

and those whose hearts are hardened

—the wrongdoers are mired

in deep resistance to truth—

54and so that those given knowledge

might know that the Quran

is the truth from your Lord,

and believe in it, humbly submitting

their hearts to Him.

For God Guides those who believe

to the straight path.

55But those who disbelieve

won’t cease to doubt it, until

the hour falls upon them suddenly,

or the torment of a day of desolation.

56Dominion on that day

shall belong to God, and

He shall judge between them.

Those who believed

and did good deeds

shall find themselves

in gardens of bliss,

57while those who disbelieved

and denied Our signs

shall face disgracing torment.

SECTION 8

58God shall give a fine provision

to those who leave their homes

in the cause of God,

and are then killed or die—

He is the Best Provider.°

59He will bring them into a place

most pleasing to them,

for God is All Knowing, Forbearing.

60So it will be. If someone requites

a wrong in like measure, and is

wronged again, God will help them—

He is Pardoning, Forgiving.

61So it will be. For God

fades night into day

and day into night. God

is All Hearing, All Seeing.

62So it will be. For God is Reality,

and those they call on besides Him

are illusion. And God is Most High,

the Most Great.

63Do you not see how God

sends down rain from the sky,

and the earth turns green.

God is Most Subtle, All Aware.

64To Him belongs

all that is the heavens

and all that is on the earth.

He is Self-Sufficient, Praiseworthy.

SECTION 9

65Do you not see that God

has subdued to your use

all that is on the earth

and the ships that sail the sea

by His command? That He

prevents the sky from falling

onto the earth, without His leave?

God is Most Kind, Ever Merciful

toward humankind.

66It is He Who gave you life,

will make you die, and give you life

again. Yet humankind is ungrateful.

67We have assigned rites of worship

for every people to perform, so

don’t let them dispute this with you,

Prophet, but call them to your Lord,

for you are guided on a straight path.

68If they should dispute with you,

say, “God knows best what you do.

69“God will judge between you

on the day of resurrection

concerning the things

over which you dispute.”

70Do you not know that God knows

all that is in the heavens and earth?

All this is inscribed in a record—

and this is easy for God.

71Yet they worship, instead of God,

things for which no sanction

has been revealed to them,

things they have no knowledge of;

and there will be none to help

those who do wrong.

72When Our clear verses are recited

to them, you’ll observe recalcitrance

on the faces of those who disbelieve—

they would almost do violence

to those who recite our verses to them.

Say, “Shall I tell you of something

worse than [your anger]?

The fire of hell—which God has

promised for those who disbelieve—

an evil destination.”

SECTION 10

73People, here is a parable, so hear it

with due care: those you invoke

besides God could not create a fly—

though they all combined in trying.

And if the fly snatched something

from them, they couldn’t take it back.

How feeble are those who seek

and those who are sought.

74They fail to assess God

in His true measure—for God

is Supremely Strong, Almighty.

75God chooses messengers

from angels and humans,

for God is All Hearing, All Seeing.

76He knows what lies before them

and what lies behind them;

and all issues return to Him

for resolution.

77You who believe, bow down,

prostrate yourselves,

worship your Lord, and do good,

that you might flourish.

78And strive for God

with due effort. He has chosen you,

and imposed upon you

no hardship in religion.

It is the creed of Abraham.

God named you as those

who submit [to His will],° both

before and in this [Book], so that

the messenger might be a witness

for you, and you for humankind.

Be steadfast, then, in prayer,

give in charity, and hold fast to God,

for He is your Protector—

the Supreme Protector,

the Supreme Helper.

SURA 23

The Believers (Al-Muʾminun)

Late Meccan, this sura of 118 verses underscores the benefit of faith for true believers, invoked in v. 1 and addressed throughout. Instances of God’s power and protection abound (vv. 12–22) and the role of messengers is extolled, including Jesus (vv. 50–51) while the certainty of resurrection is marked by a barrier (barzakh, v. 100), evident for all to see on the Last Day (vv. 101–15).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1The true believers shall succeed,

2those who pray humbly,

3who turn away from idle speech,

4who perform deeds of charity,

5and preserve their chastity,

6except with their spouses or servants,

for then they are not blameworthy.

7But those who seek to exceed

these limits are transgressors.

8Those who observe

their covenants and trusts,

9who preserve their practice of prayer—

10shall be the heirs

11who inherit the highest paradise,

living there through eternity.

12We created humankind

from a substance of clay,

13which We lodged as a drop [of sperm]

within a secure, stable home.

14We turned the sperm drop

into a clot, and the clot

into an embryonic mass;

We turned the mass into bones,

clothing the bones with flesh,

to produce from this

a new being.° Blessed be God,

the Most Excellent of Creators.

15After this, you will die,

16and be raised up again

on the day of resurrection.

17We created seven spheres above you,°

never heedless of Our creation.

18We sent down water from the sky

in due measure, and caused it

to soak the earth. Yet We always

have the Power to withdraw it.

19We use it to grow gardens for you

of date palms and grapevines,

yielding abundant fruit for you to eat,

20and a tree springing from Mount Sinai,°

yielding oil and relish for your food.

21There is a lesson for you

in the example of livestock—

from their bellies We give you milk

to drink, and they have many uses

for you; you also feed on them,°

22and you are carried

on them, as you are in ships.

SECTION 2

23We sent Noah to his people.

He said, “My people, worship God.

you have no god other than Him,

so will you not be mindful of Him?”

24The chiefs of the unbelievers

among his people retorted,

“This is but a human, like you,

wanting to show that he is

superior to you. If God had willed it,

He could have sent angels.

We never heard such talk as this

among our ancestors of old.

25“He’s merely a madman,

so let’s wait for a while

[to see what might happen].”

26Noah pleaded, “My Lord, help me,

for they accuse me of lying.”

27So We inspired him,

“Build the ark, under Our gaze

and Our inspiration. Then,

when Our command comes,

and the springs of the earth gush out,

take on board a pair of every species

and your family, except those

already sentenced.

Do not plead with Me

for the wrongdoers—

they will be drowned.

28“And when you and your crew

have embarked on the ark, say,

‘All praise be to God, Who saved us

from a people who do wrong.’

29“And say, ‘My Lord, let me

disembark in a blessèd harbor,

for You bestow the best of harbors.’ ”

30In this are signs—for We have always

put human beings through trials.

31After them We raised

another generation.

32And We sent a messenger to them,

one of their own, who urged,

“Worship God, you have no god

but Him—so will you not

be mindful of Him?”

SECTION 3

33But the chiefs of those

who disbelieved among his people

—who denied the meeting with God

in the hereafter, and to whom

We had granted the luxuries

of the life of this world—

said to them, “This prophet

is but a human like you.

He eats what you eat,

and drinks what you drink.

34“And if you obey a mere human

like yourselves, you will lose out.

35“Does he promise that when you die,

and are nothing but dust and bones,

you’ll be raised up once more?

36“What you’re promised

is far, far-fetched.

37“There’s nothing beyond

our life in this world.

We die and we live—

but we shall never

be raised up again.

38“He’s just a man who invents

a lie about God,

and we don’t believe him.”

39The prophet said,

“My Lord, help me,

for they accuse me of lying.”

40God replied, “Soon, they will

begin to feel remorse.”

41Then the blast struck them,

and We reduced them to debris

of dead leaves. Away, then,

with a people who do wrong!

42After them, We raised

other generations.

43No community can hasten

its term, nor delay it.

44We sent Our messengers, in turn.

Every time a people’s messenger

came to them, they denied him.

So We made them follow one another,

and We made them an example—

a tale of warning. Away, then,

with a people who will not believe!

45Then We sent Moses

and his brother Aaron,

with Our signs,

with clear authority

46to Pharaoh and his chiefs,

but they were proud, arrogant people.

47They said, “Shall we believe

in two men like ourselves,

whose people merely serve us?”

48So they accused them of lying

but they were themselves destroyed.

49And We gave Moses the Book

so that his people might be guided.

50We made the son of Mary

and his mother a sign for humankind,

and We gave them shelter

on a serene hill, with a flowing spring.

SECTION 4

51“Messengers, eat food

that is wholesome and good,

and do good works,

for I Know all that you do.

52“This community of yours

is one community,

and I am your Lord,

so be mindful of Me.”

53But they split up their religion,

among themselves, into sects,

each faction happy with its own beliefs.°

54So leave them,

in their confusion,

for a while.

55Do they think that, because

We gave them wealth and sons,

56We will hasten to grant them

all good things?

No—but they don’t know it.

57Those who live in awe,

fearing their Lord,

58those who believe

in the signs of their Lord,

59those who don’t join

other gods with their Lord,

60and those who give in charity

with hearts trembling, knowing

they will return to their Lord°—

61they are the ones who hasten

to do good deeds, foremost in this.

62We never burden any soul

beyond its capacity.

And We have before Us a Book

that speaks the truth,

so they shall never be wronged.

63But the hearts of disbelievers

are confused over this,

they perform other [evil] deeds—

64until We seize and punish

those among them mired in wealth;

then they will cry out for help.

65But they will be told,

“Don’t cry for help—

you shall never get help from Us.

66“Whenever My signs

were recited to you, you would

turn back, on your heels,

67“conversing by night, in your pride,

indulging in idle jokes about the Book.”

68Do they not ponder over the Word?

Has something new come to them

that never came to their ancestors?

69Or is it that they don’t recognize

their messenger, and so deny him?

70Or do they say, “He’s possessed”?

No. He has brought them the truth,

but most of them hate the truth.

71If the truth had complied

with their desire,

then the heavens, the earth,

and all within them

would be in ruins.

We gave them their reminder,

yet they turn away from it.

72Prophet, do you ask of them

any recompense? The recompense

of your Lord is better—

He is the Best of Providers.

73Though you call them

to a straight path,

74those who don’t believe

in the hereafter

veer from that path.

75Even if We showed mercy to them

and removed their distress,

they would keep transgressing

wandering blindly around.

76We seized and punished them,

yet still they would not submit

to their Lord, nor will they

humble themselves

77until We open for them

a door to severe torment—

then they’ll be in despair.

SECTION 5

78It is He Who engendered in you

hearing, and sight, and feeling—

but seldom are you grateful.

79It is He Who multiplied you

through the earth, and to Him

you shall be gathered.

80It is He Who gives life and death,

and rules the cycle of night and day—

Will you not, then, use reason?

81No—like ancient peoples, they say,

82“What? Once we’re dead,

and turned to dust and bones,

will we be raised up again?

83“Such promises were made before

to us and our ancestors—they are

nothing but tales of the ancients.”

84Say, “To whom

does the earth belong,

and all those upon it—

if you truly know?”

85They will answer, “To God.”

Say, “Then will you not take heed?”

86Say, “Who is Lord

of the seven heavens,

and Lord of the mighty throne?”

87They will say, “God.”

Say, “Will you not, then,

be filled with awe?”

88Say, “In whose hand

lies the dominion of all things,

Who protects all,

Who is the One against Whom

there is no protection—

say, if you know?”

89They will reply, “God.”

Say, “Why, then, are you deluded?”

90We did bring them the truth,

but they are lying.

91Nor did God beget a child,

for there is no god besides Him—

else each god would take

what he had created

and some would overpower others.

May God be glorified above

what they ascribe to Him!

92Knower of the unseen

and the seen, may He be exalted

above the gods they join with Him.

SECTION 6

93Say, “My Lord, if you

must show me° what [torment]

they are promised,

94then do not, my Lord, place me

among the wrongdoers.”

95We are quite Able to show you

the torment We have promised them.

96Repel whatever is wicked

with whatever is most excellent;

We know best

what they ascribe to Us.

97And say, “My Lord,

I seek refuge with you

against the devils’ promptings,

98“and I seek refuge with you,

my Lord, should they be near me.”

99And when death comes

to any of them, they plead,

“My Lord, send me back

100“so I can do the good deeds

I left undone.” Never.

These are mere words they speak.

Behind such people shall remain

a barrier—until the day they are raised.

101On the day the trumpet sounds

all bonds between them will be gone,

and none will ask about another.

102Those whose balance is heavy

—they shall flourish.

103But those whose balance is light—

they shall have lost their souls,

and they shall stay in hell forever.

104The fire will burn their faces,

grimacing with twisted lips.

105“Were my verses not recited

to you—which you kept denying?”

106They will say, “Our Lord,

our perversity overcame us, and

we were a people gone astray.

107“Our Lord, take us out of here,

and if we relapse,

we’ll indeed be wrongdoers.”

108He will say, “Stay there,

and do not address Me.

109“When a group of My servants

would pray, ‘Our Lord, we believe,

so forgive us, and show us mercy,

for You are the Most Merciful of all,’°

110“you mocked them—

so much so, that you forgot

to remember Me

as you laughed at them.

111“This day I have rewarded them

for their patience—and they

are the ones who will triumph.”

112He will say, “How many years

did you stay on the earth?”

113They will answer, “We stayed

a mere day or part of a day—but ask

those who are tasked with reckoning.”

114He will say, “You stayed only

a short while—if only you knew.

115“Did you think

We created you in vain,

and that you would not

be brought back to Us?”

116Exalted be God, the true King—

there is no god but Him,

Lord of the glorious throne.

117Whoever calls on any god

beyond the One God

—for which they have no proof—

shall face their reckoning

with their Lord.

The disbelievers shall never flourish.

118Say, then, “My Lord,

show forgiveness and mercy,

for You are the Most Merciful of all.”

SURA 24

Light (Al-Nur)

Medinan, this sura numbers 64 verses, highlighted by the mystical verses (vv. 35–40), but also includes ethical mandates for slander and fornication, deriving from the rumor concerning the prophet’s wife ʿAʾisha (vv. 11–20). The obligation to be mindful of slaves, children, women, the blind, and the sick concludes this litany of divine signs (vv. 58–61), with the reminder of God’s surveillance and omniscience (vv. 63–64).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1We have revealed this sura,

whose decrees are binding.

We have revealed in it clear signs,

so that you might take heed.

2Give the adulteress and

adulterer a hundred lashes each.

Don’t let pity for them keep you

from the judgment of God

if you believe in God

and the last day;

and let a group of believers

witness their punishment.

3The adulterer shall marry

only an adulteress, or a polytheist;

and the adulteress only an

adulterer or a polytheist—

this is forbidden for believers.°

4As for those who accuse

chaste women without then

bringing four witnesses—

give them eighty lashes,

and reject their testimony

ever after; they are transgressors—

5except those who then repent,

and amend themselves,

for God is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

6Let those who accuse their wives

of adultery, with no witnesses

but themselves, each bear witness

four times before God

that he is being truthful,

7and the fifth time,

that the curse of God

be upon him if he is lying.

8But the wife shall suffer

no punishment if she bears witness

four times before God

that he is lying,

9and the fifth time,

that the wrath of God

be upon her if he is being truthful.°

10If not for God’s grace

upon you and His mercy, and

that God is Relenting, All Wise.°

SECTION 2

11It was a group among you

who propagated the lie°—don’t

think of it as a bad thing for you.

No, it was for your good:

every one of them

will answer for his sin, and the one

who played the major part

will incur great torment.

12When you heard the lie,

why didn’t believing men and women

think better of their own people

and declare, “This is an obvious lie”?

13Why didn’t the accusers

bring four witnesses to vouch for it?

Since they didn’t, it is they

who are liars in the eyes of God.

14If not for the grace

of God upon you, and His mercy

in this world and the hereafter,

immense punishment would have

struck you for indulging [such calumny],

15when you took it on your tongues°

and spewed from your mouths

what you did not know—

you took lightly

what was weighty with God.

16And when you heard it,

why didn’t you say,

“It’s not for us to speak of this.

Glory be to You—

this is a great slander”?

17God warns you

not to repeat the like of this

—ever—if you are believers.

18And God makes the signs

clear for you,

for God is Knowing, Wise.

19Those who enjoy spreading

lewdness among the believers

shall face a painful punishment

in this life and the hereafter;

for God knows—and you do not.

20If not for the grace

of God upon you, and His mercy,

and that God is Most Kind,

Ever Merciful.

SECTION 3

21You who believe, do not follow

in the footsteps of Satan,

for he incites those who do so

to indecency and evil.

Were it not for the grace

of God upon you and His mercy,

not one of you would be pure, ever;

but God purifies whom He will,

for God is All Hearing, All Knowing.

22Let those among you blessed

with bounty and largesse not refuse

to help their kin, the needy, and those

who left their homes in God’s cause.

Let them forgive and pardon—

would you not like God to forgive you?

God is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

23Those who accuse chaste women,

who are believing but careless,

are cursed in this life

and in the hereafter, and

shall face great punishment

24on the day when their tongues,

their hands, and their feet

shall bear witness against them

for all their deeds.

25On that day God will give them

their due recompense in full,

and they will know that

God is the clarifying Truth.

26Lewd women are for lewd men

and lewd men for lewd women;

good women are for good men

and good men for good women—

they are innocent of what

people say about them;

they shall be shown forgiveness

and a noble provision.

SECTION 4

27You who believe, do not

enter houses other than your own

without asking permission

and greeting those within—

this is better for you,

so that you might be heedful.

28If you find no one

in the house, don’t enter it

without permission,

and if you are told, “Go away,” go—

this is more decent° for you,

and God Knows all that you do.

29There is no blame on you

if you enter uninhabited houses

that you can use—

for God knows what you reveal

and what you conceal.

30Tell believing men

to lower their gaze

and preserve their chastity;

that is more decent for them,

and God is Aware

of all that they do.

31And tell believing women

to lower their gaze,

to preserve their chastity,

and not to expose their adornment

beyond what normally shows;

to draw their scarves over

their bosoms, and not to show

their adornment, except

to their husbands, their fathers,

their husbands’ fathers,

their sons, their stepsons,

brothers, brothers’ or sisters’ sons,

their women and their servants,

their male attendants freed of desire,°

and children who are oblivious

of women’s nakedness.

Tell them not to stamp their feet

to flaunt their hidden adornments.°

And believers, all: turn toward God,

repenting, that you might prosper.

32Marry those who are single

among you, and the righteous

among your male and female slaves;

if they are poor, God will enrich them

from His grace, for God

is Expansive, All Knowing.

33Let those without the means to marry

keep chaste until God

enriches them from His grace.

Give a written contract of freedom

to those of your slaves who seek this

if you see some good in them,

and give them some of the wealth

God has given you.

Don’t force your maids

into prostitution° if they want

to be chaste, just for the gain

of this worldly life.

If anyone does compel them,

God is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

34We revealed to you clear signs,

and a parable of those who passed

before you—an admonition

for those who are mindful of God.

SECTION 5

35God is the Light°

of the heavens and of the earth;

His Light is a parable,

of a niche which holds a lamp,

the lamp enclosed in a glass,

the glass which glows like a gleaming star,

lit from an olive tree, blessed;

whose soil is neither East nor West;°

its very oil would shine forth

though untouched by fire:

Light upon Light.

God guides to His Light whom He will;

He strikes parables for humankind—

for God is Knower of all things.

36His Light abides in houses,

sanctified by God to be raised high,

where His Name is remembered.

There is He glorified, morning and evening,

37by men whom neither trade

nor profit can divert

from remembrance of God

or steadfastness in prayer,

and giving of charity;

whose sole fear is for the day

when hearts and vision

are upturned,°

38when God rewards their best deeds

giving ever more from His grace,

for God furnishes without measure

those whom He will.

39But behold the unbelievers—

their deeds are like a mirage

in the burning desert:

the parched man’s eyes see

water in the distance; approaching,

he finds nothing; beside him,

he finds God, before Whom

he must answer—and God

is Swift in Reckoning.

40Or, like darkness

on a fathomless sea,

wave upon wave, overcast by cloud:

darkness upon darkness;

if a man stretch out his hand,

he can scarce see it.

For one deprived of God’s Light

there is no light.

SECTION 6

41Do you not see that all praise God—

all in the heavens and earth,

like the birds with wings spread wide?

Each creature knows its prayer,

its mode of praise;

and God Knows all that they do.

42To God belongs dominion

of the heavens and the earth, and

to God is the final destination.

43Do you not see that God

drives the clouds, then gathers them

together, then amasses them

into heaps until you see

rain burst forth from their midst?

From these mountains

in the sky He sends down

hail, striking with it

whom He will, and averting it

from whom He will; the flash

of His lightning almost

blinds the eyes.

44God alternates night and day—

in all this is a lesson

for those with sight.

45God created every animal from water.

Some crawl on their bellies,

some walk on two legs, some on four.

God creates what He will—

God has Power over all things.

46We have revealed clear signs;

and God guides whom He will

to a straight path.

47They say, “We believe

in God and in the Prophet,

and we obey.” But afterward,

some of them turn away—

they are not believers.

48And when they are summoned

to God and His messenger

so He might judge between them,

some of them turn aside.

49But if they presume they are right,

they hurry to him, abject.

50Is there a disease in their hearts?

Or are they in doubt?

Or do they fear that God and

His messenger will be unjust to them?

No—they are the wrongdoers.

SECTION 7

51When believers are summoned

to God and His messenger

so he might judge between them,

their only response is,

“We hear and we obey”—

those are the ones who will flourish.

52Those who obey God

and His messenger, fear God

and are mindful of Him—

those are the ones who will triumph.

53They swear their solemn oaths

by God, promising that

if you commanded them,

they would march out.

Say, “Do not swear;

but offer due obedience.

God is Aware of all that you do.”

54Say, “Obey God, and obey

the messenger. But if you turn away,

know that he is liable

only for the duty placed on him,

and you for the duty placed on you.

If you obey him, you will be guided;

the messenger’s only task is

to convey the message clearly.”

55God has promised those of you

who believe and do good deeds

that He will make you inherit

the land, as He did with those

before you. And He will establish

the religion He has favored for them,

and replace their fear with security:

They shall worship me, and not

associate anything with me.

Those who deny after this

are the disobedient ones.

56Be steadfast, then, in prayer,

and give in charity,

and obey the messenger,

so you might be shown mercy.

57Do not think that

the unbelievers shall escape

God on earth; their home

is the fire—a wretched end.

SECTION 8

58You who believe, let your slaves

and those yet to reach puberty

ask your permission before they enter

at these three times:

before the dawn prayer,

when you undress at midday,

and after the evening prayer—

these are your three times of privacy.

At other times, there is no blame

upon you or upon them

if you move around one another freely.

In this way, God makes clear for you

His signs—God is Knowing, Wise.

59But when the children among you

reach puberty, let them also seek

permission, like others before them.

In this way, God makes clear for you

His signs—God is Knowing, Wise.

60There is no blame on elder women

beyond the age of childbearing,°

if they take off their outer robes,

without flaunting their adornments;

but if they refrain, that is better

for them—God is Hearing, Knowing.

61No blame will fall upon

the blind, the lame, the sick, nor

upon yourselves, if you eat

in your own houses, or the houses

of your fathers or the houses

of your mothers, or the houses of

your brothers or sisters, or of

your paternal uncles and aunts,

your maternal uncles and aunts,

or houses in your possession,°

or those of any friend.

No blame will fall upon you

whether you eat together

or separately. And when

you enter a house, greet one another

with a greeting as from God,

one that is blessed and gracious.

In this way, God makes clear to you

His signs, so you might understand.

SECTION 9

62Only those are believers who

believe in God and His messenger,

who, when they are gathered

with him for some common concern,

do not leave until they have asked

his permission. Those who do so

are the ones who believe in God

and His messenger.

And when they ask your permission

for some affair of theirs, grant it

to those whom you will among them,

and seek God’s forgiveness for them;

for God is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

63Do not treat the messenger’s

calling of you as you do your

calling of one another;

God knows those among you

who slip away in stealth.

So let those who oppose

his command beware, else

some trial or painful torment

might befall them.

64To God indeed belongs all

that is in the heavens and on earth;

He knows your state, and

on the day they are brought back

to Him, He shall inform them

of all they have done—

for God is Knower of all things.

SURA 25

The Criterion (Al-Furqan)

Middle Meccan and numbering 77 verses, this sura takes its name from the initial verse. Relying on the second-person singular in several verses, it can be referring either to the Prophet Muhammad or more generally to all believers. The depiction of barzakh as two seas (v. 53) is among its prominent literary tropes.

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1Blessèd is He Who revealed

the criterion° of right and wrong

to His servant, to warn all peoples;

2He Who has dominion over

the heavens and the earth.

He has no child, nor any partner

who shares in His dominion.

He created all things, and

determined them in due proportion.

3Yet they have adopted other gods

besides Him—who create nothing

and are themselves created,

who can bring neither harm

nor profit to themselves,

and have no power over

death or life—or resurrection.

4The disbelievers say,

“This is just a lie he’s forged

with the help of others.” But it’s they

who promote injustice and falsehood.

5And they say,

“Mere tales of the ancients

which he has had put into writing;

they’re dictated to him

morning and evening.”

6Say, “He Who knows the mystery

of the heavens and earth revealed it—

He is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.”

7They say, “What kind of messenger

is this, who eats food and walks

around the markets?

Why hasn’t an angel been sent

to give warning with him?”

8Or “Why isn’t he given treasure

or a garden° from which to eat?”

The wrongdoers say,

“You merely follow a man

who’s bewitched.”

9See what similes they coin for you!

But they are astray

and cannot find the way.

SECTION 2

10Blessèd is He Who could give you

better things than these, if He willed—

gardens, beneath which rivers flow,

with palaces He could build for you.

11But they deny the hour,

and We have prepared

for those who deny it

a blazing fire—

12when it sees them, from far away,

they will hear its raging and roaring.

13And when they are cast into it,

constricted, and chained together,

they shall plead for death.

14They will be told,

“Don’t plead, this day, for one death—

plead, rather, for many deaths!”

15Say, “Is this better,

or the eternal garden,

promised to the righteous,

as both their reward and end?°

16“They shall have there

all that they desire,

abiding there forever—a promise

assured by your Lord.”

17When He gathers them

together, on the day,

with the other gods

they worshipped besides God,

He will ask,

“Was it you who led astray

these servants of Mine, or was it they

who strayed by themselves

from the true way?”

18They will say, “Glory be to You.

We should not have taken

protectors other than You.

But you granted them comforts,

and their fathers too, so they forgot

to remember You—and became

a lost people.”

19[God will reply,] “Your false gods

prove that what you say is lies—

so you cannot avert [your punishment]

nor find help. We shall make

those of you who do wrong

taste great torment.”

20We sent no messengers before you

who did not eat food

and walk through the markets.

We made some of you a test for others.

Can you show patience?°

For your Lord is All Seeing.”

SECTION 3

21As for those who don’t expect

to meet with Us—

they taunt, “Why aren’t angels

sent down to us?” or

“Why can’t we see our Lord?”

They are proud within their hearts

and show the utmost insolence.

22On the day they see the angels—

that day, there will be no

welcome news for the sinners.

The [inmates of hell] will cry,

“A barrier, forbidden!”°

23Then We shall proceed to consider

their deeds, and scatter them like dust.

24On that day,

the people of paradise

will be in a better home,

reposing in a fairer place.

25On the day the sky with its clouds

is burst asunder,

and hosts of angels are sent down—

26on that day, the Most Merciful

shall have true dominion—

a bitter day for unbelievers.

27On that day the wrongdoer

will bite his own hands, and cry,

“If only I had taken

the path with the messenger!

28“A pity for me°—if only I hadn’t

taken so and so for a friend.

29“They diverted me from

remembrance [of the Book]

after it had come to me—

Satan always betrays humankind.”

30The messenger said, “My Lord,

my people have forsaken this Quran.”°

31In this way We gave every prophet

enemies among the sinners;

but your Lord suffices

as a guide and a helper.

32The disbelievers ask,

“Why wasn’t the Quran revealed

all at once?” We revealed it

like this so it might fortify your heart,

reciting it in due measure, over time,°

33and so they can’t bring

any example to you

that We don’t explain best,

bringing you its truth.

34Those gathered into hell,

lying on their faces,

shall be in an evil place,

farthest astray from a straight path.

SECTION 4

35We gave Moses the Book,

and his brother Aaron to help him.

36And We commanded,

“Go, both of you, to the people

who have denied Our signs”—

Then, We destroyed the people.

37And when the people of Noah

denied the messengers,

We drowned them—

making them a sign for humankind.

We have prepared a painful torment

for those who do wrong.

38So too with the people of ʿAd,

Thamud, and Rass,°

and many generations in between.

39We produced parables

warning each of them,

and each We destroyed.°

40Disbelievers must have come upon

the town showered with brimstone°—

did they not see it? No—they don’t

expect to be resurrected.

41When they see you,

they merely mock you,

“Is this the one whom God sent

as a messenger?

42“He might have led us astray

from our gods, had we not stayed

steadfast by them.”

But soon they shall know

—when they see the punishment—

who is more astray from the true way.

43Have you seen those who take

their own desire as their god?

Are you their guardian?

44Do you think most of them listen

or understand? They’re like cattle—

even more astray from the true way.

SECTION 5

45Don’t you see how your Lord

lengthens a shadow? If He wished,

He could make it stand still—

We made the sun its sign,

46then We draw it in toward Us,

phase by phase.

47It is He Who makes the night

a robe for you, and sleep a repose,

and the day for you to rise again.

48And it is He Who sends the winds

as omens, heralding His mercy;

and We send pure water from the sky

49to give life thereby to a dead land,

and drink to those We created—

so many livestock and people:

50We have distributed

[the water] among them,

that they might remember.

But most of them refuse

to be anything but thankless.

51Had We wished, We could have

sent someone to warn every town.

52So don’t heed the unbelievers

but strive hard against them,

using the Quran.

53It is He Who merged the two seas

—one fresh and sweet, the other

salty and brine—and placed between

them a barrier, forbidden.°

54And it is He Who created

the human being from water,

and ties of blood and marriage;

for your Lord is All Powerful.

55Yet they worship, besides God,

things that can neither profit

nor harm them; and the disbeliever

always helps those opposed to God.

56We sent you, Prophet, only as a

bearer of joyous news and warning.°

57Say, “I ask no reward for what I do,

only that those who desire it

take the path to their Lord.”

58And trust in the Living God

who never dies, and hymn His praise;

for He is Well Aware

of the sins of His servants.

59It is He Who created the heavens

and earth and what lies between them

in six days, then took up

the throne—the Most Merciful—

ask a learnèd person about Him.

60When they are told, “Bow down

before the Most Merciful,” they ask,

“What is the Most Merciful?

Shall we bow down

to anything you command us to?”

So their aversion grows.

SECTION 6

61Blessed is He Who graced the skies

with starry constellations, placing there

a beaming lamp and gleaming moon.

62It is He Who made night and day

in seamless sequence so that

those inclined might be mindful

or show that they are grateful.

63The worshippers of the Most Merciful

are those who walk humbly upon the earth,

and, when the ignorant address them,

respond with “Peace”;

64those who spend the night bowing

and standing [in prayer] before their Lord;

65those who plead, “Our Lord,

avert from us the torment of hell,

for its torment always cleaves—

66“it is an evil home

an evil place to repose—”

67those who are neither prodigal

in spending, nor miserly,

but achieve a mean between these;

68those who don’t invoke

any other god than the One God,

nor take a life—that God

has made sacred—without just cause,

nor engage in fornication.

Those who do these things

shall face a penalty,

69their torment doubled on the day

of resurrection, and there

they shall stay forever, disgraced—

70except those who repent,

and do good deeds.

God will displace their bad deeds

with good ones;

for God is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

71And those who repent

and do good deeds

have truly turned again to God;

72those who refrain

from bearing false witness; who,

when they hear vain talk, pass it by,

retaining their dignity;

73those who, when reminded

of the signs of their Lord,

do not stumble over them

as if they were deaf or blind;

74and those who pray, “Our Lord,

grant us spouses and offspring

who will bring comfort to our eyes,

and make us leaders of the righteous.”

75Those are the ones to be rewarded

with the highest mansion in paradise,

—for they were patient—where they

will be met with greetings and peace,

76to live there forever—a beautiful

home, a beautiful place of repose.

77Say to the disbelievers,

“My Lord will not care for you

if you do not call on Him.

You have denied Him, and soon

the inexorable torment

will fall upon you.”

SURA 26

The Poets (Al-Shuʿara)

Middle Meccan, this sura contains terse narratives in short verses of several prophets, beginning with Moses and Abraham, but also including Noah, Hud, Salih, Lot, and Shuʿayb. The final verses (192–227) extol belief, and caution against poets (hence the title) who go astray and lead others to follow them (223–26).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful.

SECTION 1

1Ta. Sin. Mim.°

2These are verses of the clear Book.

3Prophet, you would perhaps

distract yourself to death

[grieving] that they won’t believe.

4If We wished, We could send

down to them a sign from heaven,

before which their necks

would humbly bow.

5But as soon as a reminder comes

to them from the All Merciful,

they turn away from it.

6Yes, they deny it, but soon

the truth of what they scorn

will come to them.

7Don’t they see the earth—

how many noble species

We have caused to grow in it?

8In this is a sign,

yet most of them won’t believe.

9And your Lord Alone

is the Almighty, Ever Merciful.°

SECTION 2

10When your Lord called to Moses,

“Go to the people who do wrong,

11“the people of Pharaoh—

will they not be mindful of God?”

12He said, “My Lord, I fear

that they’ll say I am lying.

13“My chest will tighten,

and my tongue will falter,

so send Aaron also.

14“Besides, they have charged me

with a crime,°

and I fear they’ll kill me.”

15God answered, “Never.

Go, both of you, with Our signs.

We will be with you, listening.

16“So present yourselves

before Pharaoh, both of you,

and say, ‘We bring a message

from the Lord of the universe—

17“ ‘that you send with us

the children of Israel.’ ”

18Pharaoh retorted, “Did we not

nurture you as a child among us,

and did you not stay among us

for many years of your life?

19“Yet you committed that deed,

ungrateful as you are.”

20Moses replied, “I did it

at a time when I was astray,°

21“Then I fled from you

when I was afraid of you;

but my Lord granted me wisdom,

and made me one of the messengers.

22“And is this the favor

you have done me—that you

enslaved the children of Israel

[but spared me]?”

23Pharaoh inquired, “And what is

this Lord of the universe?”

24Moses responded, “The Lord

of the heavens and the earth,

and all that lies between them—

if only you could be convinced.”

25Pharaoh said to those around him,

“Do you not hear what he says?”

26Moses continued, “Your Lord,

and the Lord of your forefathers.”

27Pharaoh retorted, “Your messenger,

the one sent to you, is surely a madman.”

28Moses went on,

“Lord of the East and the West and

all that lies between them—

if only you could use reason.”

29Pharaoh said,

“If you take anyone but me as god,

I shall have you imprisoned.”

30Moses asked, “Even if I bring

before you convincing proof?”°

31Pharaoh said, “Bring it, then,

if you speak the truth.”

32So Moses threw his staff,

and behold, it became,

quite plainly, a snake.

33And he drew out his hand,

and behold, it gleamed white

for all to see.

SECTION 3

34Pharaoh said to the courtiers

around him, “This is indeed

an expert magician!

35“He wants to drive you

from your land by magic.

What do you advise?”

36They said,

“Detain him and his brother,

while you send

scouts to the cities to gather

37“and bring before you all

the expert magicians.”

38So the magicians were gathered

at an appointed time

on an announced day,

39and the people were asked,

“Will you too gather?”

40They replied, “We might follow

the magicians if they prevail.”

41So when the magicians arrived,

they asked Pharaoh,

“There’ll be a reward for us,

of course, if we win?”

42He replied, “Of course,

and you shall be among

my inner circle.”

43Moses said to them,

“Throw down whatever

you want to throw!”

44So they threw their ropes

and their staffs, saying,

“By the might of Pharaoh,

it is we who will win!”

45Then Moses threw down his staff,

and it soon devoured their concoctions.

46Then the magicians fell down, prostrate,

47exclaiming, “We believe

in the Lord of the universe,

48“the Lord of Moses and Aaron.”

49Pharaoh said,

“You believed in Him

before I gave you permission?

He must be your elder, who has

taught you magic. But soon

you shall know! I shall cut off

your hands and feet on either side,

and crucify you all.”

50They said,

“No harm shall befall us;

we shall turn back

to our Lord.

51“We hope our Lord

will forgive us our sins,

since we were the first to believe.”°

52And We inspired Moses—

“Travel by night, with my servants,

for you will be pursued.”

SECTION 4

53Then Pharaoh sent scouts

to all the cities,

54saying, “These Israelites

are a feeble band of men,

55“yet they have enraged us,

56“and we are a large force,

on full alert.”

57So We expelled [the Egyptians]

from their gardens and springs,

58their treasures and noble homes.°

59So it was. And later We made

the children of Israel their heirs.

60But as the sun rose

Pharaoh’s forces pursued them.

61And when the two hosts

saw each other, Moses’ companions

exclaimed, “We’re about

to be overtaken.”

62Moses responded, “No!

My Lord is with me,

He will guide me.”

63We then inspired Moses—

“Strike the sea with your staff.”

So it parted, each side like

a mighty mountain.

64And We brought the others near,

65so We delivered Moses

and all who were with him,

66then We drowned the others.

67In this is a sign—

yet most of them won’t believe.

68And your Lord Alone

is Almighty, Ever Merciful.

69And recite to them

the story of Abraham.

SECTION 5

70When he said to his father

and his people,

“What do you worship?”

71They replied, “We worship idols,

and will remain devoted to them.”

72He asked, “Do they listen to you,

when you call on them?

73“Or do you any good or harm?”

74They responded, “No, but

this is what our forefathers did.”°

75He asked, “Have you reflected on

what you have been worshipping,

76“you, and those before you?

77“They are an enemy to me—

unlike the Lord of the universe

78“Who created me;

it is He Who guides me,

79“Who gives me food and drink,

80“and Who cures me when I am ill,

81“Who will cause me to die,

and then give me life,

82“and Who, I hope,

will forgive me my faults

on the day of reckoning.

83“My Lord, grant me wisdom

and unite me with the righteous,

84“and let later generations

speak honorably of me,

85“and let me be among those

who inherit the garden of bliss;

86“Forgive my father—he is

among those who are astray,

87“and let me not be disgraced

on the day when all are raised up,

88“the day when neither wealth

nor children° will avail,

89“but only those who bring

to God a pure heart.”

90And the garden will be

brought near, to those

who were mindful of God,

91while hellfire shall

appear plainly before those

who were misguided.

92And they shall be asked,

“Where are the gods

you used to worship,

93“besides God? Can they help you

—or themselves?”

94Then they will be thrown,

face-down, into hell, with those

who misguided them,

95and all the hosts of Iblis.

96There, they will say,

as they quarrel,

97“By God, we were

in clear error

98“when we held you as equals

with the Lord of the universe,

99“it was the sinners

who led us astray.

100“And now there is no

intercessor for us,

101“nor any loyal friend.

102“If only we could return,

we would be believers.”

103Surely, in this is a sign,

yet most of them won’t believe.

104And your Lord Alone

is Almighty, Ever Merciful.

SECTION 6

105The people of Noah

denied the messengers

106when their brother Noah

said to them, “Will you not

be mindful of God?

107“I am a trustworthy messenger

sent to you.

108“So be mindful of God,

and obey me.

109“I ask of you no reward.

My only reward is with

the Lord of the universe.

110“So be mindful of God,

and obey me.”

111They said,

“Should we believe in you

when it’s only the lowest

who follow you?”

112He said, “What do I know

of what they do?

113“Their reckoning is only

with my Lord—if only

you could perceive.

114“I am not one to drive away

the believers.

115“I am merely one

who gives clear warning.”

116They said, “Noah,

if you don’t desist,

you will be stoned.”

117He said, “My Lord,

my people have denied me.

118“So judge decisively

between me and them,

and deliver me and those

with me who believe.”

119So we delivered him

and those with him,

in the laden ark.

120Then We drowned the rest.

121Surely in this is a sign,

yet most of them won’t believe.

122And your Lord Alone

is the Almighty, Ever Merciful.

SECTION 7

123The people of ʿAd denied

the messengers

124when their brother Hud

said to them, “Will you not

be mindful of God?

125“I am a trustworthy messenger

sent to you.

126“So be mindful of God,

and obey me.

127“I ask of you no reward.

My only reward is with

the Lord of the universe.

128“You build an altar°

on every high hill, out of vanity?

129“And establish

fortresses, thinking you

will live in them forever?

130“And when you seize [someone]

by force, you seize them like tyrants?

131“Be mindful of God,

and obey me.

132“Be mindful of Him,

Who has provided you

with all that you know.

133“He has provided you

with livestock and children,

134“gardens and springs.

135“I fear for you the punishment

of a momentous day.”

136They said, “It’s the same to us

whether you warn us or not.

137“It’s only the custom

of our forefathers

[that we follow].

138“And we are not

going to be punished.”°

139They denied him,

and so We destroyed them.

Surely, in this is a sign,

but most of them won’t believe.

140And your Lord Alone

is the Almighty, Ever Merciful.

SECTION 8

141The people of Thamud denied

the messengers

142when their brother Salih

said to them, “Will you not

be mindful of God?

143“I am a trusted messenger

sent to you.

144“So be mindful of God,

and obey me.

145“I ask of you no reward.

My only reward is with

the Lord of the universe.

146“Do you imagine that you

will be left secure

with all that you have here—

147“gardens and springs

148“cornfields and date palms,

soft in their clusters,

149“and carving houses out of

mountains, with such skill?

150“So be mindful of God,

and obey me.

151“And do not follow the bidding

of transgressors

152“who spread corruption in the land

and will not pursue the common good.”°

153They said, “You’re just bewitched.

154“You are a mere mortal

like us. Bring a sign

if you are being truthful.”

155He said, “Here is a she-camel—

she has a right to drink,

and you have a right to drink,

each on an appointed day.

156“Do not harm her, or

the punishment of a momentous day

shall overtake you.”

157But they hamstrung her;

and were then regretful.

158So the punishment overtook them.°

Surely, in this is a sign;

but most of them won’t believe.

159And your Lord Alone

is the Almighty, Ever Merciful.

SECTION 9

160The people of Lot denied

the messengers

161when their brother Lot

said to them, “Will you not

be mindful of God?

162“I am a trustworthy messenger

sent to you.

163“So be mindful of God,

and obey me.

164“I ask of you no reward.

My only reward is with

the Lord of the universe.

165“Must you, alone among creatures,

lust after males

166“forsaking the mates

that your Lord created for you?

You transgress all bounds.”

167They said,

“Lot, if you don’t stop,

you’ll be among those

who are thrown out.”

168He rejoined, “I am among those

who abhor what you do.

169“My Lord, save me and

my family from what they do.”

170So We saved him

and all his family,

171except an old woman

who lingered behind,

172then We destroyed the rest.

173We rained down

a hail of brimstone° on them,

a wicked rain on those forewarned.

174In this is a sign,

yet most of them won’t believe.

175And your Lord Alone

is the Almighty, Ever Merciful.

SECTION 10

176The forest dwellers also denied

the messengers

177when Shuʿayb said to them,

“Will you not be mindful of God?

178“I am a trustworthy messenger

sent to you.

179“So be mindful of God,

and obey me.

180“I ask of you no reward.

My only reward is with

the Lord of the universe.

181“Give just measure,

and do not sell short,

182“but weigh with an

even balance,

183“and don’t withhold from people

the things that are due to them,

nor work evil in the land,

spreading corruption,

184“and be mindful of the One

Who created you and

the generations before you.”

185They said, “You’re just bewitched.

186“You are a mere mortal like us.

In fact, we think you are a liar.

187“Cause fragments of the sky

to fall on us,

if you are telling the truth.”

188He said, “My Lord knows best

what you do.”

189But they denied him,

so the punishment of the day

of shadow overcame them,

the punishment of a momentous day.

190In this is a sign,

yet most of them won’t believe.

191And your Lord Alone

is the Almighty, Ever Merciful.

SECTION 11

192This is a revelation

from the Lord of the universe—

193The trustworthy spirit°

brought it down

194to your heart, Prophet,

that you might warn people

195in a clear Arabic tongue.

196And this was in the scriptures

of ancient peoples.

197Is it not a sign to them

that the learnèd people

of the children of Israel

know it?

198Had We revealed it

to any of the non-Arabs,

199and had he recited it to them,

they would not have believed in it.

200In this way, We have

made it pass into the hearts

of the sinners—

201they will not believe in it

until they see

the painful punishment,

202which shall fall upon them

suddenly, while they are unaware.

203Then they will say,

“Can’t we be granted respite?”

204Or, would they

hasten Our punishment?

205See, if We let them

enjoy a few years,

206and then they were struck

with the punishment promised them,

207what they enjoyed

would not help them.

208We never destroyed a town

without sending people to warn it,

209as a reminder—

for We are never unjust.

210It was not any devils

who brought down this revelation.

211It is not allowed them,

nor would they be able.

212In fact, they are prevented

from hearing it.

213So do not call on any

other god with God,

else you may be among

those who are punished;

214and warn your closest kin,

215and lower your wing°

over the believers who

follow you.

216If they disobey you, say,

“I am free [of the guilt]

of your actions.”

217And trust in the Almighty,

the Ever Merciful,

218Who sees you when you

stand [in prayer],

219and when you bow among

those who prostrate themselves.

220For He is the All Hearing,

All Knowing.

221Shall I inform you

on whom the devils descend?

222They descend on every sinful liar,

223they pass on whatever is heard,

and most of them are liars.

224And the poets are followed by

those who are astray.°

225Don’t you see them wandering

aimlessly through every valley?°

226Saying things

that they do not do?

227Except those of them who believe

and do good deeds, and remember God

often, defending themselves

only when wronged.

The wrongdoers shall soon know

their place of return.

SURA 27

The Ants (Al-Naml)

Like “The Bee” (Sura 16) and “The Spider” (Sura 29), this middle Meccan sura of 93 verses is named after lowly creatures of great industry and subtlety, also emblematic of God’s creative expanse. They were singled out as insects that even Solomon respected when he entered “the valley of the ants” (v. 18). The hoopoe, other birds, and also Sheba (described but not mentioned by name) figure prominently in the initial verses (vv. 16–44), while the stories of Thamud and Lot precede a long invocation—and warning—about God’s signs (vv. 59–93).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1Ta Sin.°

These are verses

of the Quran,

a clear Book,

2a guide, and joyous news

for believers,

3those who are steadfast in prayer

give in charity, and are certain

of the hereafter.

4As for those who don’t believe

in the hereafter, We have made

their deeds seem fair to them—

so they wander blindly.

5They shall face severe torment,°

and in the hereafter

they shall bear the greatest loss.

6Prophet, you receive the Quran

from One Who is All Wise, All Knowing.

7Moses said to his family,

“I see a fire; I will bring you

word from it, or a lighted torch

to warm yourselves.”

8But when he came to the fire,

a voice called out, “Blessed is the One

who is at the fire and whoever is around it.°

And glory be to God,

Lord of the universe.

9“Moses, I am the One God,

the Almighty, the All Wise.

10“Now, cast down your staff.”

But when he saw it stirring

like a snake,° he turned away,

fleeing, without returning.

“Moses,” said the voice, “Don’t fear:

messengers have no fear

in My presence.

11“As for those who do wrong,

then turn to good after evil—

I am Forgiving,

Ever Merciful.

12“Now, place your hand

by your breast,° and it will

come out gleaming white,

though unharmed.

This is among nine signs

you will take to Pharaoh

and his people—

a disobedient people.”

13But when Our signs were

shown to them, they said:

“This is obviously magic.”

14And they rejected the signs

through their iniquity and pride

though in themselves

they were convinced.

See, then, the fate

of those who wreak corruption.

SECTION 2

15We gave knowledge

to David and Solomon,

who both said,

“Praise be to God Who

has favored us over many

of His believing servants.”

16And Solomon was David’s heir.

He said, “People, we have been taught

the speech of birds,° and we have

been endowed with all things—

an evident favor from God.”

17And gathered before Solomon

were his hosts of jinn and men

and birds, all arrayed in rows.

18When at length they came

to a valley of ants, an ant said,

“Ants, disperse to your homes

or Solomon and his armies

might unwittingly crush you.”°

19Solomon smiled, laughing

at its speech, and said,

“My Lord, grant that I have strength

to give thanks for Your favor

which You have bestowed

on me and on my parents,

and grant that I may perform

righteous deeds that please you,

and bring me, through Your Mercy,

to be among your righteous servants.”

20He inspected the birds, and said,

“Why do I not see the hoopoe?°

Is he absent?

21“I’ll punish him severely,

or execute him, unless

he brings me a clear reason

[for his absence].”

22But the hoopoe, who was

not long gone

[drew near] and explained,

“I have learned something

that you don’t know,°

and I come from Sabaʾ°

with decisive news.

23“I found there a woman

ruling over them,

possessed of everything.

And she has a mighty throne.

24“I found her and her people

bowing before the sun instead of God,

for Satan has made their deeds

seem fair to them, barring them

from the path, leaving them

without guidance,

25so they don’t bow before God

Who brings forth what is hidden

in the heavens and the earth, and

Who knows what you conceal

and what you reveal.

26God—there is no god but He,

Lord of the mighty throne.”

27Solomon responded,

“Soon we shall see whether

you have told the truth or lied.

28“Go, with this letter of mine,

and deliver it to them. Then,

withdraw from them, and await

the answer they bring back.”

29The Queen said, “Counselors,

here is a royal letter, delivered to me.

30“It’s from Solomon, and it reads,

‘In the Name of God,

the All Merciful, Ever Merciful;°

31“ ‘do not exalt yourselves

above me, but come to me

in submission.’ ”°

SECTION 3

32She said, “Counselors,

advise me in this matter—

I don’t decide on any matter

without your presence.”

33They said, “Though we have

strength and great power in war,

yours is the command.

So consider what you

would like to command.”

34She said, “When kings enter a town,

they ravage it, and humiliate

its noblest inhabitants—

this is what they typically do.

35“But I will send them a gift

and see what response

my envoys bring back.”

36When the envoys came to him,

Solomon said, “What, are you

offering me wealth?

What God has granted me is better

than what He grants you.

In fact, it’s you who

rejoice in your own gift.

37“Go back to your people—

and be sure we’ll come upon them

with irresistible forces, and

expel them from there,

humiliated, and abased.”

38He said to his own men,

“Counselors, which of you can

bring me her throne before

they come to me in submission?”

39An ʿifrit among the jinn said,°

“I will bring it to you

before you rise from your place;°

I assuredly have the strength

and can be trusted to do this.”

40Another, who had knowledge

of the Book, said, “I will bring it

to you before you even blink.”°

Then, when Solomon saw it

placed before him, he exclaimed,

“This is by the grace

of my Lord to test whether

I would be grateful or ungrateful.

Whoever shows gratitude does so

only to his own gain, but whoever

is ungrateful—my Lord

is Self-Sufficient, Munificent.”

41He said, “Disguise her throne

so she won’t recognize it.

Let’s see whether she is guided

or one of those without guidance.”

42When she arrived, she was asked,

“Is your throne like this?” She answered,

“It looks like it.” [Solomon said],

“Knowledge was granted to us before her,

and we submitted to God’s will,

43“while she was prevented

by her worship of others

besides God; for she was from

a disbelieving people.”

44“Enter the palace,” she was told.

But when she saw it, she thought

its [floor] was a [shining] lake, so she

uncovered her shins. He explained,

“It is in fact a palace paved smooth

with glass.” She said, “My Lord,

I have wronged myself, and

I submit, with Solomon, to God,

Lord of the universe.”

SECTION 4

45We sent to the people of Thamud

their brother Salih,° who urged them,

“Worship God.” But they split

into two factions, quarreling.

46He said, “My people,

why do you seek to bring on evil

before good? Why not seek

forgiveness of God,

so you might be shown mercy?”

47They said, “We see you

and those with you as an ill omen.”

He replied, “Your ill omen

is a matter for God; and you are

a people undergoing trial.”

48There were in the city

nine [heads of families],

spreading corruption in the land,

and they would not reform.

49They said, “Swear to one another

an oath by God that we’ll launch

a night attack on him and his family,

and that we’ll say to his heir [when

he seeks vengeance], ‘We never saw

the destruction of his family,

and we’re speaking the truth.’ ”

50So they plotted and planned,

but We also planned,

though they were not aware.

51See, then, the outcome

of their plot—We destroyed

them and all their people.

52These were their houses—

now in utter ruin, for they were

wrongdoers. In this is a sign

for people with knowledge.

53And We saved those

who believed and were

mindful of God.

54We also sent Lot, who said

to his people, “How can you

commit such indecency,

which you can clearly see [is wrong].

55“Would you really lust after

men rather than women?

What an ignorant people you are!”°

56But the only response

of his people was “Drive out

the family of Lot from your town!

They are truly people

who fancy themselves pure!”

57But We saved him

and his family, except his wife

whom We destined to be

among those left behind.

58And We rained down on them

a rain of brimstone°—

on those who had been warned.

SECTION 5

59Say, “Praise be to God,

and peace be upon His servants,

whom He has chosen.”

Who is better—God, or the gods

they join with Him?

60Who created the heavens and earth,

and sends down upon you water

from the sky? With it, We grow

gardens of beauty and delight.

It is not in your power

to grow their trees.

Is there any god besides God? No.

Yet they are a people

who ascribe equals to Him;

61Who made the earth a secure home,

and wrought rivers in its midst,

and made firm mountains for it, placing

between the two seas a barrier?°

Is there any god besides God?

Yet most of them do not know;

62Who answers the distressed person

calling on Him, relieves their anguish,

and makes you regents on the earth?

Is there any god besides God?

How little you remember!

63Who guides you through

the darkness of land and sea?

Who sends the winds as joyous news,

heralding His mercy?

Is there any god besides God?

Exalted is God, above

the gods they join with Him.

64Who brings about Creation,

then renews it, Who sustains you

from the heavens and the earth?

Is there any god besides God?

Say, “Bring your proof

if what you say is true.”

65Say, “None in the heavens

or on the earth knows the unseen

except God, nor can they fathom

when their resurrection will come.”

66Even less can their knowledge

reach into the hereafter: they remain

in doubt over it, blind to it.

SECTION 6

67The unbelievers ask,

“What, when we are dust, with our fathers,

will be really be brought back?

68“Yes, we’ve been promised this

before—we and our fathers. But these

are merely tales of the ancients.”

69Say, “Wander through the earth

to see what was the fate of the sinful.”

70But don’t grieve on their account,

nor let their plotting distress you.

71And if they ask,

“When will this promise come to pass,

if what you say is true?”

72Say, “It may be that

some of the things

you seek to hasten

are close behind you.”

73And your Lord is Full of Favor

toward humankind,

though most of them are ungrateful.

74And your Lord knows

what their hearts conceal

and what they reveal.

75Nor is there anything hidden

in the heavens and the earth

that is not [recorded] in a clear Book.

76This Quran explains

to the children of Israel

most of the things

about which they differ.

77It is a guide and a mercy

for the believers.

78Your Lord will decide

between them, with His judgment,

for He is Almighty, All Knowing.

79So, trust in God—you stand

upon the clear truth.

80You cannot make the dead hear

or the deaf hear the call,

when they turn away, recoiling.

81Nor can you guide the blind

from their straying;

you can only make those hear

who believe in Our signs,

those who submit to Our will.

82And when the sentence

is passed on them,

We shall bring forth for them

a beast° from the earth

to tell them that

humankind was uncertain

about Our signs.

SECTION 7

83On that day, We shall gather

from every people a troop of those

who denied Our signs, in ranks.

84Then, when they come

to judgment, God will say,

“Did you deny My signs,

without knowledge of them—

what were you doing?”

85And the sentence will be passed

on them, for they did wrong,

and they will be unable to speak.

86Do they not see that

We made the night,

in which they might rest,

and the day, bringing light

to the eyes? In this are signs

for a people who believe.

87On the day the trumpet

is sounded, all in the heavens

and all upon the earth

shall be filled with terror,

except some by the will of God.

And all shall come

before Him, humbled.

88You see the mountains

and think them firmly fixed;

but they shall pass,

like the passing clouds—

this is the artistry of God,

Who brings all things

to their perfection.

He is Aware of all that you do.

89Those who come bringing good

shall receive even better,°

and they will be safe from

the terror of that day.

90Those who come bringing evil—

their faces shall be cast into the fire,

“Are you not rewarded precisely

for what you have done?”

91I have been commanded only

to worship the Lord of this city,

the One Who has sanctified it,

to Whom all things belong.

I have been commanded to be among

those who submit to God’s will,°

92and to recite the Quran.

Whoever takes guidance

takes it only for his own good;

and say to whoever strays,

“I am only one of those who warn.”

93And say, “Praise be to God

Who will soon show you His signs,

so you shall know them.”

Your Lord is not unmindful

of what you do.

SURA 28

The Story (Al-Qasas)

The “story” is about Moses and Pharaoh, who occupy the first part of this late Meccan sura, numbering 88 verses. It also includes a cautionary tale about Qarun, a wealthy Israelite whose fortune did not save him, or his house, from being swallowed by the earth (v. 82). Anticipating Sura 55:26–27, the last verse declares, “All things shall pass away except His Face” (v. 88).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1Ta Sin Mim.°

2These are verses of the clear Book.

3We recite to you the story

of Moses and Pharaoh—the truth

for people who believe.°

4Exalting himself in the land,

Pharaoh split its people into factions.

Oppressing a group of them,

he killed their sons

but spared their women.

He always sowed corruption.°

5But We intended to favor those

who were oppressed in the land,

to make them leaders, and heirs,

6to empower them in the land,

to bring before° Pharaoh, Haman,°

and all their forces

what they had always feared.

7We inspired Moses’ mother,

saying, “Suckle your child,

but if you fear for him,

place him in the river—

and do not fear or grieve.

We shall restore him to you,

and We shall make him

one of Our messengers.”

8Then the family of Pharaoh

picked him up—who would

become an enemy to them

and a source of grief—

Pharaoh, Haman, and their forces

were always sinners.

9Pharaoh’s wife cried,

“Here’s a joyful sight

for me and you! Don’t kill him.

Perhaps he’ll be of use to us, or

we might adopt him as a son”—

they were unaware [of God’s plan].

10But a void opened up

in the heart of Moses’ mother,

who might have disclosed his plight,

had We not strengthened her heart,

to make her a believer.

11She said to his sister,

“Follow Moses.”°

So she watched him from a distance,

though [the people of Pharaoh]

were unaware.

12We had ordained earlier

that he should not suckle

from wet nurses, so

his sister asked [Pharaoh’s house],

“Shall I show you

the people of a house

who will rear him for you

and take good care of him?”

13So We returned him to his mother,

that she might be comforted

and not grieve, and know

that God’s promise is true.

Yet most of them don’t know.°

SECTION 2

14When Moses reached

his maturity and manhood,

We endowed him with wisdom

and knowledge; this is how

We reward those who do good.

15He entered the city at a time

when its people would not notice.

He found two men fighting there,

one from his own people

and the other an enemy.

The former sought his help

against his enemy.

Moses struck him with his fist,

killing him.° He said,

“This must be Satan’s work,

for he is clearly an enemy

who leads astray.”

16He prayed, “My Lord,

I have wronged myself: forgive me.”

And God did forgive him—

He is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

17He said, “My Lord,

because You have favored me,

I shall never support those who sin.”

18As the morning came,

he was in the city, fearful, wary,

when the man who had sought

his help the day before

called out to him for help again.

Moses said, “Clearly, it’s you

who are in the wrong!”

19Then, when Moses showed

his intent to strike the man who was

their common enemy, the man said,

“Moses, do you want to kill me

as you killed a person yesterday?

You want to be a tyrant in the land,

not someone who fosters the good.”°

20Then a man came, running,

from the farthest end of the city,

crying, “Moses, the chiefs

are conferring about you,

proposing to kill you. So leave!

This is my sincere advice to you.”°

21So he left from there,

fearful, wary, praying, “My Lord,

save me from people who do wrong.”

SECTION 3

22And when he turned his face

toward the land of Midian,° he said,

“May my Lord guide me

to the right way.”

23And when he came to

the wells of Midian,

he found a group of men there

watering their flocks,

and beside them two women

holding back their flocks. He asked,

“What’s the matter with you?”

They explained,

“We can’t water our flocks

until the shepherds drive theirs back—

our father is a very old man.”

24So he watered their flocks for them.

Then, turning back toward the shade,

he sighed, “My Lord, I am truly

in need of whatever good

You might send down to me.”

25Later, one of the two women

came to him, walking shyly,

“My father invites you,

so he might reward you

for watering our flocks.”

When Moses came to him and

narrated his story, the father said,

“Don’t be afraid—you have escaped

from people who do wrong.”

26One of the women said,

“My father, hire him—

the best person to hire is someone

strong and trustworthy.”

27The father said to Moses,

“I want to wed you to one

of my two daughters here,

if you’ll serve me for eight years.

But if you were to complete ten,

that would be up to you.°

I don’t want to burden you;

you’ll find me, God willing,

to be a righteous person.”

28Moses replied, “Let that be

the agreement between me and you.

Whichever of the two terms I fulfill,

don’t harbor animosity toward me,

for God is Witness to what we say.”

SECTION 4

29When Moses had fulfilled the term,

and was traveling with his family,

he glimpsed a fire

on the side of Mount Tur.

He said to his family, “Stay here,

I glimpsed a fire;

perhaps I can bring you

some word from it°

or firewood to warm yourselves.”

30But when he came to the fire,

he was called by a voice

from the right slope of the valley,

from a tree on hallowed ground,

“Moses, I am the One God,

Lord of the universe.

31“Now, throw down your staff.”

But when Moses saw it stirring,

like a snake, he turned in flight,

and did not return.

“Moses, draw near, and

don’t fear, for you are safe.

32“Slip your hand into your cloak—

it will come out gleaming white, unharmed.

Drop your hand by your side,

free from fear.° These shall be

two proofs from your Lord

to Pharaoh and his chiefs—

they are a wicked people.”

33Moses said, “My Lord,

I have killed one of them,

and I fear they will kill me.

34“Also, my brother Aaron

is more eloquent in speech than me,

so send him with me, as an aide,

to confirm what I say, for I’m afraid

they will call me a liar.”

35God said, “We shall strengthen

your arm through your brother,

and invest you both with authority,

beyond their reach. With Our signs

you and those who follow you

will be victorious.”°

36But when Moses came to them

with Our clear signs, they said,

“This is nothing but contrived magic.

We never heard the like of it

from our ancestors.”

37Moses replied, “My Lord knows best

who has come with guidance

from Him, and whose outcome

will prevail in the hereafter.

The wrongdoers will never thrive.”

38Pharaoh said, “Counselors,

I know of no god for you but me.

So, Haman, kindle for me

a fire to bake clay bricks,

and make me a towering edifice

so I may look upon

the God of Moses,

for I consider him a liar.”

39Hence Pharaoh and his forces

behaved arrogantly in the land

beyond their right, thinking

they would never be returned to Us.

40So We seized him and his forces,

and cast them into the sea—

observe the end of those

who do wrong!

41We made them leaders

who summon people to the fire;

on the day of resurrection

they shall find no help.

42In this world,

We laid a curse upon them,

and on the day of resurrection,

they shall be among the despised.

SECTION 5

43We gave the Book to Moses

—after We destroyed earlier generations—

to give insight to humankind,

as well as guidance and mercy,

that they might be reminded.

44You, Prophet, were not there

on the western side of the mountain°

when We decreed the commandment

to Moses—you were not a witness.

45We raised up generations over

long eras—you, Prophet, did not live

among the people of Midian,

reciting to them Our signs—

it is We who send [messengers].

46Nor were you at the side

of Mount Sinai when We called

to Moses;° yet you are sent

as a mercy from your Lord

to warn a people to whom

no one before you came to warn,

that they might be reminded,

47and may not say, if calamity

—brought by their own hands—

befalls them, “Our Lord,

if only You had sent us a messenger,

we would have followed Your signs

and would have been believers.”°

48But now, when the truth

has come to them from Us, they say,

“Why is he not given signs

like those given to Moses?”

And did they not also deny

what was given to Moses before?

“Two brands of sorcery,

hand in hand,” they say

and “We deny it all,” they say.

49Say, “Then bring a Book from God,

a better guide than either of these,

so I may follow it,

if you are speaking the truth.”°

50But if they don’t answer you,

know that they only follow

their own desires—who

goes further astray than someone

who follows their own desire

without guidance from God?

God does not guide

a people who do wrong.

SECTION 6

51And now indeed We have

conveyed to them the Word,

that they might be reminded.

52Those to whom

We gave the Book before

believe in it;

53and when it is recited to them,

they say, “We believe in it—it is

indeed the truth from our Lord.

In fact, even before it came,

we submitted to His will.”°

54They will be twice rewarded

for they have been patient,

they avert evil with good,

and spend in charity from

what we have given them;

55and when they hear idle talk,

they turn away from it, saying,

“Our deeds belong to us,

yours to you. Peace be with you.

We do not seek out the ignorant.”

56You, Prophet, cannot guide

all those you love.

But God guides whom He will,

and He knows best those

who will be guided.

57They say, “If we followed

the guidance with you, we would be

swept away from our land.”

Have We not set up for them

a safe sanctuary,° where fruits

of all kinds are brought,

as sustenance from Us?

Yet most of them do not know.

58And how many towns have

We destroyed, which exulted

in their easy living. And after them,

their homes were scarcely lived in—

We are the sole Heirs.°

59Your Lord never destroyed

the towns until he had sent

to their center° a messenger,

reciting to them Our signs;

nor would He have destroyed

these towns unless their people

had been wrongdoers.

60Whatever things you are given

are fleeting joys, adornment

of the life of this world;

but whatever is with God

is better and enduring.

Will you not, then, use reason?

SECTION 7

61Is a person to whom We made

a good promise and sees it fulfilled

like the person to whom We gave

the joys of the life of this world,

then, on the day of resurrection,

will be brought out [for punishment]?

62On the day that God

calls to them, He will ask,

“Where are the other gods

you claimed to be My partners?”

63Those with proof against them

will say, “Our Lord, these are the ones

we led astray. We led them astray

as we ourselves were led astray. Now

we disavow them before you;

it was not us that they worshipped.”

64They will be told,

“Call upon your other gods.”

They will call them, but they

will not answer. Then they

will see the punishment—if only

they had let themselves be guided.

65On the day that God calls them,

He will ask, “How did you answer

the messengers?”

66All news will seem

dubious to them on that day,

when they cannot query one another.

67But those who repent,

believe, and do good deeds

may be among

those who succeed.

68For your Lord creates what He will,

and it is He Who chooses—

there is no choice for them.

Glory be to God—

may He be exalted above

the gods they join with Him.

69And your Lord knows

what their hearts conceal

and what they reveal.

70For He is God: there is

no god but Him. His is the praise

in this world and the next.°

His is the judgment; and to Him

you shall be returned.

71Say, “Do you see? If God

enshrouded you in unending night

until the day of resurrection,

what other god could bring you light?

Will you not, then, listen?”

72Say, “Do you see? If God

exposed you to unending day

until the day of resurrection,

what other god could bring you night

in which you might repose?

Will you not, then, perceive?

73“But through His mercy,

He made for you the night,

where you might repose,

and the day, where you might

seek His bounty,

that you might give thanks.”

74On the day that God

calls them, He will ask,

“Where are the gods

you claimed to be My partners?”

75And from each people

We shall draw a witness,

saying, “Bring your proof.”

Then they shall know

that the truth is with God—

and the gods they invented

will abandon them.

SECTION 8

76Korah belonged to the people

of Moses,° but he oppressed them.

We gave him treasures whose

very keys would weigh down

a company of strong men.

His people told him, “Don’t

flaunt [your wealth], for God

does not love those who boast.

77“But rather, seek through what

God has given you the house

of the hereafter.

Don’t neglect what you have

in this world,° but do good

as God has been good to you,

and do not seek corruption

in the land, for God does not love

those who sow corruption.”

78He said, “This was granted me

on account of my knowledge.”

Did he not know that God

had destroyed generations

before him, greater than him

in strength and possessions amassed?

The sinners shall not be asked

about their sins.

79So he went out among

his people in his finery,

and those hankering after

the life of this world remarked,

“Ah, if only we had the like

of what Korah has been given!

What a great fortune he has!”

80But those endowed with knowledge

retorted, “Shame on you!

God’s reward is better, for those

who believe and do good deeds,

and none will attain it except

those who practice patience.”°

81Then We roused the earth

to swallow him and his house.

There was none° to help him,

beyond God, nor could he

defend himself.

82By morning, those who yesterday

had coveted his position

began to say, “Indeed—

God enlarges provision

or restricts it for whom He will

of his servants. If God did not

favor us, He could have

roused the earth to swallow us.

Indeed—those who deny God

shall not prosper.”

SECTION 9

83We shall grant the house

of the hereafter to those

who don’t seek to be exalted

in the land or to sow corruption,

and the best outcome will be

for those mindful of God.

84Those who bring good

will receive what is better;

as for those who bring evil—

their recompense will equal

their evil deeds.

85He who assigned you

[to convey] the Quran

will bring you back,

to the place of return.°

Say, “My Lord knows best

who comes with guidance and

who is clearly in error.”

86Nor had you, Prophet,

expected the Book

to be sent to you; it was

but a mercy from your Lord.

So, never support the disbelievers.

87And never let them turn you

away from the verses of God

once they are revealed to you.

Call people to your Lord,

and never be among those

who ascribe partners to God.

88Nor call on any other god

besides the One God.

There is no god but Him.

All things shall pass away

except His Face. His is

the judgment; and to Him

you shall be returned.

SURA 29

The Spider (Al-ʿAnkabut)

Taking its name from v. 41, this late Meccan sura of 69 verses warns all those who take anyone but the One God as their support. Not only Qarun but Pharaoh and Haman (v. 39) are marked as proud profligates who disregarded God’s signs. No less unmindful are seafarers who call on God at sea but forget him when they land safely (v. 65).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1Alif Lam Mim.°

2Do people imagine

that they’ll be left alone

after saying, “We believe,”

and that they won’t be tested?

3Yes, We tested those before them—

and God knows those who are truthful

and those who lie.

4Do those who do bad deeds

think they can elude Us?

How bad their judgment is!

5For those who hope to meet God,

the hour appointed by God°

will surely come—

for He is All Hearing, All Knowing.

6And whoever strives

strives only for himself,

for God is Self-Sufficing,

free of all need

of created beings.°

7As for those who believe

and do good deeds,

We shall wipe out their misdeeds,

and reward them

for the best of their deeds.

8We have enjoined people

to be kind to parents;

but if they strive to make you

associate things with Me

of which you have no knowledge,

then don’t obey them. To Me

is your return, and I will inform you

of all you have done.

9As for those who believe

and do righteous deeds,

We shall admit them

among the righteous.

10Some of the people say,

“We believe in God.”

But when they are harmed

in the cause of God,

they equate people’s duress

with God’s punishment;

and if help comes to you

from your Lord, they say,

“We were always with you.”

Does God not know best

what lies within the hearts

of His creatures?°

11And God knows those who believe,

just as He knows the hypocrites.

12Those who disbelieve

say to those who believe,

“Follow our way, and

we will bear your sins.”

But they cannot bear

any of their own sins—

they are nothing but liars.

13They will bear their own burdens

and other burdens besides—

they shall be questioned,

on the day of resurrection,

about their fabrications.

SECTION 2

14We sent Noah to his people,

and he stayed with them

for a thousand years less fifty,

but the flood overcame them

for they were wrongdoers.

15But We saved him

and the people of the ark,

and We made it a sign

for all nations.°

16And We sent Abraham,

who said to his people,

“Worship God, and

be mindful of Him.

That is better for you,

if only you knew.

17“You worship instead of God

only idols, and you invent falsehood.

Those you worship instead of God

can give you no provision,

so seek provision from God,

worship Him, and be grateful to Him—

to Him you will be returned.

18“And if you deny the message,

as nations before you denied it,

know that the messenger’s task

is only to convey it clearly.”

19Do they not see how God

originates creation and

then renews it?

This is easy for God.

20Say, “Travel through the earth

and see how He originated creation;

then God will bring about

a new creation,

for God has Power over all things.

21“He will punish whom He will,

and show mercy to whom He will,

and to Him you will be turned back.

22“You cannot evade Him

on the earth nor in the heavens,

Nor shall you find beyond God

any protector or helper.”

SECTION 3

23As for those who deny the signs

of God and the meeting with Him,

they have despaired of My mercy,

and theirs shall be a painful torment.

24His people’s only reply was

“Kill him or burn him,”

but God saved him from the fire.

In this are signs

for people who believe.

25Abraham responded,

“You have adopted idols

instead of God,

out of love for one another

in the life of this world. But on

the day of resurrection, you will

deny and curse one another,°

and your home shall be the fire—

with none to help you.”

26But Lot believed in Him.

He said, “I will flee to my Lord,

for He is Almighty, All Wise.”

27And We granted to Abraham

Isaac and Jacob, and We placed

within his progeny prophethood

and the Book, and We gave him

his reward in this world;

and in the hereafter

he will be among the righteous.

28Recall when Lot said to his people,

“You commit an indecency

without precedent by anyone

in the world before you.

29“Do you approach men,

cut off their path,

and commit wickedness

when you gather together?”

His people’s only reply was

“Bring on God’s punishment,

if you are speaking the truth.”

30He said, “My Lord,

help me against a people

who breed corruption.”

SECTION 4

31When Our messengers came

to Abraham with joyous news

[of his son’s birth], they said,

“We are going to destroy

the people of this town—

they are given to wrongdoing.”

32He said, “But Lot is there!”

They rejoined,

“We well know who is there;

we shall save him and his family—

except for his wife,

who will be among those

who stay behind.”

33When Our messengers came to Lot,

he felt vexed and constrained

on their behalf, powerless

to protect them, but they said,

“Don’t fear and don’t grieve.

We shall save you and your family—

except for your wife,

who will be among those

who stay behind.

34“We are going to bring down

retribution on the people of this town,

for they are given to transgression.”

35And We have left its ruins°

as a clear sign

for people who use reason.

36And We sent to the people

of Midian their brother Shuʿayb,

who said, “My people, worship God,

be wary of the last day,

and don’t do evil on the earth,

sowing corruption.”

37But they denied him—

then the earthquake shook them,

and they lay fallen,

face-down, in their homes.

38The fate of the people of ʿAd

and Thamud is clear

from [the ruins] of their homes.

Satan made their deeds

seem fair to them,

hindering them from the path,

though they possessed insight.

39Moses came to Korah and Pharaoh

and Haman with clear signs,

but they were proud upon the earth—

still they could not elude Us.

40We seized each of them for his sin.

Against one We sent a hailstorm;

another was gripped by a great blast,

and the other We caused to be

swallowed up by the earth,

and yet another We drowned.

It was not God who wronged them

but they who wronged themselves.

41The parable of those who

take protectors other than God

is the house the spider builds.

It is the frailest of houses—

if only they knew.°

42God knows all

that they call upon besides Him—

for He is Almighty, All Wise.

43Such are the parables

We coin for humankind;

but only those with knowledge

can fathom them.

44God created the heavens and earth

with true purpose—in this is a sign

for those who believe.

SECTION 5

45Recite what was revealed to you

of the Book, and be steadfast in prayer;

prayer forestalls indecency and evil.

Paramount is remembrance of God,

for God knows all that you do.

46And do not argue

with the people of the Book,

except using the best means—unless

it is with the wrongful among them.

And say, “We believe

in what was revealed to us

and what was revealed to you;

our God and your God is One;

and to Him we submit.”

47This is how We sent

to you the Book; those given

the Book before believe in it,

and some of these [pagan Arabs]

believe in it. None but

unbelievers deny Our signs.

48You did not recite from any book

before this, nor did you write it

with your right hand, else

the falsifiers would have doubted.

49No, these are clear signs

in the hearts of those endowed

with knowledge; and none but

the wrongdoers deny Our signs.

50Yet they say,

“Why are signs not sent down

to him from his Lord?”

Say, “The signs are only

with God; and I am only

here to give plain warning.”

51Is it not enough for them

that We have sent down to you

the Book, as recited to them?

In this is a mercy and a reminder

for people who believe.

SECTION 6

52Say, “God suffices as Witness

between me and you;

He knows what is in the heavens

and the earth. And those who

believe in falsehood and deny God

shall be the ones in loss.”

53They taunt you—to hasten

the punishment; had it not been

appointed for a fixed time,

punishment would surely

have come upon them,

and it will come suddenly to them,

while they are unaware.

54They taunt you—to hasten

the punishment;

but hell shall encompass

the disbelievers,

55on the day the punishment

enshrouds them from above,

and from below their very feet—

and He will say, “Taste the deeds

that you have done!”

56My servants, who believe—

My earth is wide indeed,

so worship only Me.

57Every soul shall taste death;

then to Us

you shall be brought back.

58As for those who believe

and do good works,

We shall give them a home

in the garden, in raised halls,

beneath which rivers flow,

to dwell there always—

how superlative the reward

of those who labor,

59those who practice patience,

and trust in their Lord.

60How many are the creatures who

do not shoulder their own provision.

It is God Who provides for them

and for you—

for He is All Hearing, All Knowing.

61If you ask them,

who created the heavens and the earth,

and who controls the sun and moon,

they will surely say, “God.”

So how are they deluded?

62God enlarges or restricts provision

for whom He will of His servants—

God is Knower of all things.

63And if you ask them

who sends down rain from the sky

to give life to the earth after its death,

they will surely say, “God.”

Say, then, “Praise be to God.”

Still, most of them do not discern.

SECTION 7

64What is the life of this world

but amusement and play?

The home of the hereafter

is true life—if only they knew.

65Whenever they set sail by ship,

they call on God, on Him alone,

yet when He delivers them to dry land,

see how they join other gods

with Him in worship.

66Let them be ungrateful

for what We have given them

Let them enjoy themselves—

soon, they shall know.

67Don’t they see that We’ve made

a secure sanctuary, while people are

plucked away all around them?

Do they still believe in falsehood,

ungrateful for the favor of God?

68Who does more wrong

than those who invent

a lie about God,

or deny the truth

when it reaches them?

Is there not in hell a home

for the disbelievers?

69As for those who strive

in Our cause,°

We shall guide them in Our ways,

for God is with the righteous.

SURA 30

The Byzantines (Al-Rum)

A rare reference to actual historical events, the title of this middle Meccan sura numbering 60 verses refers to Byzantines or Greeks, cited in v. 2. who were enemies of the pre-Islamic Arabs and conquered by the new Muslim polity. God’s promises etched as His signs are repeatedly extolled, providing hope for believers, at the same time that God “sets a seal on the heart of those who don’t know” (v. 59).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1Alif Lam Mim.°

2The Empire of the Byzantines

lies defeated

3in a neighboring domain,

yet soon after this defeat

they shall triumph

4within a few years—

God is ever in command,

both before and after—

and on that day

the believers shall rejoice°

5in the help of God.

He helps whom He will,

for He is Almighty,

Ever Merciful.

6God’s promise—He never breaks it.

but most people do not know.

7They know only the surface

of the life of this world, and they

remain heedless of the hereafter.

8Do they not reflect

upon themselves?

God did not create the heavens

and the earth and all

that lies between them

without true purpose

and for an appointed time.

Yet most people deny

that they will meet their Lord.

9Do they not travel

through the earth and observe

how those before them

met their end?

They were stronger than these,

they plowed the earth

and built upon it more than these.

Their messengers came to them [in vain]

with clear proofs—

God did not wrong them

but they wronged themselves.

10Those who did evil

met an evil end, for they

denied the signs of God,

and mocked them.

SECTION 2

11God originates creation

then renews it, then to Him

you shall be returned.°

12On the day when the hour comes,

the guilty shall be in despair.

13None of the gods

they joined with God

shall intercede for them

and they will deny belief

in these gods.°

14On the day when the hour comes,

people will be sorted [into two groups]:

15those who believed

and did good deeds,

will be filled with delight

in a lush meadow,

16while those who disbelieved,

denying Our signs and

the meeting in the hereafter

shall be brought forward

for punishment.

17So hymn the glory of God

when you reach evening and rise at dawn

18—praise be to Him throughout

the heavens and earth—

and in your late afternoons

as well as your midday hour.°

19He brings the living from

the dead, and the dead from

the living, and brings the earth

to life after its death. Likewise,

you shall be brought back

[to life after death].

SECTION 3

20Among His signs is that

He created you from dust, then,

see, you became humans,

scattered wide.

21And among His signs is that

He created partners for you

from among yourselves,

to live serenely with them;

and He placed between you

love and mercy.

In this are signs

for a discerning people.

22And among His signs is

the creation of the heavens

and the earth, the diversity

in your languages and colors.

In this are signs

for people who know.°

23And among His signs

is that you sleep by night and

seek His bounty by day.

In this are signs

for people who hear.

24Among His signs—

He shows you the lightning,

that engenders fear and hope, and

he sends down rain from the sky

bringing life to the earth

after its death.

In this are signs

for people who reason.

25Among His signs is that

the heaven and the earth

stand by His command, then

once He calls you—see,

you shall come forward.

26To Him belong

all in the heavens

and on the earth—

and all obey Him.

27He originates creation,

then renews it;

this is most easy for Him,

He is beyond analogy

in the heavens and the earth,

for he is Almighty, All Wise.

SECTION 4

28He coins for you this analogy

from your own lives: Do you make

your slaves your partners, with

equal part in what we gave you?

Do you fear them as you fear

one another? This is how

We clarify Our signs°

for a people who reason.

29Yet the wrongdoers follow

their own desires, without knowledge.

And who will guide those

whom God allows to stray?

They shall have none to help them.

30So set your sights, upright,

toward the true faith,° the nature°

from which God created humankind.

No change can there be

in God’s creation.

This is the upright faith,

but most of humankind don’t know.

31Turn to Him, and

be mindful of Him;

be steadfast in prayer,

and don’t be one of those

who join other gods with God,

32nor those who sunder

their religion, becoming sects,

each party exulting

in what it has.

33When calamity strikes people,

they call upon their Lord, turning

to Him. Then, when he lets them

savor His mercy, some of them

join other gods with Him,

34ungrateful for what

We have given them.

Enjoy yourselves, then—

for soon you shall know.

35Did We reveal to them any authority,

sanctioning the partners

they join with God?

36When We let people savor Our mercy,

they rejoice in it.

But if some evil befalls them

—wrought by their own hands—

see how they despair.

37Don’t they see that God

enlarges or restricts provision

for whom He will? In this

are signs for people who believe.

38So give what is due

to relatives, the poor,

and the traveler.

This is better for those

who seek the Face of God—

it is they who shall flourish.

39What you lend with usury

to reap interest through

the wealth of others

shall reap no interest with God.

But what you give in charity,

seeking the Face of God,

shall be multiplied.

40It is God Who created you,

then gave you sustenance;

He will bring you to death, then to life.

Can any of the gods you join with Him

do any of these things? Glory be to Him,

and exalted is He over

the gods they join with Him.

SECTION 5

41Corruption has surfaced

on land and sea, through

the hands of humankind,

and He will let them taste the [fruits]

of some of their deeds,

that they might return [to Him].

42Say, “Travel through the earth

and observe what was the end

of those before you.

Most of them joined

other gods with God.”

43So direct your face

toward the steadfast faith,

before there comes from God

a day that cannot be averted.

On that day, humankind

will be divided—

44as for those who disbelieved—

their disbelief will stand against them;

while those who did good deeds

make provision for themselves,

45so that out of His bounty

He may reward those

who believed and did good deeds

for He does not love

those who disbelieve.

46Among His signs is that

He sends the winds, bearing joyous news,

so you might savor His mercy.

Your ships sail by His leave,

so you may seek His bounty,

and be grateful.

47And We sent, before you,

messengers to their own peoples,

coming to them with clear proofs.

We requited those who sinned—

It is always Our province

to help those who believe.

48It is God Who sends

the winds that raise up the clouds,

which He spreads across the sky

as He will, bursting them

into fragments; you see the rain

pouring from within their midst,

and when he makes it fall

upon His servants, as He will—

see how they rejoice,

49though before—before

it was sent down upon them—

they were in despair.

50Consider then the traces

of God’s mercy, how He gives life

to the earth after its death.

He is Restorer of life to the dead,

and He has Power over all things.

51Yet, if We sent a [scorching] wind

so they saw their crops all yellowed,

they would still disbelieve.°

52Prophet, you cannot

make the dead hear, nor can you

make the deaf hear your call

when they turn their backs to you,

53nor can you guide the blind

from their straying. The only ones

you can make hear are those

who believe in Our signs,

those who submit to Our will.°

SECTION 6

54It is God Who

created you weak,

then gave you strength,

then made you weak again

with gray hair.

He creates what He will,

for He is All Knowing,

All Powerful.

55On the day when the hour comes,

the sinners will swear that they

lingered but an hour [on earth]—

they were always deluded like this.

56Those given knowledge and faith

will say, “Actually, you lingered,

by God’s decree until

the day of resurrection.

The day of resurrection is now,

but you—you did not know.”

57On that day

the wrongdoers’ excuses

won’t help them,

nor can they beg

to make amends.

58We have contrived in this Quran,

every kind of parable for humankind—

yet if you bring them a sign,

the unbelievers declare,

“You are merely falsifiers.”

59In this way God sets a seal

on the hearts of those who don’t know.

60So, be patient. God’s promise

is true. And do not let those

who lack all conviction

lighten your resolve.

SURA 31

Luqman (Luqman)

A pre-Islamic wise man or sage, Luqman appears only here in the Quran. The heart of this middle or late Meccan sura of 34 verses is the section of advice given by Luqman to his son, featured in vv. 12–19.

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1Alif Lam Mim.°

2These are verses

of the wise Book,

3a guide and mercy

for those who do good,

4who are steadfast in prayer,

give in charity, and

are certain of the hereafter.

5It is they who are rightly

guided by their Lord—

they who will succeed.

6But among the people, there’s a person

who invests in idle tales°—without knowledge—

to mislead people, away from God’s path,

seeking to mock it. Shameful torment awaits him.

7When Our signs are recited to him,

he turns away in pride, as if he hadn’t

heard them, as if his ears

were weighed down in deafness.°

Warn him, then, of painful torment.

8Those who believe and do good deeds,

shall enter gardens of bliss,

9to live there forever.

God’s promise is true—

He is Almighty, All Wise.

10He created the heavens [raised up]

with no visible supports;

He set upon the earth firm mountains

so it would not quake beneath you;

He spread throughout it animals

of all kinds; and We sent down

rain from the sky, so that fine plants

of all kinds might bloom in pairs.

11All of this is God’s creation;

now show Me what those other gods

have created—the wrongdoers

are clearly mistaken.

SECTION 2

12We gave Luqman wisdom:

“Be thankful to God—

whoever gives thanks,

does so for his own sake,

and as for the thankless—

[they should know that] God

is Self-Sufficient, Praiseworthy.”

13Luqman cautioned his son,

“My son, don’t worship any

but God, for joining gods

with the One God

is a great wrong.”

14And We commanded people

to honor their parents;

their mothers bore them,

strain upon strain, weaning them

after two years—Be thankful, then,

to Me and to your parents,

for your destination ends with Me.

15But if your parents urge you

to join other gods with Me

—about whom you know nothing—

don’t obey them. However,

be kind companions to them

in this world while following

the path of those who turn to Me—

to Me you shall return,

and I shall inform you

of all you have done.

16“My son,” said Luqman,

“if even the slightest thing

—like a mustard seed°—

were hidden in a rock, or

anywhere in the heavens or earth,

God would bring it into sight,

for He is Subtle, All Aware.

17“My son, be steadfast in prayer,

commend what is right,

and forbid what is wrong;

endure with patience

whatever befalls you—

this is the true resolve

in all affairs.

18“And don’t shun people,

turning your face away from them;

nor walk haughtily upon the earth,

for God does not like

the proud and boastful.

19“Walk in a modest way,°

and lower your voice,

for the harshest of voices

is the braying of an ass.”°

SECTION 3

20Don’t you see that God

has subdued [to your use]

all that is in the heavens,

and all that is on the earth,

that He has multiplied

His blessings upon you,

both seen and unseen?

Yet some people dispute over God,

without knowledge, or guidance,

or recourse to an illuminating book.°

21And when they are told,

“Follow what God has revealed,”

they say, “No. We’ll follow

the ways of our fathers.”°

Really? Even if Satan

were beckoning them to the

torment of blazing fire?

22Whoever submits wholly to God,

and does good, has surely grasped

the securest handhold—

for all affairs are concluded in God.

23And don’t be grieved

by the disbelief of those

who deny: to Us they shall return,

and We shall inform them

of all that they did.

God is Aware of all

that their hearts contain.

24We grant them enjoyment

for a while, but then

We shall force them

into harsh torment.

25If you ask them who created

the heavens and the earth,

they will say, “God.”

Say, “Praise be to God.”

Yet most of them don’t know.

26To God belongs all

that is in the heavens and earth.

God is Self-Sufficient, Praiseworthy.

27If all the trees on earth

were pens, and the seas were ink,

with seven more seas beyond,

still the Word° of God

would not be exhausted.

God is Almighty, All Wise.

28Nor was the creation

and resurrection of you all

any more for Him

than that of a single soul.

God is All Hearing, All Seeing.

29Do you not see how

God fades night into day,

and day into night,

and holds sway over sun

and moon, each sailing in

its own domain for its

ordained term?

And that God is Aware

of all that you do?

30All of this is because

God is the Truth, and those

they invoke besides Him

are false; and because God

is Most High, Most Great.

SECTION 4

31Do you not see that

ships sail upon the sea

by God’s grace, that He might

show you His signs?

In this are signs for all

who are patient, and all

who are grateful.

32When a towering wave hangs

over them, like a darkened vault,

they call upon God, with sincere

faith in Him; but once We deliver

them safely on land, some begin

to waver. Only the treacherous

and thankless dispute Our signs.

33Humankind, be mindful

of your Lord, and fearful

of a day when no father

can help his son in anything,

nor any son his father.

The promise of God is true,

so don’t let the life of this world

deceive you, nor let the deceiver

deceive you about God.

34God alone has knowledge

of the hour. It is He

Who sends down rain, and He

Who knows what is closed within

the womb. No soul knows what

it will reap tomorrow,

nor does any soul know

in which land it will die.

God is All Knowing,

All Aware.

SURA 32

Prostration (Al-Sajda)

A late Meccan sura of 30 verses, it extols the act of prostration (v. 15), which characterizes the believers, those who fall down, prostrate, in praise of God when they “are reminded of” His verses.

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1Alif Lam Mim.°

2This is the revelation

of the Book—free of doubt—

from the Lord of the universe.

3Yet they ask, “Has he forged it?”

No—it is the truth from your Lord,

so you might warn a people

warned by none before you,°

so they might be guided.

4It is God Who created

the heavens and the earth,

and all between them, in six days,

then set Himself upon the throne.

You have no protector or intercessor

beside Him—so will you not heed?

5He oversees all things

from heaven to earth.

All things shall rise to Him,

on a day which spans

a thousand years in your counting.

6This is the Knower

of the unseen and seen—

the Almighty, Ever Merciful,

7He Who perfected in its excellence

each thing that He created. He began

the creation of humankind from clay,

8then made its offspring

from the essence of a lowly fluid.

9He then proportioned it,

and breathed into it His Spirit;

and He gave you

hearing, seeing, and feeling°—

though little do you give thanks.

10And they say, “When we

are buried beneath the earth,

will we be created anew?”

Yes, the disbelievers

deny the meeting with their Lord.

11Say, “The angel of death

in charge of you shall take you;

then, you shall be returned

to your Lord.”

SECTION 2

12If only you could see how

the sinners will hang their heads

before their Lord, saying, “Our Lord,

we have seen and we have heard.

So send us back, and we will do

good deeds—for now we are certain.”

13Had We wished, We could have

given guidance to each soul.

But My words will come true,

“I will fill up hell with jinn

and humans—all together.

14“Taste, then—for you forgot

the meeting on this day of yours,

and We too will forget you—

taste the eternal punishment

for what you have done.”

15Only those people believe

in Our verses who, when

they are reminded of them,

fall down, prostrate, and

glorify their Lord with praise—

for they are not too proud.

16They° forsake their beds

to call upon their Lord, in fear and

in hope; and they spend in charity

from what we have given them.

17Nobody knows

what joy and comfort

lie hidden for them in reward

for what they have done.

18Is a person who believes

like a person who is defiant?

They are not the same.

19Those who believe and do good deeds,

shall have gardens as their home,

a reward for what they have done.

20As for those who still disobey,

their home shall be the fire.

Whenever they wish to escape it,

they shall be brought back to it,

and told, “Taste the torment of fire—

which you always denied.”

21And We shall make them taste

the nearer torment [of this life]

before the ultimate torment, so they

might return [to the straight path].

22Who does more wrong

than those who turn away

when the verses of their Lord

are recited to them?

We shall requite the sinners.

SECTION 3

23We gave the Book to Moses,

so be in no doubt, Prophet,

about receiving it—

We made it a guide

for the children of Israel.

24We made leaders among them,

giving guidance by Our command,

for they were patient,

and assured of Our signs.

25Your Lord will judge between them

on the day of resurrection

in the things they dispute.

26Will they not learn from

the number of generations

We destroyed before them,

in whose homes they now tread?

In this are signs—

so will they not listen?

27And do they not see that

We drive the rain to parched soil,

and bring from it crops from which

they and their livestock eat?

So will they not see?

28And they say,

“When will this verdict come,

if you are speaking the truth?”

29Say, “On the day of the verdict,

it will not profit the disbelievers

to then believe—for then

they will be granted no respite.”

30So turn away from them, and wait—

they too are waiting.

SURA 33

The Allied Forces (Al-Ahzab)

A Medinan sura, this takes its name from the forces who opposed Muhammad and his followers at the Battle of the Trench, which took place in 627, five years after the hijra, the exodus from Mecca to Medina. Elements of that encounter occupy vv. 9–27 while the remainder of its 73 verses deal with kinship and covenant (vv. 4–8) and guidelines for regulating behavior in general but also among Muhammad’s wives (vv. 28–60). Perhaps the most memorable verse occurs toward the end, in v. 72, when the burden of moral trust is refused by all except humankind who “bore it, being unjust and ignorant.”

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1Prophet, be mindful

of God, and do not heed

the unbelievers and hypocrites.

God is All Knowing, All Wise.

2Rather, follow what is

revealed to you from your Lord—

God is Aware of all that you do.

3And trust in God,

for God suffices as Guardian.

4God has not made two hearts

within any man;

nor has He made your wives

—whom you liken

to your mothers°—

your actual mothers;

nor has He made

your adopted sons your actual sons.°

Such is the talk that comes

out of your mouths.

But God speaks the truth,

and He guides to the path.

5Name [your adopted sons]

after their fathers; this is more just

in the sight of God. But if

you do not know their fathers,

[treat them as] your brothers

in religion, as relatives.°

There is no blame on you

if you err in this—only for

what your hearts intend.

For God is Forgiving,

Ever Merciful.

6The Prophet is closer to believers

than they are to themselves,

and his wives are their mothers.

And blood relatives are closer,

in God’s decree, than other believers

and emigrants, though you should

still treat your friends with kindness.°

This is written in the Book.

7And We took a pledge

from the prophets, as from you,

from Noah, Abraham, Moses,

and Jesus, son of Mary—

We took from them a solemn pledge:

8God will question the truthful

about their truthfulness,

and has prepared for disbelievers

a painful punishment.

SECTION 2

9You who believe, remember

God’s favor to you when legions

descended upon you°—We sent

against them a mighty wind

and legions beyond your seeing.

For God Sees all that you do.

10When they came upon you

from above you and below,

your eyes were frantic [with fear],

your hearts swelled into

your throats, and you started

to harbor doubts about God.

11There the believers were tested

and shaken—severely.

12The hypocrites and the sick in heart

said, “God and His messenger

promised us nothing but delusion.”

13A party of them urged,

“People of Yathrib,° you cannot

withstand the onslaught, so retreat!”

And a group of them asked

the Prophet’s permission to retreat,

saying, “Our homes lie exposed”

—though they were not—

they merely wanted to flee.

14Had the city been

breached from all sides,

had they been urged to rebel,

they would have done so

with barely a qualm.

15Yet they had already pledged

to God not to turn their backs—

one is always answerable

for a pledge to God.

16Prophet, tell them,

“Fleeing won’t help you.

Even if you flee from death

or killing, you’ll be granted

but a brief respite.”

17Say, “Who can shield you

from God whether He intends

ill for you or mercy?”

Nor will they find, besides God,

any protector or helper.

18God knows those among you

who hold others back,

and those who say to their brothers

“Come and join us,” those who

barely come out to fight,

19begrudging you [their help].

Yet, when fear overcomes them,

you’ll see them looking to you,

their eyes rolling, as if shadowed

by death. And once fear leaves them

they abuse you sharply with their tongues,

begrudging in doing good.

These are the ones who never believe,

hence God makes vain their deeds—

that is always easy for God.

20They think the allied forces°

have not gone; and if those allies

should come, they would wish

they were nomads

among the Bedouin Arabs,

asking for news of you° [from afar].

Even if they were with you,

they would hardly fight.

SECTION 3

21You have an excellent example

in the messenger of God—

for those who repose their hope

in God and the last day,

and remember Him often.

22When they saw the allied forces,

the believers said, “This is what God

and His messenger promised;

what God and His messenger

said was true,” and it only increased

their faith and submission to God.

23Among the believers

are men who remained true

to their covenant with God;

and among them are those

who fulfilled their vow;° also

among them are those who still wait—

who have not reformed at all.

24Accordingly, God will reward

the truthful for remaining truthful,

and punish the hypocrites, if He will,

or turn to them, relenting.

God is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

25God repulsed the disbelievers

in their rage,° and they made no gain.

God suffices for the believers in war,

for God is Powerful, Almighty.

26He cast down from their strongholds

the people of the Book who helped them

and He cast terror into their hearts.

A group of them you slew,

and another you took captive;

27and He made you heirs

to their land, their homes,

and their possessions—

a land where you

had not set foot before—

for God has Power over all things.

SECTION 4

28Prophet, say to your wives,

“If you yearn for the life

of this world, and its ornament,

then come, I will provide

for you and release you

with a handsome allowance.

29“But if you yearn for God

and His messenger,

and the home of the hereafter,

God has prepared a great reward

for those of you who do good.”

30Wives of the Prophet,

whoever among you

commits obvious indecency

shall be doubly punished—

that is always easy for God.

31Whoever among you

obeys God and His messenger

and does good works,

We shall grant her a double reward—

We have prepared

a noble provision for her.

32Wives of the Prophet, you

are not like any other women.

If you are mindful of God,

do not be too soft in speech

—or those sick in their hearts

might be moved with desire—

so speak with propriety.

33Remain in your homes,

and refrain from adorning yourselves

in display, as in the former time

of [pagan] ignorance.

Be steadfast in prayer, give in charity,

and obey God and His messenger.

God wishes only to remove

all abomination from you, people

of the [Prophet’s] household,

and to perfect you in purity.

34And remember what is

recited in your homes

from the verses of God

and His Wisdom.

God is Ever Subtle, All Aware.

SECTION 5

35For men and women

who submit to the will of God—

believing men and women,

obedient men and women,

truthful men and women,

patient men and women,

men and women with humility,

men and women who give in charity,

who fast, who guard their chastity,

who remember God often—

for all of these God has prepared

forgiveness and a great reward.

36It is not fitting for

any believing man or woman

to claim choice in any matter

where God and His messenger

have ruled. For whoever disobeys

God and His messenger

has clearly gone astray.

37When you said to the one

whom God and you had favored,

“Keep your wife, and be mindful

of God,” you kept in your heart

what God would reveal.

You feared the people, but God

has a greater right to your fear.

So when Zayd ended his marriage

to her, with due procedure,

We gave his wife to you

so there would be no blame

on believers for marrying the wives

of their adopted sons once they have

ended their marriage with them,

with due procedure.

God’s command will be fulfilled.°

38There can be no blame

upon the Prophet in what

God has ruled for him.

This was God’s way

with those who passed before

—for God’s command is ordained—

39and with those who convey

the message of God, who fear Him,

fearing none but God—

God suffices as Reckoner.

40Muhammad is not father

to any among your men,

but is the messenger of God,

the seal of the prophets°—

God is Knower of all things.

SECTION 6

41You who believe,

remember God often,

42and glorify Him

morning and evening.

43It is He Who bestows

blessings upon you, as do

His angels, to bring you

from darkness to the light,

for He is Ever Merciful

to the believers.

44Their greeting on the day

they meet him will be “Peace.”

And He has prepared for them

a noble reward.

45Prophet, We have sent you

as a witness, a bearer of joyous news,

and one who gives warning;

46as one who calls to God,

by His leave, as a lamp,

whose light shines.

47So give the believers

joyous news that they

shall have from God

a great favor.

48And don’t heed the disbelievers

and hypocrites. Ignore the harm

they wrought, and trust in God,

for God suffices as Guardian.

49You who believe,

when you marry believing women,

then divorce them before touching them,

you should impose no “waiting period”°

but give them due provision

and release them

with a handsome allowance.

50Prophet, We made lawful to you

the wives whose bridal gift you paid,

and those God gave you

to own as captives;

the daughters of your paternal

uncles and aunts;

the daughters of your maternal

uncles and aunts, who emigrated

with you; any believing woman

who dedicates herself to the Prophet

and whom he wishes to wed—this is

for you only, not for other believers.

We know precisely what we have

made obligatory for them

concerning their wives and those

whom they own as captives—so that

no blame will fall upon you.

God is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

51You may defer [a wife’s turn]

and receive any of [your wives]

as you wish. Nor will you be

at fault if you take one that you

had set aside. This is more likely

to comfort them, so they

will not be vexed, and will all be

content with what you give them.

For God knows what is in your hearts.

And God is All Knowing, Forbearing.

52It is not lawful for you, Prophet,

to marry more women after this,

nor to exchange them for [other] wives,

even though their beauty may allure you—

except those you own as servants.

God is Ever Watchful over all things.

SECTION 7

53You who believe, do not enter

the Prophet’s apartments for a meal,

awaiting its due time, without his leave.

But when you are invited, enter,

and when you have eaten, disperse,

and don’t stay to indulge in talk,

for that would offend the Prophet,

and he would refrain from asking you

to leave. But God does not refrain

from speaking the truth. And when

you ask [his wives] for something,

ask from behind a screen—

that is purer for your hearts and theirs.

It is not fitting for you

to offend the messenger of God,

or ever to marry his wives after him—

something gross in the sight of God.

54Whether you reveal something

or conceal it—God Knows all things.

55There is no blame

on the Prophet’s wives [if

they appear before] their fathers, °

their sons, their brothers,

their brother’s sons,

their sister’s sons,

their women, or those they own.

[Wives of the Prophet]:

Be mindful of God,

for God is Witness to all things.

56God and His angels

invoke blessings on the Prophet;

So, you who believe, you also

invoke blessings on him,

and meet him

with greetings of peace.

57As for those who offend God

and His messenger—

God has renounced them

in this world and the hereafter,

and has prepared for them

a humiliating punishment.

58As for those who unduly offend

believing men and women—

they bring upon themselves

calumny and flagrant sin.

SECTION 8

59Prophet, tell your wives,

daughters, and believing women

to wrap their robes

about them in public;

this is most appropriate

so they will be known

and not open to offense.

God is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

60If the hypocrites,

the sick in heart,

and rumormongers in the city

don’t desist,

We will rouse you against them

and they won’t stay long in it

as your neighbors,

61and will be cursed.

Wherever they are found,

they will be taken

and executed.

62This was God’s way

with those who passed before;

and you will find no change

in God’s way.

63People ask you about the hour.

Say, “Knowledge of that

lies with God alone.”

And how could you know this?

Perhaps the hour draws near.

64God has cursed the disbelievers,

and has prepared for them a blazing fire,

65where they shall stay forever;

they shall find no protector,

nor any helper.

66That day, their faces

will be turned around in the fire;

they will say, “If only

we had obeyed God

and obeyed the messenger.”

67And they will say,

“Our Lord, we in fact obeyed

our chiefs and our great ones,

and they led us astray

from the path.

68“Our Lord, double

their punishment, and curse

them with a great curse.”

SECTION 9

69You who believe,

don’t be like those

who offended Moses,

whom God absolved

of their charges,

and was honored

in the sight of God.

70You who believe,

be mindful of God, and speak

in a forthright manner,

71that He might reform

your deeds and forgive your sins.

Whoever obeys God

and His messenger

has surely gained a great victory.

72We offered the [burden

of moral] trust

to the heavens and the earth

and the mountains, but

they refused to bear it,

fearing it.°

Yet humankind bore it,

being unjust and ignorant,

73so God will punish

hypocritical men and women,

and idolatrous men and women,

but God will turn in mercy to

the believing men and women—

for God is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

SURA 34

Sheba (Sabaʾ)

This late Meccan sura of 54 verses warns of judgment, death, and disaster, citing David and Solomon as forewarners, with the people of Sheba in Yemen their primary audience (vv. 15–21).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1All praise be to God,

to Whom belongs

all that is the heavens and

all that is on the earth;

to Whom belongs

all praise in the hereafter—

He is All Wise, All Aware.

2He knows all that goes into the earth

and all that comes out of it,

all that comes down from the sky

and all that goes up to it—

He is Ever Merciful, Forgiving.

3The unbelievers say,

“The hour shall never fall upon us.”

Tell them, “No! It will

befall you—by my Lord,

Knower of the unseen,

Whom even an atom’s weight

cannot escape, in the heavens or earth,

nor anything smaller or greater,

for all is recorded in a clear Book

4“so He might reward those who believe

and do good deeds: they shall know

forgiveness and a rich provision.”

5Those who strive against Our signs,

trying to undermine them

shall face painful torment.

6Those who were granted knowledge

of what your Lord revealed to you

see that it is the truth,

which guides to the path

of the Almighty, the Praiseworthy.

7The unbelievers say,

“Shall we show you a man

who tells you that when

you are wholly decomposed,

you’ll be re-created anew?

8“Has he invented a falsehood

about God, or is he mad?”

No—those who disbelieve

in the hereafter

shall face punishment,

for they are far astray.

9Don’t they see what lies before them

and behind them, in heaven and earth?

If We willed, We could make the earth

swallow them, or fragments of sky

fall on them. In this is a sign

for every servant who turns to God.

SECTION 2

10We graced David with Our favor,

“You mountains, hymn with David

Our praise, and you birds too!”

And we made iron pliable for him,

11saying, “Make armor of chain mail,

measuring the links correctly,

and do righteous deeds,

for I See all that you do.”

12We subdued the wind to Solomon;

its morning journey took a month,

its evening course a month.

And We made to flow for him

a fountain of molten brass,

and some jinn worked for him

with their Lord’s leave,

but if any turned from Our command,

We made them taste

the torment of blazing fire.

13They worked to make him all

that he wanted: places of worship,

statues, basins large as cisterns,

and anchored cauldrons.

“Work, people of David, with gratitude,

for few of my servants are grateful.”

14When We decreed Solomon’s death,

nothing showed the jinn that he was dead

except an earthworm gnawing at his staff.

So, when he fell down, it was clear to them—

had they known what is in the unseen,

they would not have remained

in degrading torment [of this labor].

15There was a sign for Sheba’s people

in their own home—two gardens,

right and left: “Eat of what your Lord

has provided, and be thankful to Him—

a good land and a Forgiving Lord.”

16But they turned away, so We sent

upon them a flood from the dam,°

replacing their two gardens

with two others bearing bitter fruit,

tamarisks, and a few lote-trees.

17This is how We rewarded them,

for they were ungrateful—

and who but the ungrateful

would We reward like this?

18Also, We placed between them

and the towns We had blessed,

other towns, clearly visible,

between which We placed easy stages:

“Travel through them safely,

by night and by day.”

19But they said, “Our Lord,

lengthen the stages of our journeys,”°

and they wronged themselves.

So We made an exemplary tale

of them, scattering them into fragments.

In this are signs for all

who are patient and thankful.

20Iblis proved his view of them

to be true,° for they followed him

—all but a group of believers—

21though he would have had

no authority over them—

only so that We might show

who believes in the hereafter,

and who is in doubt over it,

for your Lord is Guardian

over all things.

SECTION 3

22Say, “Call on those you claim

besides God—they don’t control

even an atom’s weight in either

the heavens or the earth; they hold

no share in either,

nor can any of them help Him.

23“No intercession can help with Him

except by those He allows.”

Once fear is driven from their hearts

they’ll ask the intercessors,

“What did your Lord say?”

They’ll answer, “The truth,

for He is Most High, Most Great.”

24Say, “Who gives you provision

from the heavens and the earth?”

Say, “It is God. And either we or you

are rightly guided, while [the other]

has clearly gone astray.”

25Say, “You won’t be questioned

about the sins we committed,

nor will we be questioned

about what you did.”

26Say, “Our Lord shall gather us

together and shall decide justly

between us, for He is the Judge,°

the All Knowing.”

27Say, “Show me the gods

you have joined with Him—

no—He alone is God,

the Almighty, the Wise.”

28We sent you as a messenger

to all peoples, only to bring

joyous news as well as warning;

but most people won’t understand.

29They say, “When will this promise

come to pass,

if you are speaking the truth?”

30Say, “Your meeting [with God]

is on a day

that you can’t put back or forward—

even by one hour.”

SECTION 4

31The disbelievers say,

“We shall never believe this Quran

or what came before it.”

If you could see the wrongdoers,

arrayed before their Lord,

flinging back rebukes on one another.

The oppressed will accuse

their oppressors, “If not for you,

we would have been believers.”

32The oppressors will reply

to the oppressed, “Was it we

who kept you from true guidance

after it had come to you?

No, you were sinners.”

33The oppressed will rejoin, “No,

it was your scheming, night and day,

urging° us not to believe in God

and to set up equals beside Him.”

When they see the punishment,

they will feel inward remorse,

and We shall shackle the necks

of the disbelievers.

How should they be rewarded

except for what they did?

34Whenever We sent someone

to warn a town, its wealthy people

would say, “We don’t believe

in the message you’re sent with.”

35And they would say,

“We have more wealth and children,

and we won’t be punished.”

36Say, “My Lord enlarges provision

or restricts it for whom He will,

yet most people don’t know.”

SECTION 5

37It is not your wealth or children

that will bring you close to Us,

only those who believe

and do good deeds—they shall reap

a double reward for their deeds

and high mansions, safe [in paradise].

38Those who strive against Our signs,

trying to undermine them

shall be brought for punishment.

39Say, “My Lord grants more or less

to whom He will of his servants;

and whatever you spend

[in His cause], He will restore,

for He is the Best of Providers.”

40One day He shall gather them

all together, and ask the angels,

“Were these the ones

who used to worship you?”

41They will say, “Glory be to You—

You are our Protector, not they.

In fact, they worshipped the jinn,

and most believed in them.”

42And on this day,

none of you will have power

to help or harm the others,

and We shall say to the wrongdoers,

“Taste the torment of fire—

which you denied.”

43When Our clear signs

are recited to them, they sneer,

“This is just a man who wants

to bar you from what your fathers

worshipped,” and they jeer,

“This is just a lie, concocted.”

Even when the truth comes their way,

unbelievers say, “This is plain magic”

44—though We had not given them

any books to study,

nor sent anyone to warn them.

45Those before them also denied,

and these people have achieved

not a tenth of what We gave them.

When they denied My messengers,

[see] how I rejected them!

SECTION 6

46Say, “I counsel you

on one thing only: stand before God,

in pairs or individually, and reflect:

your companion is not possessed;

he simply warns you

of impending, severe torment.”

47Say, “I ask of no reward

from you—it is all for you.

My only reward is from God,

for He is Witness to all things.”

48Say, “My Lord casts down

the truth before you—

Knower of the unseen.”

49Say, “The truth has come,

and falsehood can neither

originate nor resurrect a thing.”

50Say, “If I am astray, it is to my loss,

but if I am rightly guided,

it is by what my Lord reveals to me.

He is All Hearing, Ever Near.”

51If you could see how terrified

they will be—there shall be no escape,

when they are seized from a nearby place.°

52And they will say,

“We believe in it now,”

but how can they attain it

from such a distant place,°

53since they denied it before

and conjectured about the unseen

from that distant place?

54A barrier shall be imposed

between them and their desires,

as was done with their kind before,

for they have always been

deep in grave doubt.°

SURA 35

The Originator (Fatir)

Another late Meccan sura, this stresses human moral responsibility in response to recognition of, and gratitude for, creation (hence the title). The Book of God is extolled as the resource and reminder for both rewards and punishments, with the latter underscored as the outcome for evil schemers in the final verses (vv. 42–45).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1All praise be to God, Originator

of the heavens and the earth, Maker

of the angels, messengers with wings,

two, three, or four pairs.

He adds to His creation what He will;

He has Power over all things.

2Whatever mercy God bestows

on humankind, none can withhold;

and what He withholds,

none can disburse,

for He is Almighty, All Wise.

3Humankind, call to mind

God’s favor to you—

is there a creator besides God

who provides for you

from the heavens or the earth?

There is no god but Him—

so how can you be deluded?

4And if they deny you,

messengers before you

were likewise denied.

All matters fall back to God

for resolution.

5People, God’s promise is true,

so never let the life of this world

deceive you, nor let the deceiver

deceive you about God.

6Satan is your enemy,

so treat him as one.

He calls his supporters—

though only to be inmates

of the blazing fire.

7Those who disbelieve

shall face severe torment;

but those who believe

and do good deeds shall see

forgiveness and a rich reward.

SECTION 2

8What of the person whose bad deed

seems alluring, good to them?

God leaves to stray whom He will

and He guides whom He will.

Prophet, don’t weigh down your soul

with remorse for them,

for God Knows all that they do.

9It is God Who sends the winds

to stir up the clouds, and

We drive them to dead land

to bring life to the earth after its death.

The resurrection will be just like this.

10Whoever seeks honor—[know that]

all honor belongs to God. To Him

rises up all the good that is spoken°

and He raises up each good deed.

But those who scheme evil things

shall face severe torment

and their schemes shall perish.

11God created you from dust,

then a drop of sperm, then made you

into pairs. No female conceives

or gives birth without His knowing.

No life is lengthened or shortened

that is not recorded in the Book.

All this is easy for God.

12The two seas are not alike,

one fresh, sweet, pleasing to drink,

the other brinish and bitter.

Yet from each you eat fresh meat,

and retrieve gems to wear;

and you see ships streaming

through the seas, that you might seek

His bounty—and be grateful.

13He fades night into day

and day into night, and subdues

sun and moon, each sailing

in its own orbit for a fixed term.

This is God, your Lord, to Whom

belongs all dominion. And the gods

on whom you call besides Him

control nothing—not even

the membrane of a date seed.

14If you call them,

they don’t hear your call,

and if they heard it,

they would not answer you.

On the day of resurrection,

they’ll deny your association

of them with God;

and none can better inform you

than the One who is All Aware.

SECTION 3

15Humankind, it is you who need God,

but God is He Who needs no one,

He alone is Praiseworthy.

16If He wishes, He can efface you,

and bring in a new creation—

17and that would not be hard for God.

18No soul can bear another’s burden°

and if a soul with a heavy burden

should call on another to bear its load,

none of its burden can be taken,

even by one who is close in blood.

You can only warn those

who fear their Lord, though unseen,°

and are steadfast in prayer.

Those who purify themselves

do so for their own soul—

the final journey is to God.

19The blind and the seeing

are not alike;

20nor are the depths

of darkness and the light;

21nor are the cool shade

and the heat of the sun;

22nor alike are the living and the dead.

God can make whom He will hear,

but you cannot make

those in their graves hear.

23You are here merely to warn.

24We have sent you with the truth,

to give joyous news and to warn—

no nation was without warning.°

25If they deny you,

earlier peoples did the same—

messengers came to them

with clear signs, scriptures,

and an illuminating Book.

26In the end, I seized the disbelievers—

how dreadful was my reprimand!

SECTION 4

27Don’t you see how God

sends down rain from the sky,

with which We raise fruit

in varying colors?

And the mountains bear tracts

of red and white,

in varied hues, and deep black.

28Likewise, people, wild beasts,

and livestock are in varying colors.

Only those of His servants

with knowledge truly fear God—

God is Almighty, Forgiving.

29Those who recite the Book of God,

are steadfast in prayer, and spend in charity

from what we give them, secretly and openly—

can hope for a commerce that will never fail.

30For He will reward them in full

and give even more from His grace;

He is Forgiving, Appreciating.

31What was revealed to you

from the Book was truth,

confirming what came before it;

God is All Aware,

Seeing everything about His servants.

32We gave the Book as a legacy

to Our servants whom We favored.

Some of them wrong their own souls,

some are moderate, and others

by God’s leave are foremost

in good deeds—the greatest grace.

33They shall enter eternal gardens,

adorned there with bracelets of gold,

and pearls, in robes of silk.

34And they will say, “Praise be to God,

Who removed our sorrow.

Our Lord is Forgiving, Appreciating,”

35“Who, in His grace, settled us

in a lasting home, where no fatigue

or weariness shall fall upon us.”

36But those who disbelieve

shall know the fire of hell,

where no death is decreed for them,

nor relief from its torment.

This is how We reward

every disbeliever.

37There, they will cry out,

“Our Lord, let us out.

We’ll do good deeds—

not those we did before.”

“Did We not give you life

long enough, for those willing

to be heedful, to be warned?°

And someone did come to warn you.

So taste [the reward]—there is none

to help the wrongdoers.”

SECTION 5

38God Knows all that is unseen

in the heavens and the earth;

He Knows all that lies

in human hearts.

39It is He who made you

regents on the earth.°

The ungrateful will pay

for their ingratitude;°

it adds only to their odium

in the sight of their Lord,

and to their loss.

40Say, “Have you seen the gods

you invoke besides God?

Show me what they’ve created

on the earth.

Or, do they have a share

in the heavens?

Or, have We given them a Book,

on which they can ground

clear proofs?

No—the wrongdoers promise

one another

nothing but delusion.”

41It is God Who keeps

the heavens and earth

in their ceaseless being;

and if they should cease,

none beyond Him could stop this.

He is Forbearing, Most Forgiving.

42Swearing by God the strongest

of their oaths, they claimed that

if someone came to warn them,

they would be more rightly guided

than other nations.

Yet when someone did come,

it only increased their aversion

43because of their pride on earth

and their evil scheming.

But their scheming shall confound them.

Do they expect anything

But the fate of earlier peoples?

You will never find any change

or variation in God’s way.

44Have they not traveled

through the land and seen

the fate of those before them—

though they were more powerful?

God is not to be frustrated

by anything in the heavens

or on the earth—

He is All Knowing, All Powerful.

45If God took people to task

for the deeds they earned,

he would not leave any creature

on the face of the earth.

But He gives them respite

for a fixed term,

and when that term expires

[they will know that]

He Sees everything

about His servants.

SURA 36

Ya Sin (Ya Sin)

A middle Meccan sura, this takes its name from the initial and perplexing letters that mark it, as they do twenty-eight other suras. After the initial sura, “The Opening,” it is perhaps the most liturgically important sura in the entire Quran. With its accent on the afterlife in the last part (vv. 51–83), it provides the fitting recitation for someone who has died, and its verses are often spontaneously recited by a devout Muslim on hearing of another’s demise.

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1Ya Sin.°

2By the wise Quran,

3you, Prophet, are truly

one of the messengers

4on a straight path.

5It is a revelation sent down from

the Almighty, the Ever Merciful,

6that you might warn a people

whose forefathers had no warning,

who therefore are heedless.

7Sentence has been passed

on most of them,

for they won’t believe—

8We placed yokes

around their necks,

drawn up to their chins,

forcing up their heads,

9and We placed a barrier

before them and behind them,

and shrouded them so

they cannot see.

10It’s the same to them

whether you warn them or not—

they won’t believe.

11You can warn only those

who follow the message and fear

the All Merciful, though unseen.°

So give joyous news to them,

of forgiveness and a noble reward.

12We bring the dead back to life,

and We transcribe all the deeds

they send before them

and all they leave behind,

and We have accounted all things

in a clear record.

13Coin for them a parable,

of a people to whose town

messengers came.

SECTION 2

14When We sent two messengers°

to them, they denied them both.

So We reinforced them with a third,

and they declared,

“We have been sent

as messengers to you.”

15The people said,

“You’re merely humans like us,

and the All Merciful

has not sent anything.

You are just lying.”

16They said, “Our Lord knows

that we have been sent

as messengers to you.”

17“And our task is only

to convey [the message] clearly.”

18The people retorted,

“We think you’re an evil omen.

If you don’t desist, we’ll stone you

and subject you to painful torment.”°

19They replied, “Your evil omen

is within yourselves. [Do you say this]

because you have been reminded?

No—you people are given to excess.”

20A man came running from

the outskirts of the city, saying,

“My people, follow the messengers.

21“Follow those

who ask of you no reward,

and who are rightly guided.

22“Why should I not worship Him

Who created me? To Him

you will be returned.

23“Should I take other gods

besides Him? If the All Merciful

intended harm for me,

their intercession could not

help in any way, nor

could they save me.

24“I would clearly be wrong.

25“I believe in your Lord;

so hear me.”

26He was told, “Enter the garden.”°

He said, “If only my people knew

27“how my Lord has forgiven me

and has set me among those

held in honor.”

28We did not send down,

after him, any hosts from heaven

against his people,

nor would We deign to—

29there was but a single blast,

and they were gone.

30Alas, for My servants—

no messenger came to them

whom they did not mock.

31Don’t they see how many

generations before them We destroyed,

so none would come back to them?

32And every one, all together,

will be brought before Us.

SECTION 3

33A sign for them

is the dead earth:

We bring it to life,

and bring from it

grain which they eat.

34And We placed upon it gardens,

with palm groves and grapevines,

We made springs burst forth there,

35so they might eat of its fruit,

which their hands did not make;

will they not, then, be grateful?

36Glory be to Him Who

created in pairs

all that the earth yields,

and their own selves,

and also things of which

they are unaware.

37And a sign for them is the night—

we strip away from it the light of day

so they are left in darkness,

38and the sun, coursing

through her appointed path

by decree of the Almighty,

the All Knowing,

39and the moon, for whom

We ordained phases, so it returns,

curved like a dried, date stalk of old.

40The sun may not outrun the moon,

nor the night outstrip the day—

each glides in its own orbit.

41And a sign for them

is that We bore their offspring

in the loaded ark,

42and We have created for them

such vessels in which they sail.°

43If We wished, We could

drown them, and they would

have no helper,

nor would they be saved,

44except by Our mercy,

for a fleeting reprieve.

45When they are told,

“Have fear of what lies before you

and what lies behind you,

that you might be shown mercy,”

46they turn away from every sign

that comes to them from their Lord;°

47and when they are told,

“Spend in charity from what God

has given you,” those who disbelieve

say to those who believe,

“Should we feed those whom

God could have fed, had He willed?

You are clearly wrong.”

48They say, “When will this promise

[of resurrection] come to pass,

if you are speaking the truth?”

49But they wait [unaware]

only for a single blast,

which will seize them

while they dispute.

50They won’t be able

to disburse any bequest,

or return to their own people.

SECTION 4

51The trumpet shall be sounded,

and behold, how they will hasten

from their graves to their Lord.

52They will say, “Alas for us!

Who has raised us from our place

of sleep?” A voice will answer,°

“This is what the All Merciful promised:

the messengers spoke the truth.”

53It will be but a single blast,

then they shall all

be brought before Us.

54On that day, no soul

shall be wronged in any way,

and you shall be requited

only for what you have done.

55On that day,

the people of the garden

shall be gladly occupied,

56they and their spouses,

in the shade,

reclining on couches.

57There, they shall have fruit,

and all that they ask for.

58“Peace”—the word [of welcome]

from a Lord Ever Merciful.

59It will be said, “This day,

stand apart, you sinners.”

60“Children of Adam,

did I not enjoin you

not to worship Satan,

—for he is your open enemy—

61“and to worship Me?

—this is a straight path.

62“But he led astray

a great many of you—

did you not use reason?

63“This is hell,°

which you were promised.

64“Burn in it, this day,

for you went on disbelieving.”

65This day, We shall seal

their mouths; but their hands

shall speak to Us, and their feet

shall bear witness to what they reaped.

66Had We wished, We could

have extinguished their sight,

then they would grope to find

the path, but how should they see it?

67Had We wished, We could

have transfixed them in their place,

unable to move forward or go back.

SECTION 5

68To whomever We grant long life,

We reverse their faculties—

will they not, then, use reason?

69We have not taught poetry°

to the Prophet, nor is it fitting for him.

This is nothing other than a reminder

and a clear Quran,

70so that those who are living

might be warned, and the Word

can be vindicated

against those who disbelieve.

71Don’t they see that We created for them

—among the things that Our hands have made—

livestock, which they own,

72and which We made tame for them,

some to ride and others to eat?

73And they yield further uses,

and give drink.

So won’t they be thankful?

74Yet they still take

other gods beside God,

hoping they might be helped.

75Those gods have no power

to save them, even if they were

an army assembled.°

76So do not be grieved, Prophet,

by what they say—

We know all that they conceal

and all that they reveal.

77Do human beings not see

that it is We who created them

from a drop of semen? Yet, see,

they are openly adversarial°

78and coin allegories about Us,

forgetting their own creation,

asking, “Who can bring life

to bones that have decomposed?”

79Say, “He will bring life to them

Who first composed them,

for He Knows every creation.

80“It is He who made fire

for you from the green tree,

and see, you light from it

your own fires.”

81Is He Who created the heavens and earth

not able to create the like of human beings?

Of course—for He is the Creator,

the All Knowing.

82When He intends something,

His only command is to say to it:

“Be,” and it is.

83So glory be to Him

in Whose hand is dominion

over all things; and to Him

you will be returned.

SURA 37

Arrayed in Ranks (Al-Saffat)

An early Meccan sura, its title appears to come from the initial verse, then confirmed by later verses (vv. 164–66), presupposed to be ranks of angels. It begins by extolling the awesome creative power of God, then warns of the disparate fates awaiting believers and disbelievers. Prophets from Noah to Jonah are lauded, while any link of God with daughters or with jinn is rejected (vv. 149–59). The final verses extol God, Lord of the universe (vv. 180–82).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1By those arrayed in ranks,°

2those who cry out a warning,

3reciting a reminder—

4your God is One,

5Lord of the heavens, of the earth,

and all that lies between,

Lord of every place

where the sun rises.°

6We have graced

the lower heaven

with stars

7to guard against

every rebellious devil,

8to bar them from hearing

the highest assembly [of angels];

they are pelted from every side,

9repelled; and they shall face

lasting torment.

10Any who eavesdrops, snatching

an overheard fragment,

shall be pursued by a piercing flame.

11So, Prophet, ask the disbelievers,

are they more difficult to create

than the other things We have created?

We created them from clinging clay.

12How you marvel [at God’s creation],

while they mock,

13and when reminded,

they do not take heed;

14and when they see a sign,

they mock it,

15saying, “This is nothing

but obvious magic.

16“When we die, when

we are dust and bones,

shall we then

be raised up again,

17“with our forefathers of old?”

18Say, “Yes, indeed,

and you shall be brought low.”

19There will be a single cry,°

and behold, they will see,

20and they will say, “Alas for us!

This is the day of reckoning.”

21A voice will say,°

“This is the day of decision,

which you denied.

SECTION 2

22“Gather all the wrongdoers

and their spouses, together

with what they worshipped

23besides God, and guide them

to the path of the blazing fire,°

24and stop them, to be questioned,

25‘What is wrong with you,

why do you not help one another?’ ”

26On that day, they shall indeed

submit to the will of God.°

27And they will turn to

one another, questioning,

28“It was you who came to us,

with authority, [urging us to evil].”°

29The others will rejoin, “No,

it was you who were not believers;

30“we had no authority over you.

You were rebellious people.

31“Now the Word of our Lord

is proven against us,

and we must taste [the torment].

32“We led you astray—

we ourselves were astray.”

33On that day, they will share

the same punishment.

34This is how We deal

with the sinners.

35When it was said to them,

“There is no god but [the One] God,”

they remained proud,

36saying, “Shall we forsake our gods

for the sake of a mad poet?”

37No—he brings the truth, and

confirms the [earlier] messengers.

38You shall surely taste

the painful punishment—

39you will be requited

only for what you have done—

40as for the chosen servants of God,

41they shall enjoy

an endowed provision

42of fruits; and they shall be honored

43in gardens of bliss,

44facing one another,

arrayed on couches.

45Around them will be passed

a goblet from a spring,

46white, delicious

to those who taste it,

47neither impairing

nor intoxicating them.

48Beside them will be

females of modest glance,

and lustrous eyes,

49like sheltered eggs.°

50They will turn to one another,

inquiring.

51One will say, “[On earth]

I had a close companion

52“who used to ask,

‘Are you really one of those

who believe?

53“ ‘When we die and become

dust and bones, shall we

really be brought [for reckoning]?’ ”

54The other will say,

“Will you look down?”

55So he’ll look down

and see his companion

in the midst of hellfire.

56He said, “By God,

You almost brought me to ruin.”

57“If not for the grace of my Lord,

I should have been brought to it.”

58[To those with him he shall say,]

“Shall we really not die

59“beyond our first death,

and not be punished?

60“This is surely

the supreme triumph.”

61Let all who strive

strive for the like of this—

62is this the better welcome

or the tree of Zaqqum?°

63We made Zaqqum

a trial for wrongdoers,

64for it is a tree that comes

from the pit of hellfire;

65its fronds like the heads

of devils.

66They will eat from it,

filling their bellies with it;

67then they shall have a brew

of scalding water,

68and then shall return

to the blaze of hellfire.

69Yes, they found

their forefathers astray

70yet they hastened

in their footsteps.

71Before them, indeed,

most of the ancients were astray,

72though We had sent

messengers to warn them.

73Observe, then, the outcome

of those who were warned—

74all but the chosen

servants of God.

SECTION 3

75Noah cried out to Us—

and how excellent was Our response,°

76We saved him and his people

from great distress,

77enabling his offspring to survive,

78and We left him [a good name]

with posterity,

79“Peace be to Noah

among all beings”°—

80this is how We reward

those who do good.

81For he was among

Our believing servants.

82Then We drowned the rest.

83Abraham was of his creed°

84when he approached his Lord

with a pure heart.

85He said to his father

and his people,

“What are you worshipping?

86“Do you desire false gods

instead of the One God?

87“What are your thoughts

on the Lord of the universe?”

88Then he turned his gaze

toward the stars,

89and said, “Actually, I am unwell.”

90So they turned their backs to him, and left.

91Then he turned to their gods,

“Why do you not eat?

92“Why is it that you do not speak?”

93He turned toward them, and

struck them with his right hand.

94At this, his people

rushed toward him,

95so he asked, “Do you worship

what you yourselves have sculpted,

96“when it is God who created you

and what you make?”

97They cried, “Build a pyre° for him

and throw him into the blazing fire!”

98So they plotted against him,

but We brought them low.

99He said, “I will go to my Lord—

He will guide [me].

100“My Lord, grant me

a righteous child.”

101So We gave him joyous news

of a son who would be forbearing.

102When the boy was old enough

to help his father, Abraham said,

“My son, I saw in a dream

that I was offering you as a sacrifice.

See, now—what do you think?”

The son replied, “My father,

do as you are commanded. God willing,

you shall find me patient.”°

103And when they had both

submitted to the will of God,

and Abraham had laid him

face-down on his forehead,

104We called to him, “Abraham,

105“you have fulfilled the vision.”

This is how We reward

those who do good;

106this indeed was a clear trial.

107We ransomed his son

with a crucial sacrifice,°

108and We left Abraham

a good name with posterity,

109“Peace be with Abraham.”

110This is how We reward

those who do good—

111for he was among

Our believing servants.

112And We gave him joyous news

of a son Isaac—a prophet,

one of the righteous.

113We blessed him and Isaac.

and among their progeny

were some who were good,

and some who clearly

wrong themselves.

SECTION 4

114We also bestowed Our favor

on Moses and Aaron;

115We delivered them both

and their people from great distress;

116We helped them,

so they were victorious;

117and We gave them

the illuminating Book;

118We guided them to the straight path,

119and We left them a good name

with posterity—

120“Peace be with Moses and Aaron”—

121this is how We reward

those who do good;

122they were both among

Our believing servants.

123Elijah, too, was one of the messengers.

124He said to his people,

“Will you not be mindful of God?

125“Do you call upon Baʿal

and forsake the Best of Creators—

126“the One God, your Lord,

and Lord of your forefathers?”

127But they denied him,

for which they will surely

be brought [for punishment]—

128all but the chosen servants of God.

129and We left him a good name

with posterity—

130“Peace be with Elijah”—

131this is how We reward

those who do good,

132for he was among

Our believing Servants.

133Lot also was one of the messengers.

134We delivered him and all his people,

135save an old woman with those

who lingered behind;

136then we destroyed the rest.

137You pass by their ruins, morning

138and night—will you not,

then, use reason?

SECTION 5

139Jonah, too, was one of the messengers.

140When he fled to the loaded ship,

141they cast lots, and he lost;°

142then the whale swallowed him,

for he had incurred blame.

143Had he not then glorified God,

144he should surely

have stayed in its belly

until the day of resurrection.

145But We cast him, sick,

onto a barren shore,

146and let a tree of gourd fruit

grow above him.

147We sent him [as a messenger]

to a hundred thousand or more,

148and they believed—

so We let them enjoy life

for a while.

149Prophet, ask the disbelievers,

“Does your Lord have daughters

while they have sons?”

150Did We create the angels

as females, while they looked on?

151No—and it’s one of their lies

when they say,

152“God has begotten.”

They are liars indeed.

153Did He really choose

daughters over sons?

154What is wrong with you?

How do you form your judgment?

155Will you not reflect?

156Or do you have clear authority

[for your claims]?

157Then bring your scripture,

if you are speaking the truth.

158And they assert kinship

between Him and the jinn,

yet the jinn surely know that

they will be brought [for reckoning].

159—May God be glorified, above

what they ascribe to Him—

160all but the chosen servants of God.

161And neither you

nor those you worship

162can beguile any away from [God]

163but those who will burn

in the blazing fire.

164[The angels say], “Every one of us

has an appointed place;

165“we are arrayed in ranks

166“and we are the ones

who glorify God.”

167Yet [the disbelievers] say,

168“If only we had a reminder

like former peoples,

169“we would have been

chosen servants of God.”

170Now they deny [the Quran];

but soon they shall know.

171Our Word has already

been given to Our servants,

the messengers,

172that they shall be helped,

173and that Our forces

shall be victorious.

174So, Prophet, turn away

from the disbelievers for a while,

175and see what becomes of them;

for soon they shall see.

176Do they wish to hasten

Our punishment?

177When it descends

upon their courtyards,

it will be an evil morning

for those forewarned.

178So turn away from them

for a while,

179and see what becomes of them;

for they shall soon see.

180Glory be to your Lord,

the Lord of Majesty, far above

what they ascribe to Him;

181peace be to the messengers;

182and praise be to God,

Lord of the universe.

SURA 38

Sad (Sad)

Middle Meccan, this sura is named after its first letter, not otherwise explained. Numbering 88 verses, it condemns those who had vilified Muhammad and other messengers before him. Some of the messengers (like Elisha and Dhul Kifl, v. 48) are seldom or never mentioned except here. The penultimate section concerns the story of Iblis—his creation, disobedience, and dismissal (vv. 71–85). The final directive underscores Muhammad as an authentic and selfless messenger (vv. 86–88).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1Sad.°

By the Quran with its reminder—

2the unbelievers are steeped

in self-glory and dissent.

3How many generations

We destroyed before them.

Then they cried out for escape

when it was too late.°

4They’re bemused that

one of their own

has come to warn them;

and the unbelievers cry,

“This is a lying sorcerer.

5“Has He made all the gods

into One God? How bizarre!”

6Their leaders stride away, saying,

“Walk on, and stay steadfast to your gods,

for there’s some motive°

within this [against us].

7“We never heard the like of this

in previous religious creed.°

It’s nothing more than a fiction.

8“Out of all of us, the message

was sent to him?” Yes

—they doubt My message—

they have yet

to taste My punishment.

9Or do they possess the treasures

of the mercy of your Lord,

the Almighty, the Bestower?

10Or do they have dominion

over the heavens and the earth

and all that lies between?

Then let them ascend

by whatever means° they can

[to bring down revelation].

11The armies there,

of their allies,

shall be vanquished.

12Before them, the people of Noah,

ʿAd, and Pharaoh of the stakes°

denied [the messengers],

13as did Thamud, the people of Lot,

and the forest dwellers°—

these were the allies.

14Every one of them

denied the messengers,

so My punishment

came justly upon them.

SECTION 2

15These disbelievers but await

a single blast, which cannot be delayed.

16They taunt, “Our Lord,

hasten for us our share

of punishment—even before

the day of reckoning!”

17Bear with patience what they say,

and bear in mind Our servant David,

who was strong, ever turning to God.

18We made the hills

hymn Our glory, along with him,

at evening and at sunrise,

19as well as the birds in flocks—

all turning to Him.

20We fortified his kingdom,

gave him wisdom, and made him

decisive in discourse.

21Have you heard the story

of the two litigants, who climbed

the wall to reach his private quarters?°

22When they came upon David,

he was terrified of them.

They said, “Don’t be frightened.

We are two litigants, and one of us

has wronged the other. So, judge

between us fairly, and don’t be unjust,

but guide us to the right path.

23“This is my brother.

He has ninety-nine ewes

and I have just one. Yet he says,

‘Let me have charge of her,’

and his words overwhelmed me.”°

24David said,

“He has wronged you

in demanding that your ewe

be added to his ewes.

Many business partners

wrong each other

except those who believe

and do good deeds—

but they are few.”

Then David knew—

We were testing him.°

He begged forgiveness of his Lord;

he fell down, bowing,

and turned [to God again].

25We forgave him this [lapse],

and he will be brought close to Us,

with the best home for his return.°

26“David, We made you

a regent on the earth,

so judge between people justly,

and don’t follow your desires,

for they will lead you astray

from God’s path. Those who stray

from the path of God shall face

severe torment, for they

have forgotten the day

of reckoning.”

SECTION 3

27We did not create in vain

heaven and earth and all between

—that is what the unbelievers think—

what torment awaits them in the fire!

28Should We treat those who believe

and do good deeds as We would those

who work mischief on earth?

Or, should We treat the righteous

as We would the wicked?

29This is a blessèd Book

We have revealed to you,

that they might ponder its signs,

and people of insight

might remember.

30We gave David a son, Solomon

—an excellent servant—

he always turned to Us.

31When swift steeds, well bred,

were brought before him

near the day’s end,

32he said, “I loved fine things

rather than remembering my Lord.”

When the horses vanished,

veiled from sight,°

33[he commanded],

“Bring them back to me,”

then he began to stroke

their legs and necks.°

34And We tested Solomon:

We reduced him to a lifeless body

on his throne. Then he turned

to Us in repentance,

35saying, “My Lord, forgive me,

and bestow upon me a kingdom

such as none after me can acquire,

for You alone are the Bestower.”

36Then We subdued the wind to him,

coursing gently by his command,

wherever he directed;

37and the devils, every kind

of builder and diver,

38as well as others, bound in chains.°

39“This is Our gift,

so grant or withhold [it]

without measure.”

40and he will be brought close to Us,

an excellent home for his return.

SECTION 4

41Remember Our servant Job

who called out to his Lord,

“Satan has brought me distress

and torment.”

42[He was told,]

“Stamp the ground with your foot.

Here is cool water to bathe in,

and to drink.”

43We restored his family to him,

and more like them—a mercy from Us,

and a reminder to those with insight.

44[We told him,]

“Take a bundle of reeds in your hand

and strike [her] with it°

so as not to break your oath.”

We found him to be patient,

an excellent servant, who turned to Us.

45And remember Our servants

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,

who possessed strength and vision.

46We chose them, for their fervent

remembrance of the final home.

47In Our sight, they were among

the elect, the best.

48And remember Ishmael, Elisha,

and Ezekiel°—all among the best.

49This is a reminder:

those who are mindful of God

shall have the best abode

for their final return.

50Eternal gardens, whose gates

shall always stay open to them.

51There they shall recline

and call [at their pleasure]

for fruit in abundance

and refreshing drink.

52With them will be companions

of modest glance, well matched.

53This is what you are promised

for the day of reckoning.

54This is Our provision—

that never ends.

55So it will be.

But those who transgress

shall have an evil home

for their final return—

56Hell—where they will burn—

a wretched dwelling place.

57So it will be for them:

let them taste boiling liquid

and purulent fluid

58and [face] other such torments

of various kinds.

59[The leaders of the unbelievers

shall say to one another,]

“Here is a group

bursting in to join you.

They are not welcome—

they shall burn in the fire.”

60[The followers shall reply

to their leaders,] “No, you!

You are not welcome!

You brought us to this—

a wretched home.”

61The followers will say, “Our Lord,

let those who brought this upon us

bear a doubled punishment in the fire.”

62And they will say,

“Why don’t we see those

we used to consider wicked,

63“those we ridiculed?

Or have our eyes missed them?”

64This is how things will transpire—

squabbling among people in the fire.

SECTION 5

65Say, “I am here only to warn:

there is no god

but the One God, Supreme.

66“The Lord of the heavens and earth

and all that lies between,

Almighty, Forgiving.”

67Say, “This is momentous news,

68“yet you turn away from it.

69“I know nothing of what

the highest [angels] discuss.

70“It is only revealed to me,

that I am to give clear warning.”

71Your Lord declared to the angels,

“I shall create a human from clay.

72“When I have proportioned him

and breathed My spirit into him,

bow down before him.”

73So the angels bowed down, all,

74except Iblis, who was too proud,

and became a disbeliever.

75God demanded, “Iblis,

what stops you from bowing

to what I created with My own hands?

Are you too proud, or too exalted?”

76Iblis retorted,

“I am better than him.

You created me from fire,

but him from mere clay.”

77God answered, “Well, go from here,

for you are cursed.

78“And the curse shall stay with you

until the day of reckoning.”

79Iblis implored, “My Lord,

grant me respite, till the day

when they are raised [from the dead].”

80“You shall have respite,” said God,

81“until the appointed day.”°

82Iblis said, “I swear, by your might,

I will lead them astray—all.

83“except those among them

who are Your chosen servants.”

84God said, “This is the truth

—for I speak the truth—

85“that I will fill hell

with you and those of them

who follow you—all.”

86Say, Prophet,

“I ask no reward of you,

nor am I an impostor.

87“This is no less than a reminder

to all the worlds,

88“and, in time, you shall know

the truth it holds.”

SURA 39

The Crowds (Al-Zumar)

A late Meccan sura of 75 verses, this declares God’s unity and creative intent. Repeatedly the fate of believers and disbelievers is contrasted, before concluding with a vivid depiction of the day of resurrection (vv. 67–75).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1A revelation of the Book

from God—

the Almighty, the Wise.

2We revealed the Book to you

with truth—

so serve God with true devotion.°

3True devotion is for God alone.

Those who take gods other than Him

as protectors claim, “We serve them

only to bring us closer to God.”

God will judge between them

in the things they dispute.

God does not guide those

who lie and disbelieve.

4Had God wanted a child,

He could have chosen whom

He wished from His creation.

Glory be to Him—

He is the One God, Omnipotent.

5He created the heavens and earth

with true purpose. He enfolds day

within night and night within day,

and he subdues the sun and moon,

each sailing for an appointed term—

He is truly the Almighty, Forgiving.

6He created you from a single soul

then from it made its mate;

and He gave you four kinds°

of livestock, in pairs.

He creates you in the wombs

of your mothers, in stages, one upon

another, in threefold darkness.°

This is God, your Lord,

Who has dominion over all.

There is no god but Him—

so, how can you turn away?

7If you disbelieve, know that

God is Free of all need of you;

but His servants’ ingratitude

does not please Him.

If you are grateful,

He will be pleased with you.

None can bear another’s burden.

In the end, you will return to

your Lord and He will inform you

of all you have done—

He Knows what is in your hearts.

8When harm strikes people,

they call on their Lord

and turn to Him.

But then, when He grants them

His favor, they forget the One

they called on before,

and they set up against God

rivals, who will lead them

from His path. Say,

“Enjoy your disbelief for a while.

You shall be inmates of the fire.”

9[Are such people better] than

those who devote themselves

during the night, prostrating

and standing, fearful

of the hereafter, and hopeful

of their Lord’s mercy?

Say, “Are those who know

the same as those who don’t?”

Only the discerning take heed.

SECTION 2

10Say, “My servants who believe,

be mindful of your Lord.

Those who do good in this world

shall be rewarded with good.

God’s earth is wide.

Those who are patient shall know

a reward beyond measure.”

11Say, “I am commanded

to serve God with true devotion.

12“And I am commanded

to be the first of those

who submit their will to God.”

13Say, “If I disobeyed my Lord,

I would fear the torment

of a momentous day.”

14Say, “It is God whom I serve,

with true devotion.

15“So serve what you will

besides Him.” Say,

“The true losers are those who

lose themselves and their families

on the day of resurrection.

That is the clear loss.”

16Layers of fire shall engulf them,

above and below. This is how God

puts fear into His servants:

“So, be mindful of Me, My servants.”

17But there is joyous news for those

who spurn the worship of false gods

and turn to God. So give

this joyous news to My servants—

18those who hear the Word

and follow the best in it.

Those are the ones God guides—

they are the discerning ones.

19What of those

who are justly sentenced?

Can you rescue those

already in the fire?

20But those mindful of their Lord

shall have high mansions

raised for them, one upon another,

with rivers flowing beneath.

This is God’s pledge—

He never fails in His promise.

21Don’t you see how God

sends down rain from the sky,

guiding it through earth’s springs,

to bring out crops of varying colors?

Then, as they wither, you see them

yellowing, crumbling.

In all this is a reminder

for people of insight.

SECTION 3

22What of those whose hearts

God has opened to bow to His will,

who live by their Lord’s light?

Woe to those whose hearts are hardened

against remembrance of God—

they have clearly gone astray.

23God has revealed

the most sublime of narratives

as a Book, its parts consistent, paired°—at which

those who fear their Lord

tremble in their skins,

then their skins and hearts

are soothed by His remembrance.

This is God’s guidance, by which

He guides whom He will.

But those whom God leaves astray

have none to guide them.

24What of those who have only

their faces to shield them

from extreme torment

on the day of resurrection?

The wrongdoers will be told,

“Taste what you have earned.”

25Those before them disbelieved,

and punishment came to them

from places they could not imagine.

26So God made them taste

disgrace in the life of this world;

but punishment in the hereafter

is greater—if only they knew.

27We have coined for people

all kinds of parables in this Quran,

that they might take heed—

28an Arabic Quran,

with no deviation,

that they might be mindful.

29God offers a parable:

is a man owned by shared masters

—all squabbling—equal to a man

owned by one master?

Praise be to God—

most of them don’t know.

30It is certain that you will die,

and they too will die.

31Then, on the day of resurrection,

you will bring your disputes

before your Lord.

SECTION 4

32Who does more wrong

than those who lie about God

and deny the truth when it comes

to them? Is there not a home in hell

for those who disbelieve?

33But the one who brought the truth

and those who affirmed it—

they are the ones mindful of God.

34They shall have all that they desire

from their Lord—the reward

of those who do good;

35God shall erase their worst deeds

and reward their best ones.

36Does God not suffice

for His servant?

Yet they threaten you

with other gods.°

Those whom God leaves astray

have no guide.

37And none can lead astray

those whom God guides. Is God not

Almighty, Lord of Requital?

38If you ask them, who created

the heavens and the earth,

they will surely say, “God.”

Say, “Consider those

you call on besides God—

if God wanted harm for me,

could they remove it?

And if he wanted mercy for me,

could they withhold it?

Say, “God suffices for me—

let those who trust,

trust in Him.”

39Say, “My people,

do whatever you can;°

and I will do what I can—

for soon you will know

40“who shall face degrading torment

and on whom

lasting punishment will descend.”

41Prophet, We revealed the Book

to you, with truth, for humankind.

Those who receive guidance

do so to their own gain;

but those who go astray

do so to their own loss—

and you are not their custodian.

SECTION 5

42God takes the souls of people

at the hour of their death,

and of those asleep who are not dead.

He keeps the souls of those

for whom He has decreed death,

and the others He sends back

until an appointed time—in all this

are signs for those who think.°

43Do they take intercessors

other than God? Say, “Even though

they have no power [to intercede]

and no understanding?”

44Say, “All power to intercede

belongs to God alone—His

is dominion of the heavens and earth;

in the end, you will return to Him.”

45When the One God is mentioned,°

the hearts of those who don’t believe

in the hereafter recoil in aversion,

but when other gods are spoken of,

they exult and rejoice.

46Say, “O God, Originator

of the heavens and the earth,

Knower of the unseen

and the seen—it is You Who

will judge between Your servants

on the things they dispute.”

47If the wrongdoers possessed

all that is on the earth—twice over—

they would offer it as ransom

for the dreadful torment

of the day of resurrection—

but God will bring before them

something they had not conceived.

48The evil deeds they reaped

will come before them,

and they shall be engulfed

by what they mocked.

49When adversity strikes someone,

they cry out to Us. But when

We grant them Our favor, they say,

“I’m given this for my knowledge.”

Wrong—such favor is a trial,

but most of them don’t know.

50Those who came before them

said the same thing. But the deeds

they reaped were of no use to them.

51The evil they reaped

overtook them; and the evil reaped

by the wrongdoers among these

shall overtake them—

they shall not escape.

52Don’t they know that God

enlarges provision and restricts it

for whom He will? In this

are signs for people who believe.

SECTION 6

53Say, “My servants, who have

transgressed against yourselves—

do not despair of God’s mercy.

God forgives all sins.

He is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

54“Turn to your Lord and bow

to His will, before punishment

overcomes you—then

you will not be helped.

55“And follow the best

of what is revealed to you

from your Lord, before punishment

overcomes you—suddenly,

while you are unaware,

56“and your soul says,

‘Alas for me, for my neglect

of what was due to God—

I was among those who mocked.’

57“Or, ‘If only God had guided me—

I would have been among the righteous.’

58“Or [when it sees the punishment],

‘If only I could have another chance—

I’d be among those who do good.’

59“[A voice will then reply,]

‘No—My signs came to you

and you denied them, through pride—

you were among the disbelievers.’ ”

60On the day of resurrection

you’ll see those who lied about God

with faces blackened—is there not

a home in hell for the proud?

61But God will deliver the righteous

to their salvation. No evil shall

touch them, nor shall they grieve.

62God is the Creator of all things;

it is He Who Oversees all things.

63His are the keys of the heavens

and the earth, and those who deny

the signs of God shall suffer loss.

SECTION 7

64Say, “Do you command me

to worship something other than God,

you who are so ignorant?”

65It has been revealed to you

and those before you, that if you join

other gods as partners with God,

your works will be vain,

and you will be among

those who suffer loss.

66No—worship God, and be

among those who are grateful.

67They have not reckoned God

in His true measure; on the day

of resurrection, the whole earth

will be folded in His grasp,

and the heavens rolled up

in His right hand. Glory be to Him,

exalted beyond the other gods

they partner with Him.

68The trumpet shall be sounded

and all in the heavens and earth

shall fall dead, except those

God wishes. Then, it will be sounded

again, and they shall stand, staring.

69And the earth will shine

with the Light of its Lord;

the Book will be laid open

and the prophets and witnesses

brought forward. Fitting judgment

shall be passed on them

and they shall not be wronged.

70Every soul shall be paid

in full for its deeds;

and God knows best

all that they do.

SECTION 8

71The unbelievers will be driven

toward hell in throngs. When they

reach it, its gates shall open,

and its keepers shall ask,

“Did messengers not come to you

from among yourselves, reciting

to you the verses of your Lord,

and warning you of the meeting

with God on this day of yours?”

They will answer, “Yes, indeed.”

The threat of torment for unbelievers

has proven to be true.

72They will be told,

“Enter the gates of hell

to dwell there forever—

a wretched home for the proud.”

73But those who were mindful

of their Lord will be urged toward

the garden, in throngs. When they

reach it, its gates shall open,

and its keepers proclaim,

“Peace be with you.

You have done well. Enter here,

where you shall live forever.”

74They will say, “All praise be to God,

who has fulfilled His promise to us,

and has made us heirs to this realm.°

We can live where we will

in the garden,

how excellent is the reward

of those who labor [for God].”

75And you shall see the angels

surrounding the high throne, as

they hymn the praise of their Lord.

Fitting judgment shall be passed

among them, and these words

shall resound, “All praise be to God,

Lord of the universe.”

SURA 40

The Forgiving (Al-Ghafir)

A late Meccan sura, 85 verses in length, this is the first of seven consecutive suras that begin with the same two Arabic letters—ha mim. It begins with an encomium to God marked by six Divine Names, accenting the importance of belief and prayer. After a detailed story of Moses (vv. 23–53), the sura circles back to God, extolling the majesty and inviolability of the Creator who is also the Judge (vv. 54–85).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1Ha Mim.°

2This Book is a revelation from God,

the Almighty, the All Knowing,

3Forgiving of sin,

Accepting of repentance,

Severe in Requital,

Encompassing in Abundance°—

there is no god but Him.

To Him is the final return.

4None dispute the signs of God

but the disbelievers—

don’t let their [proud] ventures

in the land deceive you.

5Before them, the people of Noah

denied [the truth], as did factions

after them. Every nation schemed to

seize its messenger, and they disputed,

using falsehood to impugn the truth.

So I seized them—

how severe was My requital!

6Hence your Lord’s promise

[to punish] the disbelievers

was proven true—

they shall be inmates of the fire.

7Those who bear the throne,

and those around it, hymn the praise

of their Lord; they believe in Him

and ask forgiveness for those

who believe, “Our Lord,

You encompass all things

with mercy and knowledge—

so forgive those who repent

and follow Your path, and

save them from the torment of hell.

8“Our Lord, usher them

into everlasting gardens

which You have promised them

and the righteous among their fathers,

their wives, and their children—

for You are Almighty, All Wise.

9“And save them from all evils

—those whom you save on that day

are surely granted Your mercy—

that is the supreme triumph.”

SECTION 2

10The disbelievers will be told,

“God’s loathing of you

is greater than your self-loathing

for you were called to the faith

but you refused.”

11They will say, “Our Lord,

twice you placed us in a state

of non-being,° and twice

you brought us to life, and

now we acknowledge our sins—

is there no way out of this?”

12[They will be answered,]

“This is because, when the One God

was invoked, you disbelieved.

But when other gods were joined

with Him, you believed—

judgment belongs to God,

the Most High, Most Great.”

13It is He Who shows you His signs,

and sends down sustenance from the sky.

But only those who turn to God,

repenting, will take heed.

14So call upon God, with sincere faith

though disbelievers may hate this.

15Exalter of rank, Lord of the throne,

He sends the Spirit by His command

to whom He will of His servants,

to warn of the day of meeting—

16the day they will all

come forward. Nothing of them

is hidden from God—

Who holds dominion on this day?

God—the One, the Invincible.

17On that day every soul

shall be requited for what it earned.

No injustice shall occur that day—

God is Swift in Reckoning.

18Warn them of the approaching day

when their hearts will rise

to their throats, choked.

The wrongdoers will have no friend,

no intercessor who will be heeded.

19God knows their furtive glances

and what their hearts conceal.

20God will judge with justice—those

other gods they invoke besides Him

shall judge with nothing. It is God

Who is All Hearing, All Seeing.

SECTION 3

21Don’t they travel through the earth

and see the fate of those before them—

superior to them in strength

and influence on the earth?

Yet God seized them for their sins—

against God they have no protector.

22For messengers came to them

with signs, but they denied them,

so God seized them.

He is Strong, Severe in Requital.

23Earlier, We sent Moses

with Our signs, and clear authority,

24to Pharaoh, Haman, and Korah,°

but they retorted, “Lying sorcerer!”

25When he brought them the truth

from Us, they said, “Kill the sons

of those who believe with him,

and spare only their women.”

The disbelievers’ scheming is misconceived.

26Pharaoh said, “Let me kill Moses

even as he calls upon his Lord.

I fear that he’ll change your faith

or spread disorder through the land.”

27Moses said, “I have sought refuge

in my Lord and your Lord

from every proud person

who does not believe

in the day of reckoning.”

SECTION 4

28A believing man from Pharaoh’s people

who had concealed his faith said,

“Would you kill a man just for saying,

‘My Lord is the One God,’

and who has brought you clear proofs

from your Lord? If he is a liar,

the lie shall fall upon his own head.

But if he is truthful, some of the things

he threatens could fall upon you.

God does not guide

the liar and transgressor.

29“My people, today, as masters,

you hold sway in this land—but

who will help us against God’s wrath

if it falls upon us?” Pharaoh retorted,

“I merely tell you my view

and guide you to the right path.”

30The believer responded,

“My people, I fear for you

a day like that which fell

upon factions before you—

31“like the plight of the people

of Noah, ʿAd, Thamud, and those

who came after them—

though God never intends injustice

toward His servants.

32“And, my people,

I fear for you a day when

you will cry out to one another,

33“a day when you shall

turn and flee—you shall have

no protector against God—

and those whom God leaves to stray

shall have no guide.

34“And when Joseph came to you

in earlier times with clear proofs,

you never ceased to doubt his message,

and when he died, you proclaimed,

‘God shall never send a messenger

after him.’ So, God leaves to stray

those who doubt and transgress,

35“who dispute the signs of God

without being granted any sanction—

this is abhorrent in the sight of God

and the believers. Thus God seals up

the heart of every proud tyrant.”

36Pharaoh said, “Haman, build me

a high tower so I can climb the paths°—

37“the paths to the heavens

to gaze upon the god of Moses,

for I deem him a liar.”

And so, Pharaoh’s evil deeds

were made to seem fair to him,

he was barred from the right path;

and Pharaoh’s scheming led

to nothing but ruin.

SECTION 5

38The man who believed said,

“My people, follow me—

I’ll guide you to the right path.

39“My people, the life of this world

is merely a passing pleasure

but the hereafter is a lasting home.

40“Whoever does a wicked deed

shall be requited only with its like;

but whoever does good deeds,

—whether male or female—

and is a true believer,

shall enter the garden,

with provision beyond measure.

41“And, my people, how is it that I

call you to salvation, while you

call me to the fire?

42“You call me to disbelieve in God

and to join with Him partners

—of which I have no knowledge—

while I call you to the One

Who is Almighty, Forgiving.

43“Without doubt, what you call me to

has no claim to be invoked either

in this world or the hereafter.

We shall return to God,

and the transgressors shall be

inmates of the fire.

44“Soon you will remember

what I am saying to you:

I commit my affairs

to God—God Sees all

concerning His servants.”

45So God saved him

from their wicked scheming;

and dire punishment

engulfed Pharaoh’s people.

46They will be brought before the fire

morning and evening; and on the day

when the hour falls, a voice shall say,

“Strike the people of Pharaoh

with the most severe torment.”

47See, they will quarrel with one another

in the fire. The weak will say to the proud,

“We were but your followers. So can you

avert from us some portion of the fire?”

48The proud will answer,

“We are all in this together—

God has judged

between His servants.”

49The people in the fire will plead

with the keepers of hell,

“Call on your Lord to lighten

our punishment for a day.”

50But they will answer,

“Did messengers not come to you

with clear proofs?” “Yes, indeed,”

the inmates will say. And the keepers

will retort, “Plead, then”—

but the pleas of disbelievers

will be misconceived.

SECTION 6

51We shall help Our messengers

and those who believe,

both in the life of this world

and on the day when

witnesses will rise,

52the day when the excuses

of the wrongdoers

shall be of no use to them—

they shall be cursed

and have a wretched home.

53We gave guidance to Moses,

and We made the children of Israel

heirs to the Book—

54a guide and a reminder

for people of insight.

55Be patient, then—God’s promise

is true; ask forgiveness for your sin,°

and hymn the praise of your Lord

evening and morning.

56Those who dispute the signs of God

without being granted any sanction

have in their hearts only pride

that they will never satisfy.

Seek refuge, then, in God,

for He is All Hearing, All Seeing.

57Creation of the heavens and earth

was a greater thing

than the creation of humans,

yet most of humankind

do not know.

58The blind are not equal

to those who see;

nor are those who believe,

doing good deeds, equal

to those who commit evil deeds.

How little you take heed.

59The hour will undoubtedly come,

yet most people don’t believe.

60Your Lord says, “Call upon Me

and I shall answer you.

But those too proud to worship Me

shall enter hell—in disgrace.”

SECTION 7

61It is God Who has made the night

in which you might rest, and the day

giving light to your eyes. God is

Full of Grace toward humankind,

yet most of them are ungrateful.

62This is God, your Lord,

Creator of all things.

There is no god but Him—

so how can you be deluded?

63This is how deluded they are—

those who deny the signs of God.

64It is God Who made the earth

a place for you to live, and the sky

a canopy. He gave you form,

perfected your forms, then provided

good things for your sustenance.

This is God, your Lord—blessed

is He, Lord of the universe.

65He is the Living—there is no god but He

so call upon Him, with sincere faith.

All praise be to God, Lord of the universe.

66Say, “I am forbidden to worship

those you call upon besides God

since clear proofs have come to me

from my Lord. I am commanded

to submit to the Lord of the universe.”

67It is He Who created you

from dust, then from sperm,

then from a clot of blood;

He then brings you out as infants,

till you reach maturity, and old age

—though some of you die young—

to reach your appointed term,

to make you understand.

68It is He Who gives life

and brings death; and

when He decrees something,

He merely says, “Be!” and it is.

SECTION 8

69Don’t you see those

who dispute the signs of God,

how perverted they are?°

70Those who deny the Book and

what We sent with Our messengers—

but soon they shall know,

71when they are dragged,

with yokes and chains

around their necks,

72into the boiling fluid,

then burned in the fire.

73Then they’ll be asked, “Where

are the other gods you worshipped

74“besides God?” They will say,

“They have abandoned us—in fact,

we were calling upon nothing.”

In this way, God leaves

the disbelievers to stray.

75[They will be told,] “That is because

you exulted on earth without right°

and because you were insolent.

76“Enter the gates of hell,

to stay there forever—wretched

is the home of the proud.”

77So be patient, Prophet, for God’s promise

is true; and whether we show you

something of [the punishment] We promised them

or make you die before that,

to Us they shall be returned.

78We sent messengers before you;

We told you the stories of some

and not others. No messenger

brings signs without God’s leave.

And when God’s command comes,

fair judgment will be passed—

and there, those who

incite falsehood shall lose.

SECTION 9

79It is God who made livestock for you,

some for you to ride, others for you to eat,

80and they have other uses for you;

through them you can fulfill

your hearts’ desire, and you are carried

upon them, as you are upon ships.

81He shows you His signs—

which, then, of the signs of God

would you deny?

82Don’t they travel through the earth

and see the fate of those before them?

They were greater in number, strength,

and in their impact on the earth—yet

their achievements proved no use to them.

83When their messengers came

to them with clear proofs,

they merely exulted

in what they already knew—

but they were engulfed

by what they mocked.

84Only when they saw Our torment

did they say, “We believe

in God alone, and we deny

the other gods we joined with Him.”

85But their “faith” after seeing

Our torment did not avail them.

This has always been God’s way

with His servants—

there, the disbelievers lost.

SURA 41

Explained in Full (Fussilat)

Still another late Meccan sura, but only 54 verses long, this accents the Quran as something explained in full and in Arabic (v. 3), at once a guide and a cure for those who believe but conveying only deafness and blindness for those who disbelieve (v. 44).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1Ha Mim. °

2A revelation from

the Most Merciful, Ever Merciful—

3a Book whose verses are explained

in clear detail, an Arabic Quran

for people who know,

4bringing joyous news

and warning—but most of them

turn away so they don’t hear.

5They say, “Our hearts are shielded°

from what you call us to,

and our ears sunk in deafness;

between us and you is a veil,

so do as you will—and so shall we.”

6Say, “I’m just a human, like you.

It’s revealed to me that your God

is One God—so seek a straight path

to Him, and ask forgiveness of Him.”

Wretched are those who join

other gods with Him,

7those who don’t give in charity,

and who deny the hereafter.

8Those who believe

and do good deeds

shall know an unceasing reward.

SECTION 2

9Say, “Do you deny the One

Who created the earth in two days?°

Do you set up others as His equals?

This is the Lord of all Creation.”

10He set firm mountains on [the earth],

high above, and blessed it, and measured

its sustenance according to the needs

of those who seek it—in four days.

11Then He set Himself toward the sky,

a mere mass of smoke, and commanded

both it and the earth, “Come into being,

willing or unwilling.” They answered,

“We are coming into being, willingly.”

12He perfected them as seven heavens

in two days, and He revealed

to each heaven its role.

We adorned the lower heaven

with lamps and rendered it secure.

This is the order ordained

by the Almighty, the All Knowing.

13But if they should turn away,

then say, “I have warned you

of a thunderbolt—like the one

that struck ʿAd and Thamud.”°

14When messengers came to them

from all perspectives,° urging,

“Do not worship anything other

than the One God,” they responded,

“If our Lord had wished,

He would have sent down angels—

we deny the message sent with you.”

15The people of ʿAd strutted proudly

through the land, without just cause.°

They would say,

“Who is our superior in strength?”

Don’t they see that God

—Who created them—

is far superior to them in strength?

Yet they continued to deny Our signs.

16So We sent against them

a roaring wind, through days

of misfortune, to let them taste

the torment of disgrace

in the life of this world—

though torment in the hereafter

shall be more disgraceful,

and they shall not be helped.

17As for the people of Thamud—

We gave them guidance but

they preferred blindness to guidance,

so they were struck by a thunderbolt

as punishment, disgracing them

for their misdeeds.

18But We delivered those

who believed and feared God.

SECTION 3

19On the day the enemies of God

are gathered toward the fire

and are driven in ranks—

20when they come to [the fire],

their hearing, and sight

—their very skins—

shall testify against them

on account of their deeds.

21They will ask their skins,

“Why do you testify against us?”

and their answer will be,

“God gave us speech—He

Who gives speech to all things.

It is He Who created you

in the beginning, and to Him

you will be returned.

22“Yet you did not try to hide, to

stop your hearing, sight, and skins

from testifying against you—

but you thought God unaware

of much of what you did.

23“This is what you thought

of your Lord, and it is this thought

that has brought you to ruin—

you are now among those

who will suffer loss.”

24Even if they can endure it,

the fire shall be their home;

if they ask to redeem themselves,

they shall not be allowed.

25And We have decreed

[evil] companions for them

who made their present and past°

seem fair to them; but the decree°

of their punishment proved true

as with the generations

of jinn and humans who came

before them—they were the losers.

SECTION 4

26The unbelievers say, “Don’t listen

to this Quran: drown it in idle noise—

that way, you’ll have the last word.”°

27But We will make the unbelievers

taste severe torment,

and We will requite them

for the worst of their deeds.

28This is the requital

for the enemies of God

—the fire, their eternal home—

their requital for denying Our signs.

29And the unbelievers will say,

“Our Lord, show us the jinn and humans

who misled us—we’ll trample them

beneath our feet, forcing them

to be among the lowest [in hell].”

30The angels will descend to those

who say, “Our Lord is the One God,”

and are upright, [saying to them],

“Have no fear, do not grieve,

and receive joyous news

of the garden you were promised.

31“We are your protectors

in the life of this world

and the hereafter.

There you shall have

all that your souls desire,

all that you ask—

32“a welcoming gift from

the Forgiving, the Ever Merciful.”

SECTION 5

33Who speaks better than one

who calls people to God,

does good deeds, and speaks

the words, “I am one of those

who bow to God’s will.”°

34Good and evil are not equal.

Counter [evil] with something better,

then the person who was your foe°

will become like a close friend.

35But none is granted this [goodness]

except people who show patience,

those with great righteousness.°

36If any evil prompting from Satan

should whisper within you,

seek refuge in God—

He is All Hearing, All Knowing.

37Among His signs are

night and day, sun and moon.

Do not bow before sun and moon,

but bow before God,

Who created them—

if it is Him alone you worship.

38But if [the unbelievers]

strut proudly, [it is of no account],

for those with your Lord

hymn His glory night and day,

without fatigue.

39And among His signs is this:

you see the earth barren, and when

He sends down rain upon it,

it stirs into life, and swells.

He Who gives it life can surely

bring life to the dead—

He has Power over all things.

40Those who distort

what is in Our signs

are not hidden from Us.

Who is better—a person

who is hurled into the fire,

or someone who comes through

secure on the day of resurrection?

Do what you will—

He is Aware of all that you do.

41Those who reject the message

when it comes to them—

it is a Book of great power,

42that no falsehood might reach

from any side,° revealed by

the All Wise, the Praiseworthy—

43[should know that] nothing is said

to you that was not said

to the messengers before you.

Your Lord is Full of Forgiveness

and Severe in Requital.

44Had We produced this Quran

in a foreign tongue, they would say,

“Why are its verses not explained

in full? A foreign [Book

brought by] an Arab!° Say,

“It is guidance and healing

for those who believe,

but for those who disbelieve,

it brings deafness to their ears,

and blindness—as if they

were being called from afar.”

SECTION 6

45We gave the Book to Moses

but disputes arose over it.

Had your Lord not issued a decree,°

judgment would have been passed

between them. But they remain

in anxious doubt over it.

46Whoever does good deeds,

does so for himself;

and whoever does bad deeds,

does so against himself.

Your Lord is never unjust

to His servants.

47Knowledge of the hour

lies with Him alone.

No fruit emerges from its sheath,

no female conceives or gives birth

without His knowing.

And on the day He calls to them,

“Where are My partners?”

they will say, “We confess to you

that none of us can attest [to them].”

48The gods they called on before

will forsake them, and they will see,

for sure, that they have no escape.

49People never cease to pray for good,

but when evil touches them,

they lose hope and despair.

50When We let them taste Our mercy

after adversity touches them,

they will say, “This my due—

I don’t believe that the hour

will ever transpire, yet even if

I am brought back to my Lord,

He will surely have the best reward

for me.” But We shall inform

the disbelievers of what they did

and We shall make them taste

severe punishment.

51When We bestow Our favor

on people, they turn away,

staying far [from Us].

But when misfortune touches them,

they turn [to Us], full of prayer.

52Say, “Did you ever reflect:

what if this [revelation] is truly

from God—yet you still deny it?

Who can be more astray than one

so far opposed to it?”

53Soon We will show them

Our signs—on the far horizons

and within themselves

until it becomes clear to them

that this is the truth.

Is it not enough that your Lord

is Witness to all things?

54Indeed, they remain in doubt about

the meeting with their Lord—yet

He surely Encompasses all things.

SURA 42

Consultation (Al-Shura)

A Meccan sura with some Medinan verses, this also is comparatively short (53 verses). Unlike other suras that begin with multiple mysterious letters, it frames them in two verses (vv. 1–2) not a single verse (as in Maryam, Sura 19). It extols settling affairs by consultation (v. 38), accented in the title. At the same time, it highlights the value of the Quran in Arabic (v. 7), a guiding light for Muhammad, unversed yet commanded through a divine spirit (v. 52).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1Ha Mim.

2ʿAyn Sin Qaf.°

3This is how He reveals to you,

as to those before you—

God, the Almighty, All Wise.

4To Him belongs

all that is in the heavens

and all that is on the earth—

for He is the Most High, Most Great.

5The heavens are almost

rent from on high,

while the angels glorify

their Lord with praise,

and pray for forgiveness

for all those on earth.

God is the One Who

is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

6As for those who take others

as protectors,° God Watches them,

and you are not their keeper.

7We have hereby revealed

to you an Arabic Quran

that you might warn

the mother of cities°

and those around her,

warn them of the day of gathering

—of which there is no doubt—

with one group in the garden,

the other in the fire.

8Had He wished, God would

have made them one people,

but He admits into His mercy

whom He will;

and the wrongdoers

shall have no protector

and no helper.

9Or, have they taken as protectors

others besides Him?

For God is the Protector,

the Restorer of life to the dead,

and He has Power over all things.

SECTION 2

10Whatever issue you dispute,

it is for God to judge—

this is God, my Lord:

in Him I trust

and to Him I turn.

11Creator of the heavens and earth,

He has made for you mates

from among yourselves, and mates

between the animals, multiplying you.

There is nothing like Him—

He is the All Hearing, All Seeing.

12His are the keys

of the heavens and the earth:

He extends and restricts provision

for whom He will—

He Knows all things.

13He has ordained for you

the religion that He enjoined

upon Noah, that We revealed

to you, Prophet,

and that We enjoined upon

Abraham, Moses, and Jesus:

“Establish the religion, and do not

divide yourselves within it.”

What you call the polytheists to do

is hard for them;

God chooses for Himself

whom He will,

and He guides to Himself

whoever turns toward Him.

14They divided, out of mutual envy,

only after knowledge came to them.

If judgment on them had not been

deferred until an appointed time

by a previous word from your Lord,

sentence would have been passed

between them. And those

who inherited the Book after them

are vexed with doubt over it.

15So, call people to the [Book],

stand firm as commanded,

and do not follow their fancies;

say, rather: “I believe in the Book

which God has revealed,°

and I have been commanded

to dispense justice among you.

God is our Lord and your Lord;

our deeds belong to us,

and yours to you—so let there be

no dispute between us and you.

God will gather us together,

and to Him is our final return.

16As for those who dispute over God

after accepting the message,°

their dispute is vain

in the eyes of their Lord—

His wrath falls on them,

and severe torment awaits them.

17It is God Who sent down

the Book, with truth,

as well as the balance

[to weigh truth and falsehood].

And what would make you know

that the hour may be near?

18Those who don’t believe in it

seek to hasten it,

while those who believe in it

are fearful of it,

knowing it to be true.

Those who argue about the hour

have gone far astray.

19God is Most Gentle

toward His servants;

He provides for whom He will.

He is All Powerful, Almighty.

SECTION 3

20For those who desire

the harvest of the hereafter,

We shall increase their harvest;

and for those who desire

the harvest of this world,

We shall grant them some of it,

but they shall have no portion

in the hereafter.

21Or, do they have gods

ordaining for them in religion

what God has not permitted?

Had it not been for a decisive word

[from God], sentence would already

have been passed between them.

The wrongdoers shall face

a painful punishment.

22You will see the wrongdoers

fearful on account of what they earned,

and what will surely befall them.

But those who believe

and do good deeds shall be

in the gardens’ flowering meadows.

They will have all they wish for

from their Lord—

that is the abundant grace.

23This is the joyous news

which God gives to His servants

who believe and do good deeds.

Say, “I ask of you no reward for this

beyond the love due

to those who are close to you.”

As for those who do good,

We shall increase its good for them°—

God is Forgiving, Appreciative.

24Or, do they say,

“He has coined a lie about God”—

even though, if God wished,

He could seal up your heart?

For by His words

God abolishes falsehood

and verifies truth—

He Knows what hearts contain.

25It is He Who accepts

the repentance of His servants

and pardons wrongful deeds;

He knows all that you do.

26He answers those

who believe and do good deeds,

and grants them ever more

from His grace. But those

who disbelieve shall face

severe punishment.

27Had God extended [boundless]

provision° to His servants,

they would have tyrannized the earth.°

But He sends down in due measure

what He will, for He is All Aware,

All Seeing, of His servants.

28It is He Who sends down

rain—after people have despaired—

and spreads His mercy far,

for He is the Protector,

the Praiseworthy.

29Among His signs is creation

of the heavens and the earth,

and the creatures He dispersed

throughout both—

He is All Powerful, Able

to gather them when He will.

SECTION 4

30Whatever misfortune befalls you

is wrought by your own hands,

yet He pardons much.

31Nowhere can you escape

throughout the earth;

nor, do you have besides God

any protector or helper.

32Among His signs are the ships,

sailing [high] on the seas,

like mountains.

33If it were His wish,

He could lull the wind,

then the ships would be motionless

on the back of the ocean.

In this are signs

for all who are patient

and full of thanks.

34Or He could wreck [the ships]

on account of what [their crew]

has earned, yet He pardons much.

35So let them know, those

who dispute over Our signs—

there is no escape for them.

36Whatever you are given

is but a passing pleasure

of the life of this world.

But what God will give to those

who believe and trust in their Lord

is far better and will endure—

37those who avoid the major sins

and indecencies, and forgive,

even when angry;

38those who answer their Lord,

are steadfast in prayer,

and settle their affairs

by mutual consultation,

and who give [in charity]

from what We have given them;

39and those who defend themselves

when oppression falls upon them.

40The requital for a wrong

is an equal wrong; but whoever

pardons and reconciles

will find his reward with God,

for He does not love

those who do wrong.

41But there is no reproach on those

who defend themselves when wronged.

42Reproach falls only on

those who oppress people and

tyrannize the earth lawlessly.

Theirs shall be a painful torment.

43But whoever forbears

and forgives, displays in this

an ideal resolve.°

SECTION 5

44And whoever God allows to stray

shall no longer have a protector.

And you shall see the wrongdoers say,

when they see the punishment,

“Is there any way [for us] to return?”

45You will see them exposed

to [the punishment], humbled,

humiliated, glancing, with furtive eyes,

and the believers will say,

“The losers are those who have

lost themselves and their kin

on the day of resurrection.

The wrongdoers will abide

in enduring torment.”

46And they have no protectors

to help them beyond God;

and whoever God allows to stray

shall find no way forward.

47Answer your Lord before

the coming of a day, from God,

which cannot be turned away.

On that day there will be no asylum

for you, no denial.

48If still they turn away, [remember,]

We have not sent you, Prophet,

to be their guardian. Your task

is only to convey [the message].

When We grant humankind

a taste of Our mercy, they rejoice in it;

but when some harm befalls them

—by their own hands—

then humankind becomes ungrateful.

49To God belongs dominion

of the heavens and the earth.

He creates what He will;

He grants to whom He will

female or male offspring;

50or grants both males and females,

and makes barren whom He will—

He is All Knowing, All Powerful.

51It is beyond any mortal

that God would speak to him

except by revelation

or from behind a veil

or by sending a messenger

to reveal, by His leave,

what He will.

He is the Most High, All Wise.

52Hereby, We have revealed

Our command to you, Prophet,

through a spirit. You were unversed

in the Book, and in faith;

but We made it a Light,

by which We might guide

whom We will of Our servants—

you truly guide to a straight path,

53the path of God,

to Whom belongs

all that is in the heavens

and all that is on the earth.

All affairs are destined

ultimately to God.

SURA 43

Gold Adornments (Al-Zukhruf)

A Meccan sura of 89 verses. Its short, pithy verses extol the virtues of Abraham, Moses, and Jesus while also condemning those who rejected them and persisted in idolatry or disbelief. The final command to Muhammad is to “turn away from them, and say ‘Peace,’ for soon they shall come to know” (v. 89).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1Ha Mim.°

2By the clarifying Book,

3which We have made

an Arabic Quran

to make you understand.

4It is in an archetypal Book,°

kept by Us, Exalted, Most Wise.

5Should We take this message

away from you, disregarding you,

since you are a people who transgress?

6How many messengers

did We send to earlier peoples,

7yet no prophet came to them

whom they did not mock.

8And We destroyed people

mightier than these—examples

of earlier peoples have passed.

9If you asked them, “Who created

the heavens and the earth?”

they would surely say,

“They were created by

the Almighty, the All Knowing,”

10Who made the earth a place

of repose for you, and traced roads

throughout it to guide you.

11And it is He Who sends down

rain from the sky, in due measure,

and We revive thereby a dead earth—

likewise, you will be raised up again.

12It is He Who created all things

in pairs, and made for you the ships

and livestock on which you ride,

13so that, securely mounted

on their backs, you might recall

your Lord’s favor to you, and say,

“Glory be to Him, Who subdued

all this [to our use],

for we were unable to do this.

14“And We shall turn

back to Our Lord.”

15Yet they attribute

to some of His servants

a share with Him [as His daughters]°—

humankind is blatantly ungrateful.

SECTION 2

16Or, has He taken daughters

from what He himself created

and chosen sons for you?

17When one of them hears

of [the birth of a daughter]

—a creature he has likened to God—

his visage darkens, and he is

choked with grief.°

18“[Am I to have a daughter]—

who is nurtured among trinkets

and cannot form a clear argument?”°

19They also deem the angels

—who are themselves servants

of the Most Merciful—to be female.

Did they witness their creation?

Their testimony will be recorded

and they shall be questioned.

20They say, “If the All Merciful

had willed it, we would not

have worshipped them.”

But they have no knowledge of this,

and do nothing but speculate.

21Or, did We give them

a Book before this,

to which they hold fast?

22No—they say,

“We found our fathers

practicing [this] religion,

and we are guided

by their footsteps.”

23Likewise, whenever We sent

someone before you, to warn a town,

their affluent people affirmed,

“We found our fathers

practicing [this] religion,

and we are guided

by their footsteps.”

24The Prophet retorted,

“Even if I brought you better guidance

than what you found

your ancestors practicing?”

They answered, “We deny

the message you have brought.”

25So We requited them—

observe, then, the fate of those

who denied the truth.

SECTION 3

26Abraham said to his father

and his people, “I repudiate

what you worship.

27“[I worship] none but the One

Who made me,

and He will guide me.”

28He made this a lasting declaration°

to his descendants,

so they might return to God.

29Still, I let these people and their fathers

enjoy this life for a while,

until the truth came to them, and

a messenger who made things clear.

30But when the truth came to them,

they declared, “This is sorcery—

we don’t believe it.”

31And they ask,

“Why wasn’t this Quran

revealed to some prominent man

from one of the two cities?”°

32Is it they who apportion

the mercy of your Lord?

It is We Who apportion among them

their livelihood in the life of this world.

We raise some of them above others

in rank, so they take them into service.

And the mercy of your Lord

is better than

all the worldly goods they hoard.

33We could have lavished on those

who deny the All Merciful

roofs of silver for their houses,

and stairways to ascend

—if this did not risk uniting them

into one disbelieving community—

34as well as doors

for their homes, and

beds on which to rest,

35as well as ornaments of gold.

But all these are merely amusements

of the life of this world. The hereafter,

with your Lord, is for the righteous.°

SECTION 4

36If anyone turns away from

the message of the All Merciful,

We appoint for him a devil,

to be his companion.

37Such [devils] hinder them from

the right path, though they think

they are being rightly guided.

38Until, when they come to Us,

they say [to their devil companion],

“If only there were a distance

between us, as between East and West.

What a wretched companion!”

39[They will be told],

“Since you did wrong,

having partners in punishment

won’t help you now.”

40Can you make the deaf hear,

or guide the blind,

or those who are clearly astray?

41Either We shall take you

[from this life],

and requite them

42or We shall show you

the fate We promised them—

for We have power over them.

43So hold fast to what

was revealed to you,

for you are on a straight path.

44And [the Quran] is a reminder

for you and your people—soon

you shall all be questioned.

45And ask the messengers

We sent before you,

did We appoint any gods

to be worshipped

other than the All Merciful?

SECTION 5

46We sent Moses with Our signs

to Pharaoh and his chiefs.

He announced, “I am a messenger

from the Lord of the universe.”

47But when he came to them

with Our signs, they laughed at them.

48We showed them sign after sign,

each greater than its predecessor,°

then We seized them with torment

so they might turn back [to Us],

49and they replied, “Sorcerer,

pray for us to your Lord

by virtue of His covenant with you—

then we will be guided.”

50But once We removed their torment,

they broke their word.

51Pharaoh called out to his people,

“My people, do I not hold dominion

over Egypt, over these rivers flowing

beneath me? Do you not see?

52“Am I not better than

this vile wretch, who can scarce

express himself in plain speech?

53“Why is he not adorned

with bracelets of gold, and escorted

by a host of angels?”

54And so he fooled his people,

who obeyed him, for they were

a disobedient people.

55So, when they angered Us,

We requited them,

and drowned them all.

56And We made them

a precedent—an example

for generations to come.

SECTION 6

57When [Jesus], son of Mary,

is offered as an example,

your people laugh about him,

58saying, “Are our gods better,

or him?” They mention him

to you merely to argue,

for they are a contentious people.

59He was only a servant—

to whom We granted favor, and

whom We offered as an example

to the children of Israel.

60Had it been Our wish,

We could have made

some of you angels,

succeeding one another

on the earth.

61And [Jesus] is a portent

of the impending hour,°

so do not harbor doubt about it,

and follow Me.

This is a straight path.

62And don’t let Satan bar you

[from the path]—

he is your open enemy.

63When Jesus came

with clear testimony, he said,

“I come to bring you wisdom,

and to clarify some of the things

over which you dispute—

so, fear God, and obey me.”

64“For God is my Lord

and your Lord.

So worship Him alone—

this is a straight path.”

65Yet the various sects still

disputed among themselves.

Let those who did wrong

beware the torment

of a painful day.

66Are they just waiting

for the hour to fall upon them

suddenly, while they are heedless?

67On that day, friends

will become foes of one another—

except those who are righteous.

SECTION 7

68My servants—on that day,

you shall have no fear

nor shall you grieve—

69those who believed in Our signs

and bowed to Our will—

70enter the garden, you

and your spouses, rejoicing.

71Plates and goblets of gold

shall be passed among them.

And there, they shall have

all that their souls desire

and all that delights the eyes.

And you shall abide there forever.

72This shall be the garden

bequeathed to you as its heirs

in virtue of your deeds.

73There you shall have

fruit in abundance to eat.

74But the sinful shall see

the torment of hell,

abiding there forever.

75Their torment shall not be lightened—

they shall be mired in despair.

76We have not wronged them—

it is they themselves who did wrong.

77They will cry, “Malik,°

let your Lord put an end to us!”

He will reply, “You must abide.”

78We have brought you the truth

but most of you abhor the truth.

79Have they contrived a scheme?

We too shall conceive a scheme.

80Or do they think We can’t hear

their covert talk and whispered counsels?

Our envoys are with them, recording.

81Say, “If the All Merciful

did have a child, I would be

the first to worship [him].”

82Glory be to the Lord

of the heavens and the earth,

Lord of the throne—far above

what they ascribe to Him.

83So leave them to gossip

and frolic—until they encounter

their promised day.

84He is God in heaven

and God on earth,

He is Wise, All Knowing.

85Blessed is He who has dominion

over the heavens and the earth

and all that lies between them;

He alone has knowledge of the hour,

and to Him you shall be returned.

86And those they call on besides God

have no power to intercede—

only those who bore witness

to the truth and know [it].

87If you, Prophet, asked them

“Who created the heavens and earth?”

they would surely say, “God.”

How, then, can they be deluded?

88[God hears the] lament

[of the messenger],°

“My Lord, these are a people

who do not believe.”

89So, turn away from them,

and say, “Peace,”

for soon they shall come to know.

SURA 44

Smoke (Al-Dukhan)

For this Meccan sura of 59 verses, the distinctive image is “a pall of smoke” marking the day of resurrection (v. 10). It suggests that the Quran was revealed “on a [single] blessèd night” (v. 3), anticipating al-Qdar, Sura 97. It also recounts the story of Pharaoh, his punishment, and the rescue of the people of Israel (vv. 17–33). It ends with a direct command to Muhammad: “Wait,” as the unbelievers also are waiting (v. 59).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1Ha Mim.°

2By the clarifying Book,

3which We revealed on a blessèd night

—We constantly give warning—

4a night where every matter

was wisely determined

5by Our command—

We constantly send [revelation]

6as a mercy from your Lord—

He is All Hearing, All Knowing,

7Lord of the heavens and earth,

and of all that lies between—if only

you were assured in faith.°

8There is no god but He—

He Who gives life and brings death,

your Lord, and Lord of your forefathers.

9Yet they idle around, in doubt.

10Watch out, then, for a day

when the sky pours out

a pall of smoke, for all to see,

11enveloping humankind—

a painful torment.

12[They will cry,] “Our Lord,

remove this torment from us—

we are true believers.”

13How can they be reminded

—a messenger already came to them

with a clear message,°

14they turned away from him,

exclaiming, “A tutored madman.”

15If We remove the torment

for a while, you will revert

[to your former ways].

16The day We seize them

with overwhelming force,

We shall exact retribution.

17Before them, We tested

the people of Pharaoh—

a noble messenger came to them,

18saying, “Deliver God’s servants to me—

I am a trustworthy messenger sent to you,

19“and do not exalt yourselves

over God—I come to you

with clear authority.

20“Should you seek to revile me°

I seek refuge with my Lord

and your Lord.

21“If you don’t believe me,

then keep away from me.”

22So Moses cried to his Lord,

“These people are a nation of sinners.”

23[The reply came:]

“Set out by night with My servants,

for you are sure to be pursued.

24“And leave the sea as it is—

divided°—behind you,

for their army shall be drowned.”

25How many gardens and springs

they left behind,

26with fields of corn

and splendid structures,

27and pleasant things° in which

they had known delight.

28This [was their end],

and We made other peoples

heirs to those things.

29Neither heaven nor earth

wept for them,

nor were they granted any respite.

SECTION 2

30We delivered the children of Israel

from disgraceful torment

31by Pharaoh, foremost

among the transgressors.

32And We chose them,

with full knowledge,

over all peoples,°

33and granted them signs

that would clearly try them.°

34As for these people

[the Meccan disbelievers], they say,

35“There is nothing beyond

our first death—we shall not

be raised again.

36“Bring back our ancestors

if what you say is true.”

37Are they better than the people

of Tubbaʿ° and those before them?

We destroyed them

for they were always sinners.

38We did not create the heavens

and earth and all between them

for mere amusement.

39We created them only

with true purpose; yet

most of them fail to understand.

40The day of decision

is appointed for them all.

41A day when no friend

can help another friend

and none shall be helped,

42except those to whom

God shows mercy—

for He is Almighty, Ever Merciful.

SECTION 3

43The tree of Zaqqum°

44shall be the sinners’ food;

45it will boil, like molten lead,

in their bellies,

46like scalding water.

47[A voice will command,]

“Seize him, and drag him

to the depths of blazing fire.

48“Then pour scalding water

over his head as punishment.”

49“Taste [this], you

who were mighty and noble.

50“This is what you always doubted.”

51But those who fear God

shall be in a secure place,

52amid gardens and springs,

53in fine silk and rich brocade,

arrayed facing one another.

54So it will be. We shall join them

as spouses to fair maidens, large eyed.

55They shall call for all kinds of fruit

in tranquility;

56nor shall they taste death there,

beyond the first death,

and He will save them

from the torment of blazing fire,

57a favor from your Lord—

the supreme triumph.

58We have made this Quran easy,

in your tongue, so they might take heed.

59So, wait—they° too

are waiting.

SURA 45

Kneeling (Al-Jathiya)

A short Meccan sura of 37 verses, this extols the several signs of God in creation and the natural world (vv. 3–13), culminating with a scene where each community will be kneeling on judgment day, attesting to its record, literally, its book (v. 28).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1Ha Mim.°

2The revelation of the Book

is from God, the Almighty, All Wise.

3In the heavens and on earth

are signs for those who believe.

4In your own creation,

and in the creatures God dispersed

throughout the earth, are signs

for those with firm faith.

5In the cycle of night and day,

and in the sustenance God sends

from the sky, giving life

to the earth after its death,

and in His steering of the winds

are signs for people who reason.

6These are the verses of God

which We recite to you with truth.

So, in what message can they believe

after rejecting God and His signs?

7Woe to every lying sinner

8who hears the verses of God

recited to him, yet persists in pride,

as though he had not heard them.

Warn him, then, of painful torment.

9Even when he learns something

of Our signs, he mocks them.

Disgraceful torment awaits him.

10Before such people lies hell,

and what they earned will be

of no use to them, nor those they took

as protectors instead of God;

they shall face great torment.

11This is true guidance—

and those who deny

the signs of their Lord

shall face painful torment.

SECTION 2

12It is God Who has subdued to you

the sea, on which ships might sail

by His command, so you might seek

His bounty, and show thanks.

13And He has subdued to you

all that is in the heavens

and all that is on earth—a favor

from Him. In all this are signs

for a people who reflect.

14Tell those who believe to forgive

those who do not truly expect [to see]

the days of God°—

so that He might requite people

for what they have earned.

15If anyone does good,

it is for himself; if he does evil,

it is against himself.

In the end, you shall all

be brought back to your Lord.

16We gave the children of Israel

the Book, wisdom, and prophethood;

We sustained them with good things

and favored them above all nations.

17We gave them clear proof

on questions [of religion].

Yet they quarreled, through mutual envy,

even after knowledge came to them.

On the day of resurrection

your Lord will judge between them

concerning the things they dispute.

18Now We have set you, Prophet,

on a proper path [of religion]°—

so follow it, and don’t follow

the desires of those who don’t know.

19They will be of no help to you

against God, for the wrongdoers

are protectors of one another,

while God is Protector of those

who are mindful of Him.

20These are insights° for humankind,

as well as guidance and mercy

for those of firm faith.

21Do those who commit evil deeds

imagine that We will treat them like

those who believe and do good deeds,

making their lives and deaths alike?

How perverse is their judgment!

SECTION 3

22God created the heavens and earth

with true purpose, so that each soul

might be recompensed for what it earned—

and none of them shall be wronged.

23Have you observed

the [kind of] person who takes

his own desire as his god?

Knowing this, God has let him stray,

placing a seal upon his hearing and

his heart, and a veil over his sight—

who can guide him after God

[has let him stray]?

Will you not, then, take heed?

24And they say, “There is nothing

but our life in this world.

We die and we live—only time

destroys us.” Yet they know nothing

of this, and merely conjecture.

25When Our clear verses are

recited to them, they merely retort,

“Bring back our forefathers

if what you say is true.”

26Say, “It is God Who gives life

to you, then brings you death;

He will gather you all together

on the day of resurrection—

of which there is no doubt,

though most people don’t know.”

SECTION 4

27To God belongs dominion

of the heavens and the earth,

and on the day when the hour falls,

it is the falsifiers who will lose.

28You will see all peoples kneeling.

Each will be called to its record:°

“This day, you shall be requited

for all that you did.

29“Our record here speaks the truth

about you—We have transcribed in it

all that you did.”

30He will admit into His mercy those

who believed and did good deeds—

that is the distinct triumph.

31Those who denied will be asked,

“Were My verses not recited to you?

Yet you remained proud,

a sinful people.”

32When it was said,

“The promise of God is true,

there is no doubt about the hour,”

you retorted,

“We don’t know what the hour is—

we think it is mere speculation

and we’re not convinced.”

33The evil of their deeds

will appear before them,

and they will be engulfed

by what they used to mock.

34They will then be told,

“Today, We will forget you

just as you forgot the meeting

[with Us] on this day of yours.

Your home shall be the fire

and you shall have no helper.

35“This is because you mocked

the signs of God, deluded by the life

of this world.” So on this day,

they shall not be brought out

of the fire, nor shall they

be able to atone.

36Praise be to God,

Lord of the heavens

and Lord of the earth—

Lord of the universe.

37His is the Grandeur

throughout the heavens and earth—

He is Almighty, All Wise.

SURA 46

Sand Dunes (Al-Ahqaf)

This is the final of seven Meccan suras that begin with the same disconnected letters, ha mim. Like others in the series, its 35 verses extol the sending down of the Quran while condemning idolaters’ recalcitrance in the face of God’s signs. It also brings into the chorus of believers a group of spirits (jinn), who are moved by the Quranic message, “a Book, revealed after Moses, confirming what came before it” (v. 30).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1Ha Mim.°

2The revelation of the Book

is from God,

the Almighty, All Wise.

3We created the heavens and earth

and all that lies between them

only with true purpose°

and for an appointed term.

Those who disbelieve turn away

from the warnings given to them.°

4Say, Prophet, “Do you see

what it is you call upon besides God?

Show me what they have created

of the earth, or what share they have

of the heavens. Bring me a Book

[revealed] before this one,

or a trace of [earlier] knowledge

if you are speaking the truth.

5And who could be more astray than

those who call on other gods besides God

—others who will not answer them

until the day of resurrection,

who will not heed their prayers?

6And when humankind

are gathered together,

[those other gods]

will be their enemies, and

will deny their worship.

7When Our clear verses are recited

to them, the disbelievers say

—of the truth that has reached them—

“This is clearly just sorcery.”

8Or they say, “He has invented it.”

Say, “Had I invented it,

you would have no power

[to intercede] for me with God.

He knows best what you say about it.

He will suffice as Witness

between you and me—

He is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.”

9Say, “I am not new

among the messengers,

nor do I know what will be done

with me or with you.

I merely follow what

is revealed to me,

and I am merely someone

who gives clear warning.”

10Say, “Have you thought—

what if this [Book] is from God

and you deny it, while a witness

from the children of Israel attests

that it is like [previous scripture]

and believes, while you [turn away]

in your pride? God does not guide

a wrongdoing people.”

SECTION 2

11The unbelievers say about the believers,

“If [this message] had merit,

they would not have embraced it

before we did.” And since [the unbelievers]

will not be guided by it,

they say, “This is an ancient lie.”

12Yet, before this, the Book of Moses

was a guide and a mercy—

this Book confirms it

in the Arabic tongue

to warn those who do wrong

and bring joyous news

to those who do good.

13As for those who say,

“Our Lord is God,”

and remain steadfast—

they shall have no fear,

nor shall they grieve.

14They shall reside in

the garden, abiding there forever—

a reward for all they did.

15We have enjoined man

to be kind to his parents;

in pain his mother bore him

and in pain she gave birth to him.

Bearing him and weaning him

took a full thirty months.

When, eventually, he reaches

maturity—forty years—

he [should] say, “My Lord,

give me strength to be grateful

for Your favor to me

and to my parents.

Let me do good deeds

that are pleasing to You,

and make my offspring righteous—

for I turn to You [repenting]

and I am among those

who bow to Your will.”°

16From them We shall accept

the best of their deeds, and overlook

their bad deeds. They shall be

among those who live in the garden—

fulfilling the promise given to them.°

17But some person might chide

his parents, “Confound you both—

do you really promise me that

I’ll be raised up again—even though

generations before me have passed on?”

But both parents seek God’s help,

saying, “Shame on you! You should

believe—for the promise of God is true.”

Yet still he retorts, “These are merely

fables of the ancients.”

18Sentence shall be passed on

such people, along with generations

of jinn and men that have passed

before them—they shall suffer loss.

19All shall be ranked by degrees

in virtue of what they did,

so that God might

requite them for their deeds—

and none of them shall be wronged.

20The day unbelievers are exposed

to the fire [they will be told],

“You exhausted your share of the

good things in the life of this world

and you enjoyed them. But this day

you shall be requited

with humiliating torment,

for you were proud

upon the earth, without due right,

and were always disobedient.”

SECTION 3

21Recount [the story of Hud]

of the tribe of ʿAd, when he warned

his people amid the sand dunes

—others had come to warn them

before and after him—

“Worship none but God,

for I fear for you the torment

of a momentous day.”

22They retorted, “Have you come

to turn us away from our gods?

Then bring down upon us

the torment you threaten us with,

if you are speaking the truth.”

23He said, “Knowledge of that

rests with God alone. I merely convey

the message with which I am sent.

Yet I see you are an ignorant people.”

24Then, when they saw a cloud

looming over their valleys,

they exclaimed, “Here is a cloud

bearing rain for us”—“No.

It is [the threat] you asked

to be hastened—a stormy wind

bearing painful torment,

25“destroying all before it

by its Lord’s command.”

By morning, nothing could be seen

except their homes [in ruins]—

this is how We requite

a sinful people.

26We established them

with [such power and authority]

as we have not endowed you.

We gave them

hearing, sight, and hearts—but none

of these—hearing or sight or hearts—

availed them at all, for they denied

the signs of God, so they were engulfed

by the very thing they would mock.

SECTION 4

27We destroyed towns around you,

after giving them diverse signs

that they might return [to Our path].

28Why then did their gods

not help them—those they had taken

as gods instead of the One God

to bring them closer to Him?

Instead, they abandoned them—

that was the lie they invented.

29We sent to you, Prophet, a group

of jinn, to listen to the Quran,

and, while they attended it, they said,

“Listen in silence.”

When it was concluded, they turned

back to their people to warn them.

30They said, “Our people,

we have heard a Book, revealed

after Moses, confirming what came

before it. It guides to the truth

and to a straight way.

31“Our people, answer the one who

calls [us] to God, and believe in Him.

God will forgive you your sins

and deliver you from painful torment.

32“Those who fail to answer the one

who calls [us] to God shall find

no escape throughout the earth,

nor any protectors besides God—

they are clearly wrong.”

33Do they not see that God is the One

Who created the heavens and the earth,

unfatigued by their creation?

He is Able to give life to the dead—

He has Power over all things.

34On the day the unbelievers

are exposed to the fire,

[they will be asked,] “Is this not real?”

They will reply, “By our Lord, it is.”

[They will be told,]

“Taste the punishment

for your disbelief.”

35Be patient, then, as the messengers

of firm resolve° were patient,

and do not seek to hasten [torment

for the unbelievers]. On the day

they see the torment promised them,

it will seem as if they had stayed

[in this life] a mere hour of one day.

[This Quran] is a message.

Shall any be destroyed

but those who were disobedient?

SURA 47

Muhammad

A Medinan sura of 38 verses, this deals with historical events around the Battle of Badr (624 CE), which occurred two years after Muhammad’s move to Medina. The rare mention of Muhammad by name in the Quran (v. 2) is the reason this becomes the title of the sura.

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1God will nullify the deeds

of those who disbelieve

and bar [people] from His path.

2But for those who believe

and do good deeds, who believe

in what was revealed to Muhammad

—the truth from their Lord—

He will nullify their misdeeds

and rectify their condition.

3For those who disbelieve

pursue falsehood,

while those who believe

pursue the truth

from their Lord. This is how God

mirrors for people their true likeness.°

4When you meet the unbelievers

[in battle], strike at their necks,

and when you have subdued them,

bind them firmly, then you can

either be gracious [and free them]

or hold them for ransom, once

the weight of war has lifted.

That [is Our command].

Had God wished, He Himself

could have requited them,

but He would test you

against one another.

And the deeds of those killed

in God’s cause shall never be lost.

5He will guide them and

and rectify their condition,

6and bring them into the garden—

as He has made known to them.

7You who believe—if you help

in the cause of God, He will help you

and plant your feet firmly.

8As for the disbelievers—

destruction awaits them

and their deeds shall be lost.

9For they hate what God has revealed,

so He has nullified their deeds.

10Don’t they travel through the earth°

and see the fate of those before them?

God brought destruction to them;

the unbelievers shall see the same end.

11For God is Protector

of those who believe,

but the unbelievers

have no protector.

SECTION 2

12God will bring those who believe

and do good deeds into gardens,

with rivers flowing beneath.

The unbelievers enjoy [this world]

and eat as cattle eat; but the fire

shall be their [eternal] home.

13How many cities We destroyed

that had more power than your city

which drove you out—

and there was none to help them.

14Is a person who acts

on clear proof from his Lord

the same as someone whose

wicked deeds seem fair to him,

or the same as those

who follow their own desires?

15[Here is] a parable of the garden

promised to those who fear God:

It has rivers of pure water,

and rivers of milk whose taste

never changes, and rivers of wine,

delicious to those who drink,

and rivers of purified honey.

It has every kind of fruit for them,

and forgiveness from their Lord.

Are such people like

those who abide in eternal fire,

those given scalding water to drink,

that tears apart their bowels?

16Among them are some

who listen to you,

but when they leave you,

they say to those

who have received knowledge,

“What was it he said just now?”

They are the ones

whose hearts God has sealed,

for they follow only

their own desires.

17But God increases guidance

for those who will be guided,

and He makes them mindful of Him.°

18Do they but wait, then, for the hour

to fall upon them suddenly?

Some tokens of it have already come—

and once it has fallen upon them

what good is it then for them

to remember God’s warning?

19Know, then, that there is

no god but the One God,

so ask forgiveness for your sin,

and for believing men and women.

For God knows where you move

and where you rest.°

SECTION 3

20Those who believe say,

“Why is a sura not revealed

[commanding us to fight]?”

But when a sura is revealed that

clearly mentions fighting, you’ll see

the sick-hearted staring at you

with the look of one about to faint

at the prospect of death.

More appropriate for them

21would be obedience

and upright words.°

And once the stratagem [of war]

is resolved upon,°

it would be better for them

to stand true to God.

22If you turn away, would you

sow corruption in the land,

and cut your bonds of kinship?

23These are the ones God has cursed,

making them deaf

and taking away their sight.°

24Do they not reflect on the Quran—

or are there locks on their hearts?

25As for those who turned their backs

after clear guidance was given them—

it was Satan who enticed them,

and prolonged them in [false] hope.

26For they declared to those

who hate what God has revealed,

“We’ll obey you in some things”—

but God knows what they keep secret.

27How will it be when the angels

take their souls at death,

striking their faces and their backs?

28For they pursued what angered God

and were loath to please Him,

so He shall nullify all their deeds.

SECTION 4

29Or do those with sick hearts think

that God will not expose their hatred?

30Had We wished, We could have

shown them to you and you would have

known them by their marks––

but you’ll know them indeed

by their tone of speech.

And God knows all that you do.

31And We shall test you, to see°

which of you strive [in God’s cause]

and are steadfast—We shall test

the truth of what is said by you.°

32As for those who disbelieve,

who bar people from God’s path,

and oppose the messenger

after clear guidance was given them—

they cannot harm Him at all—

but He shall render their deeds void.

33You who believe: obey God,

obey the messenger, and

do not render vain your own deeds.

34As for those who disbelieve

and bar people from God’s path,

then die as disbelievers—

God shall never forgive them.

35So do not weaken and cry for peace

while you have ascendancy,

for God is with you;

He will never deprive you

of the reward for your deeds.

36The life of this world

is but a pastime and a sport;

but if you believe, and fear God,

He will give you your reward;

nor is He not asking you

to give up your possessions.

37If He were to ask you this,

and press you, you would hold back,

and He would expose your ill will.

38See—you are the ones called upon

to spend in the cause of God,

but some of you still hold back.

Those who hold back do so

at the cost of their own souls—

for God is Self-Sufficient,

while you are in need [of His mercy].

If you turn back, He will replace you

with another people—

who will not be like you.

SURA 48

Victory (Al-Fath)

Another Medinan sura with historical resonance, its opening verse, “We have given you a clear victory,” could refer to the Battle of Badr, noted in the previous sura, or it could be an anticipation of the victory that would come later (after the Peace of Hudaybiyya in 628 CE) when the Muslims delayed their reentry to Mecca in exchange for permission to go later (630). Its notable verses refer to God’s serenity being sent down on Muhammad and believers after Hudaybiyya (v. 26), and the marks left on foreheads of the devout at prayer (v. 29).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1We have given you a clear victory,

2such that God might forgive you

your past and future sins,

fulfill His favor to you,

and guide you to a straight path,

3granting you His mighty help.

4It is He Who sent down serenity

into believers’ hearts to increase

their faith—the forces of the heavens

and earth belong to God;

God alone is All Knowing, All Wise—

5so that He might usher

the believing men and women

into gardens, beneath which

rivers flow, abiding there forever,

and so that He might absolve them

of their bad deeds—in God’s eyes

that is the supreme triumph—

6and that He might punish

the hypocrites, both men and women,

and the polytheists, men and women,

who harbor a wrongful conception

of God. Around them is

a circle of evil, and the wrath of God

is upon them. He has cursed them

and prepared for them hell—

an evil destination.

7For the forces of the heavens

and earth belong to God;

God alone is Almighty, All Wise.

8We have sent you, Prophet,

as a witness, a bearer of joyous news,

and as one who warns

9so that [all of] you might believe

in God and His messenger,

honoring God, revering Him,°

glorifying Him morning and evening.

10Those who pledge allegiance

to you, Prophet, pledge allegiance

to God—the Hand of God

is over their hands.°

And those who break their oath

thereby harm their own soul.

But He will grant a great reward

to those who fulfill

their covenant with God.

SECTION 2

11The Bedouin Arabs who stayed back

will say to you, “Our properties

and our families kept us busy,

so seek forgiveness for us”—

their tongues speak what

is not in their hearts. Say,

“Who has power to intervene for you

with God, should He intend

either harm or gain for you?

Indeed, God is Aware

of all that you do.

12“Indeed—you thought the messenger

and the believers would never

come back to their families,

and this pleased your hearts—

but your thought was wicked—

you are a ruined people.”

13As for those who do not believe

in God and His messenger—

We have prepared a blazing fire

for such disbelievers.

14To God belongs dominion

of the heavens and the earth;

He forgives whom He will,

and punishes whom He will—

He is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

15When you set out for [the site] where

you might grasp the spoils of war,

Those who stayed back will say,

“Allow us to follow you”—they want

to change the words of God. Say,

“Never shall you follow us—

God said this before.” They will say,

“The truth is that you envy us.”

No—the truth is that they

have little understanding.

16Say to the Bedouin Arabs who stayed back,

“You will be called [to fight] against

a people of great military might.

You shall fight until they submit,

and if you obey, God will grant you

a fine reward, but if you turn back,

as you did before, He will punish you

with a painful torment.”

17The blind, the lame, and the sick

won’t be blamed [if they don’t fight].

God will usher those who obey Him

and His messenger into gardens,

beneath which rivers flow, but

He will punish those who turn away,

with a painful torment.

SECTION 3

18God was pleased with the believers

when they pledged allegiance to you

beneath the tree.° He knew

what was in their hearts, so He sent

down serenity upon them, and

rewarded them with a swift victory,

19and many spoils of war yet to take,

for God is Almighty, All Wise.

20God promised that you will take

many spoils of war, and He hastened

this for you, restraining the hands

of those against you—as a sign

for the believers, and so He might

guide you to a straight path.

21And there are more gains,

over which you have no power,

which God oversees,

for God has Power over all things.

22If the unbelievers had fought you,

they would have turned their backs—

finding then no protector or helper.

23This has been God’s way,

as before—you will never find

any change in God’s way.

24It was He Who restrained the hands

of those fighting against you, and

yours from them, in the valley of Mecca,

after He gave you victory over them—

for God Sees all that you do.

25They are the ones who disbelieved,

barred you from the sacred mosque

to stop the offering from reaching

its sacrificial site. Had there not been

believing men and women whom

you did not know among them,

whom you might have trampled,

unaware, thereby incurring blame,

[God would have let you advance

but instead held you back] so that

He might admit whom He will

into His mercy—if they had been

separated, We would have punished

the unbelievers among them

with a painful torment.

26While the unbelievers’ hearts

seethed with rage—ignorant rage—

God sent His serenity upon

His messenger and the believers,

making them cleave to their word

to be true to Him,° for they were

more deserving and worthy of this—

God is Knower of all things.

SECTION 4

27God has fulfilled the truth

of His messenger’s vision—

you shall enter the sacred mosque safely,

if God is willing, with shaved heads

or shortened hair, without fear—

for He knew what you did not know,

and decreed for you, besides this,

an imminent victory.

28It is He Who has sent

His messenger with guidance

and the religion of truth

to display its preeminence

over all [other] religion—

for God suffices as Witness.

29Muhammad is the messenger of God;

those with him are firm with unbelievers

and compassionate with one another—

you will see them bowing [in prayer]

and prostrating, seeking God’s favor

and His good pleasure. Their foreheads

bear the marks° of their prostrations.

This is how the Torah and the Gospel

present a parable of them: [they are]

like a seed which sends out its shoot

and makes it strong; then it thickens

and stands upon its own stem,

delighting those who sowed it°—

so that God might exasperate

the unbelievers by their means.

God has promised those among them

who believe and do good deeds

both forgiveness and a great reward.

SURA 49

The Private Apartments (Al-Hujurat)

A short (18 verses) late Medinan sura, this cites the protocol for behavior of believers with the Prophet (vv. 2–5), especially when they contact him from outside his private apartments (v. 4), and concludes with a critique of the Bedouin Arabs (vv. 14–18).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1You who believe, do not

put your own decisions

before those of God

and His messenger°—

rather, be mindful of God,

for God is All Hearing,

All Knowing.

2You who believe, do not

raise your voices above the voice

of the Prophet—and do not

speak loudly to him, as you might do

among one another, else

your deeds might be rendered vain

without your knowing it.

3Those who lower their voices

in the presence of God’s messenger

are the ones whose hearts

God has tested for righteousness.

They shall find forgiveness

and a great reward.

4As for those who call you, Prophet,

from behind your private apartments—

most of them fail to understand.

5If they had patience—[to wait]

until you came out to them—

that would be better for them.

But God is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

6You who believe—

if a wicked person comes to you

with news, see if it is true—

so you don’t harm people

through ignorance, and then

feel regret for what you did.

7And know that God’s messenger

is among you. If he were to heed

your wishes in many things,

you would surely suffer.

But God has endeared the faith to you

and beautified it in your hearts,

making disbelief, transgression,

and disobedience hateful to you—

such are those who are rightly guided—

8a grace and favor from God,

for God is All Knowing, All Wise.

9If two parties among the believers

fight, make peace between them.

If one seeks to oppress the other,

then oppose that party until they abide

by God’s command; when they do so,

make peace between them justly, and

be fair—God loves those who are fair.

10The believers are kin, so

make peace between your kin,

and be mindful of God

that you might be shown mercy.

SECTION 2

11You who believe—

Let no people [among you]

ridicule any other people,

for perhaps they are better than them;

nor should any group of women

ridicule another group,

for perhaps they are better than them;

nor revile, nor call one another

by [hurtful] nicknames. How terrible

to be called out in mockery

after embracing faith.

And those who don’t repent

are wrongdoers.

12You who believe,

avoid excessive suspicion, for

some kinds of suspicion are a sin.

And do not spy on one another,

nor backbite—would you like

to eat the flesh of your dead brother?

Of course not—you would hate it.

So, be mindful of God—

God is Ever Relenting, Merciful.

13Humankind, We created you

from a male and a female, then

We made you into nations and tribes,

that you might know one another.

The most noble of you in God’s sight

is the most mindful of Him—

God is All Knowing, All Aware.

14The Bedouin Arabs say, “We believe.”

Say to them, “You do not believe.

Rather, you should [first] say,

‘We have submitted to God’s will,’°

for belief has not yet entered

your hearts. But, if you obey God

and His messenger, He will not

withhold from you at all

the reward for your deeds—

God is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.”

15True believers are those

who believe in God and His messenger

and do not then fall into doubt;

who strive with their wealth and

give their lives in the cause of God—

they are the ones who are truly sincere.

16Say, “Would you presume

to instruct God in religion?

God knows all that is in the heavens

and all that is on the earth—

God is Knower of all things.”

17They consider it a favor to you

that they’ve submitted to God’s will.

Say, “Don’t think your submission

a favor to me; rather, God has favored you

in guiding you to the faith,

if you are truly sincere.”°

18God knows all that is unseen

in the heavens and the earth—

He Sees all that you do.°

SURA 50

Qaf (Qaf)

This Meccan sura begins with a single Arabic letter (qaf) elided into the opening verse. Its 45 verses appeal to God’s might and mercy in affirming resurrection from the dead (vv. 2–11). It contains a graphic account of two recording angels on the day (vv. 17–29) and ends with an injunction to the Prophet that he should “remind them, with the Quran—those who fear My warning” (v. 45).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1Qaf.°

By the glorious Quran—

2they wonder why one of their own

has come to warn them;

the unbelievers say, “How strange,

3“when we die and turn to dust

[shall we rise again]?

Such a return is a remote prospect.”

4We know well how the earth

decomposes them;° We have a Book

that preserves everything.°

5But they denied the truth

when it came to them,

and now they are confused

[as to right and wrong].

6Don’t they see the sky above them—

how We fashioned and furbished it,

with no fracture in it?

7And We spread out the earth, setting

firm mountains upon it, and made to flower

every kind of exuberant plant—

8to provide insight and a reminder

for every repenting servant.

9And We send down from the sky

rain that is blessed, and We raise

with it gardens and harvest grain,

10and tall palm trees, laden

with clusters of dates, layer on layer,

11as sustenance for Our servants,

and with rain We bring life to dead soil—

this is how [the dead] will come out.

12Before them,

the people of Noah disbelieved,

as did the people of Rass, Thamud,

13ʿAd, Pharaoh, the brothers of Lot,

14the people of Midian,

and the nation of Tubbaʿ°

—all denied the messengers,

so My warning was fulfilled.

15Did the first creation fatigue Us?

No—yet they doubt

the promise of a new creation.

SECTION 2

16We created man, and We know

what his soul whispers to him;

We are closer to him

than his jugular vein.

17Two angels,° seated on the right

and left, record everything.

18No word does [a person] utter

but an observer is with him,

ready [to record it].

19And the stupor of death

will bring out the truth—

“This is what you tried to elude.”

20And the trumpet will be blown—

“This is the promised day.”

21And each soul shall come,

with one angel to urge it on,

another to serve as witness:

22“You were heedless of this.

Now, We have removed your veil—

on this day your sight is keen.”

23And his attendant will say,

“I have his record here, ready.”

24“Hurl into hell every

stubborn disbeliever

25“who always forbade

what was good, transgressed,

and remained in doubt,

26“who set up another god

besides the One God.

Hurl him into severe torment.”

27His companion will say, “Our Lord,

I didn’t make him transgress—

he was already far astray.”

28God will say, “Don’t dispute

with each other in My presence.

I sent you a warning—

29“My Word shall not be changed,

nor am I unjust to My servants.”

SECTION 3

30On the day We ask hell,

“Are you full?” it will answer,

“Are there more?”

31But the garden shall be drawn

near for those who feared God,

distant no more.

32“This is what you were promised—

for all who turned [to God, repenting]

keeping [Him in mind],

33“who feared the Most Merciful,

though unseen, and turned to Him

with a penitent heart.

34“Enter it, in peace; this day

begins eternity.”

35They shall have there

all that they desire,

and more besides, from Us.

36How many generations

did We destroy before them,

though they were stronger,

and had explored many lands—

could they find no refuge?

37In this is a reminder for whoever

has a heart, and listens, as a witness.

38We created the heavens and earth,

and all between them in six days,

yet no fatigue could reach Us.

39So bear with patience

whatever they say,

and hymn your Lord’s praise

before sunrise and sunset,

40hymn His glory during the night,

and after bowing in prayer.

41And listen for a day

when the caller calls

from a nearby place,

42the day they hear the actual blast—

that will be the day they come out

[from their graves].

43It is We Who give life

and bring death:

to Us is the final return—

44the day the earth is

cleaved asunder beneath them,

with people rushing away—

such a gathering of them all

will be easy for Us.

45We know best what they say,

and it is not for you, Prophet,

to compel them.

So remind them, with the Quran—

those who fear My warning.

SURA 51

Scattering Winds (Al-Dhariyat)

Also Meccan and also evoking judgment by an appeal to nature (the widely scattering winds, v. 1), this sura recounts Abraham’s hospitality to his honored guests (vv. 24–37), as well as the punishment meted out to Pharaoh and other disbelievers (vv. 38–54). It culminates with a reminder to Muhammad to remind believers: “I have created jinn and humankind only so that they might worship Me” (v. 56).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1By the widely scattering [winds];

2and those bearing [clouds of rain];

3and those flowing with ease;

4and those spreading

[rain and other blessings]

as ordained; °

5what you are promised is true:

6the reckoning will surely come.

7By the sky, copious with paths—

8you differ in what you say;

9those who turn away

are thereby turned away;

10may those who lie perish,

11those who flounder in

heedlessness—

12they ask, “When will be

the day of reckoning?”

13It will be a day when

they are tried by fire.

14“Taste your ordeal—this

is what you sought to hasten.”

15Those who were mindful of God

shall be in gardens and springs,

16gaining what their Lord gives them,

for their good deeds in the past.

17They would sleep just

a small part of the night,

18and in the hours before dawn

they would ask for forgiveness;

19and give their due share of wealth

to beggars and those in need.°

20There are signs on the earth

for those assured in their faith,

21and also within your own selves—

will you not, then, see?

22The heavens hold your sustenance

and all that you are promised.

23By the Lord of the heavens

and earth, this is the truth,

as true as the fact that you speak.

SECTION 2

24Has the story of Abraham’s

honored guests reached you?

25When they came to him,

they said, “Peace.” He replied,

“Peace to you, strangers.”

26Then he went back to his family

and brought out a fattened calf,

27which he placed before them.

“Won’t you eat?” he asked,

28feeling some fear of them.

They said, “Don’t be afraid,”

and they gave him joyous news

of the birth of a learnèd son.

29Then his wife came forward,

hollering—cuffing her face,

she scoffed, “A barren old woman?!”

30They said, “It will be so,

says your Lord,

and He is Almighty, All Knowing.”

31Abraham asked, “Messengers,

what is your mission?”

32They said, “We have been sent

to a nation of sinners,

33“to send down brimstone

upon them,

34“marked by your Lord

for those who transgress.”

35Then We brought out

the believers who were there,

36but We found in one house only

those who submit their will to God,°

37and We left there a sign for those

who fear a painful torment.

38In Moses [was a further sign],

when We sent him to Pharaoh

with clear sanction.

39But [Pharaoh] turned away

with his retinue, saying, “He’s either

a sorcerer or simply possessed.”

40So We seized him with his forces

and cast them into the sea

for he was blameworthy.

41[There is also a sign]

in the people of ʿAd—against whom

We sent a barren wind

42that left nothing in its trail

but utter destruction.

43And [another sign]

in the people of Thamud

who were told, “Enjoy this life

for a short while.”

44But they defied

their Lord’s command,

so a thunderbolt struck them

as they looked on.

45Unable even to stand,

they were utterly helpless.

46Like Noah’s people before them,

they were a disobedient people.

SECTION 3

47We forged the sky with Our might,

and We spread it throughout space.

48Then We spread out the earth—

how excellently expansive!

49And We created pairs of each thing

that you might be reminded.

50[Prophet, urge them,]

“Hasten toward God—

I am sent to you from Him

to give clear warning.

51“Set up no other god

besides the One God;

I am sent to you from Him

to give clear warning.”

52Likewise, no messenger came

to the peoples before them

without their saying, “He’s either

a sorcerer or simply possessed.”

53Is this what they have

told one another? No!

They are a transgressive people.

54So turn away from them—

for you have incurred no blame.

55But remind them [of the message]

for a reminder profits believers.

56I have created jinn and humankind

only so that they might worship Me.

57I desire no sustenance from them

nor do I wish them to feed Me.

58For God is the Sustainer,

Possessor of Power,

Supreme in Strength.

59The wrongdoers will be punished

like their predecessors—so let them

not urge Me to hasten this.

60Woe to the unbelievers,

on the day promised to them.

SURA 52

Mount Sinai (Al-Tur)

Opening with a reference to Mount Sinai, this Meccan sura of 49 verses highlights the certainty and the accountability of judgment day (vv. 9–28), with a stern reminder to Muhammad that he is neither a poet nor a soothsayer nor a madman (vv. 29–30), and that he should show patience while praising God day and night (vv. 48–49).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1By Mount [Sinai],

2by a Book that is inscribed°

3in a scroll unfolded;

4by the house° that is visited

time after time,

5by the canopy° raised high;

6and by the brimming sea,

[unconfined]

7the torment of your Lord

shall come to pass—

8none can prevent it.

9On the day when the sky

rocks back and forth,

10and the mountains roll

violently around—

11woe on that day

to those who deny,

12who idle away their time

in trifling talk—

13on that day they shall be

thrust into the fire of hell.

14“This,” [they will be told,]

“is the fire you denied.

15“Is this sorcery, then,

or do still you not see?

16“Burn in it—it is the same for you

whether you endure it or not—

You are merely requited for what you did.”

17Those who were mindful of God

shall be in gardens, in bliss,

18relishing their Lord’s gifts to them,

and their Lord shall deliver them

from the torment of blazing fire.

19[They will be told,]

“Eat and drink, to your content—

for all that you have done.”

20Reclining on couches,

arrayed in rows—

We shall wed them

to houris, large eyed.

21We shall unite those who believe

with those of their offspring

who followed them in faith.

We shall not withhold at all

the reward for their deeds—

every person is bound

by° what they have earned.

22And We shall extend to them

all the fruit and meat they desire.

23There, they shall pass around

a cup among themselves, inducing

neither idle talk nor sin.

24Youths as fair as hidden pearls

shall circle among them,

25and they will turn to

one another, asking questions,

26saying, “When we were

with our families before

[on earth], we were fearful.

27“But now God has favored us,

and saved us from

the torment of scorching wind.

28“Even then, we would call on Him—

for He is Most Kind, Ever Merciful.

SECTION 2

29So remind them, Prophet—

for, by the grace of your Lord,

you are neither a soothsayer

nor a madman.

30Or, do they say, “A mere poet—

for whom we anticipate

some misfortune in time!”

31Say, “Wait, then—

and I shall be waiting with you.”

32Do their minds urge them

to [say] this, or are they

a rebellious people?

33Or, do they say,

“He has invented it”?

They just don’t believe.

34Let them produce a discourse like it

if they are speaking the truth.

35Were they created from nothing—

or are they themselves creators?

36Or, did they create the heavens

and the earth? No, they have no

assurance [of the truth].

37Or, do they possess the treasures

of your Lord, or control them?

38Or, do they have a stairway

to climb and hear [the secrets

of heaven]? If so, let those

who heard bring clear proof.

39Or, does He have daughters

while you yourselves have sons?

40Or, do you ask them for payment

that would weigh them down in debt?

41Or, do they have knowledge

of the unseen,

which they can transcribe?

42Or, do they intend to scheme

against you?—those who disbelieve

are already being outschemed.

43Or, do they have a god

other than the One God?

Glory be to God, far above

what they join with Him.

44Even if they saw a fragment

of the sky falling down on them,

they would say,

“It’s merely a mass of clouds.”

45So leave them, Prophet, until

they come face-to-face with their day

when they shall faint, thunderstruck.

46The day when their scheming

shall help them in no way,

and they receive no other help.

47As for those who do wrong

there is yet more torment beyond this

though most of them do not know it.

48So await with patience

the judgment of your Lord

—for you are in Our sight—

and hymn your Lord’s praise

when you rise,

49hymn His praise by night,

and by the evanescing stars.

SURA 53

The Star (Al-Najm)

Like many suras, including the preceding three, its name comes from the opening verse. An early Meccan sura of 62 verses, it also interpolates later verses (vv. 13–18) that refer to the Prophet’s Ascent (the initial topic of “The Night Journey,” Sura 17). The exchange with the three goddesses (vv. 20–21) has occupied many commentators, but central to the Prophet’s vision, and his mission throughout, is his connection to prior prophets, and their messages, here highlighted as the scrolls of Abraham and Moses (vv. 36–37).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1By the star when it descends—

2your companion is neither

astray nor misguided,

3nor does he voice his own desire.

4It is nothing less than revelation

that is sent down to him,

5one mighty in power°

has taught him,

6one imbued with great strength,

who stood

7at the horizon’s peak

8then approached, coming down

9to within two bow-lengths away

or closer—

10until he revealed to God’s servant

what He revealed.

11His heart did not mistake

what it saw.

12Will you then dispute with him

what he saw?

13He saw [Gabriel]

descending again

14Near the lote-tree

on the farthest horizon,

15near the garden of repose,

16when the tree was cloaked

[in sublime splendor].°

17His sight never wavered,

nor did it venture beyond,

18for he saw the most sublime

signs of his Lord.

19Have you seen the “goddesses”

Al-Lat and Al-Uzza,

20and a third, Al-Manat?°

21For you the male

and for Him the female?°

22This apportioning would be unjust.

23These are merely names

you and your forefathers

have devised, for which

God has revealed no sanction.

They merely pursue conjecture

and what they themselves desire—

even though guidance has come

to them from their Lord.

24Or shall humankind have

whatever it wishes for?

25No—both beginning and end

belong to God.°

SECTION 2

26How many angels there are in the heavens

whose intercession will be of no help—

except after God grants leave for those

whom He will and approves?

27Those who don’t believe

in the hereafter

assign female names to the angels.

28But they have no knowledge of this.

They pursue mere conjecture—

which is of no use against truth.

29So turn aside from those

who turn away from Our message,

desiring only the life of this world.

30Such is the extent

of their knowledge.

It is your Lord Who best knows

who strays from His path

and who is guided.

31To God belongs

all that is in the heavens,

and all that is on the earth.

He will requite those who do evil

for what they did, and reward those

who do good with what is best,°

32those who avoid major sins

and indecencies, though falling into

minor sins. Your Lord is Expansive

in forgiveness. He knows you well

since He brought you out of the earth,

and since you were mere fetuses

in the wombs of your mothers.

So do not claim to be pure—

He knows best who is mindful of Him.

SECTION 3

33Have you see the one

who turns away,

34who gives a little

then holds back?

35Does he have knowledge

of the unseen, so that he can see?

36Has he not been told of what

the scrolls of Moses hold?°

37And of Abraham,

who fulfilled his trust?°—

38that none shall bear

the burdens of another;

39and that humans can have

only what they strive for;

40and that their striving

will soon be seen,

41then they will be rewarded for it

with a full reward—

42that the final goal is

to your Lord;

43that it is He Who makes people

laugh and cry;

44that it is He Who

brings death and gives life;

45that it is He Who created

male and female in pairs

46from a drop of sperm, discharged;

47that He will bring forth

a second creation;°

48that it is He Who

enriches and suffices;

49that it is He Who is Lord

of Sirius;°

50that it is He Who destroyed

the ancient people of ʿAd

51and the people of Thamud,

without sparing them,

52and the people of Noah

before them—they were most unjust

and most rebellious.

53and He brought low

the overturned cities

[of Sodom and Gomorrah],

54covering them?°

55Which of the favors of your Lord

would you, then, doubt?

56This is one who warns,

like those who warned

in former times.

57The impending hour

draws near.

58None but God

can unveil it.

59Do you yet wonder

at this message?

60And laugh, rather than cry?

61Immersed, as you are, in vanities?

62Bow down before God

and worship Him alone.

SURA 54

The Moon (Al-Qamar)

A middle Meccan sura, its 55 verses begin with a cosmic sign—some would say, miracle—that portends the day of reckoning. “The moon torn asunder” evokes not just the final judgment but also the roll call of prophets honored, like Noah and Lot but also people condemned, like ʿAd and Thamud as well as the family of Pharaoh. None escapes “the book of deeds” in which “each matter, small and great, is recorded.” (vv. 52–53).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1The hour draws near,

and the moon is torn asunder.°

2If they see a sign, they turn away,

saying, “The sorcery continues.”°

3They deny the signs

and follow their own desires—

yet every affair will be resolved.

4Stories of former peoples

have already come to them,

to deter them,

5stories consummate in wisdom—

but the warnings are of no use.

6So turn away from them, Prophet.

On the day the caller summons them

to something terrible,

7they will emerge from their graves,

eyes downcast, swarming like locusts,

8scrambling toward the caller.

The unbelievers will cry,

“This is a harsh day.”

9Before them, Noah’s people

denied [the truth],

denying Our servant,

saying “He is possessed”—

and he was reproved.

10Then he called on his Lord,

“I am overcome—so help me!”

11So We opened the gates

of heaven, with water

cascading down.

12And We made the earth

burst open with gushing springs—

the waters came together as decreed.

13But We carried Noah

on [an ark] made of planks and nails

14sailing secure beneath Our gaze—

a reward for the one

who had been spurned.

15And We have left this [ark]

as a sign—so will any take heed?

16How [dire] were My torment

and My warnings.

17We have made the Quran

easy, on mind and memory—

so will any take heed?

18The people of ʿAd also denied

[the truth]—how [dire]

were My torment and My warnings.

19For We sent against them

a furious wind, on a day

of unrelenting calamity,

20plucking people out like stumps

of uprooted palm trees.

21How dire were My torment

and My warnings.

22We have made the Quran

easy, on mind and memory—

so will any take heed?

SECTION 2

23The people of Thamud [also]

denied the warnings.

24For they said, “Shall we follow

a mere mortal from among ourselves?

We would fall into error and folly!

25“Was the reminder sent to him

alone of all those among us?

It can’t be—he’s an insolent liar.”

26They shall know tomorrow

who the insolent liar is.

27We will send the she-camel

as a trial for them. So, watch them,

Salih, and be patient.

28Inform them that the water

is to be shared among them,

each drinking in turn.

29But they called their comrade

who took a sword°

and hamstrung the camel.°

30How dire were My torment

and My warnings.

31For We hurled against them

a single fearsome blast

that turned them into

the like of dry twigs

used by a builder of fences.

32We have made the Quran

easy, on mind and memory—

so will any take heed?

33The people of Lot [also]

denied the warnings.

34We hurled against them

a shower of brimstone—except

the family of Lot, whom we saved

at the hour of dawn,

35by Our grace. In this way

We reward those who are grateful.

36Lot warned them

that We would seize them,

but they disputed the warnings,

37and even solicited his guests

[to seduce them]—

but We blinded them—

“Taste My torment

and the truth of My warnings.”

38Early in the morning

a relentless torment seized them—

39“Taste My torment

and the truth of My warnings.”

40We have made the Quran

easy, on mind and memory—

so will any take heed?

SECTION 3

41Warnings came

to the people of Pharaoh.

42They denied all Our signs,

so We seized them with the power

of the Almighty, the All Powerful.

43Are the unbelievers among you

better than them?

Or, were you granted

exemption in the scriptures?

44Or, do they say,

“We are a strong force,

and we shall win”?

45But their force shall be vanquished

and they will turn their backs, fleeing.

46But the hour—as promised to them—

the hour shall be

most grievous, most bitter.

47It is the sinners who have fallen

into error—and madness;

48on the day they are dragged

into the fire, their faces down,

[they will be told,]

“Taste the embrace of hellfire.”

49We created all things

in due measure,

50Our command works in one flash

like the blinking of an eye.

51We have destroyed your kind

before—so will any take heed?

52Each thing they do

is recorded in the book of deeds

53each matter, small and great,

is recorded.

54The righteous shall be among

gardens and rivers,

55in a seat of honor,

near the All Powerful King.

SURA 55

The All Merciful (Al-Rahman)

Early Meccan in origin, according to modern scholars, this sura of 78 verses echoes one of God’s Beautiful Names, the one most revered after Allah: Rahman, “the All Merciful.” In a refrain that recurs thirty-one times from v. 13 to v. 77, it addresses both humankind and jinn, valuing each as an audience for divine commands and as recipients of divine blessings. The rhetorical use of the Arabic dual marks it as an extraordinary oral performance, one requiring parallel effort in its English rendering.

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1The All Merciful:

2He taught the Quran,

3He created man,

4He taught him speech.

5Both sun and moon,

exact in their span,

6and stars and trees, both bow down;

7and the sky He raised high,

setting up the balance,

8that you might not infract

what is due in balance;

9set up [your] weights justly, then,

and do not fall short in balance.

10And He laid out the earth

for His creatures,

11with her fruit and date palms

with clustered sheaths;

12and corn, with husks,

and scented plants.

13Which, then, of your Lord’s favors

would you both deny?

14Humankind He created from

dry clay, like earthen pots,

15and jinn He created from

smokeless fire.

16Which of your Lord’s favors

would you both then deny?°

17Lord of the two Easts°

and Lord of the two Wests.°

18And which of your Lord’s favors

would you both deny?

19He let the two seas flow,

so they might converge:

20between them a barrier,

where they shall not merge—

21so which of your Lord’s favors

will you both deny?

22Out of them both come

pearls and coral.

23Which, then, of your Lord’s favors

will you both deny?

24And His are the ships sailing high

on the seas, like mountains.

25So which of the favors of your Lord

will you both deny?

SECTION 2

26All things upon [the earth] shall perish,

27while the Face of your Lord

Abides Forever,

in Majesty and Munificence.

28Which, then, of your Lord’s favors

will you both deny?

29All that is in the heavens and earth

implores Him,

each day His decree exists.°

30Which of your Lord’s favors

will you then both deny?

31Soon We shall attend to you,

you hosts [of jinn and humankind].

32Then which of your Lord’s favors

will you both deny?

33Assembly of jinn and humankind—

if you can pass beyond the realms

of heaven and earth, then pass—

yet you shall not pass

without [Our] warrant.

34And which of your Lord’s favor

will you both deny?

35Against you both will be hurled

a fiery flame, and smoke—

you shall find no quarter.

36Which, then, of your Lord’s favors

will you both deny?

37When the sky is torn asunder,

turning crimson like red leather.°

38Which of your Lord’s favors

will you then both deny?

39On that day, none will be

questioned about his sin,

neither humans nor jinn.

40And which of your Lord’s favors

will you both deny?

41The sinners shall be known

by their marks, and seized

by their forelocks and their feet.

42Which, then, of your Lord’s favors

will you both deny?

43This is hell, which sinners deny—

44they will wander in circles

between it and boiling water.

45Which, then, of your Lord’s favors

will you both deny?

SECTION 3

46But whoever fears [the day]

when he stands before his Lord—

shall have two gardens—

47so which of your Lord’s favors

will you both deny?

48With spreading branches.

49So which of your Lord’s favors

will you both deny?

50In them both will be

two fountains, flowing.

51So which of your Lord’s favors

will you both deny?

52In them both will be fruits

of every kind, in pairs.

53So which of your Lord’s favors

will you both deny?

54Reclining on couches,

lined in rich brocade,

with fruit of both gardens

within close reach.°

55So which of your Lord’s favors

will you both deny?

56In the gardens will be females

of modest glance, untouched

before by human or jinn—

57so which of your Lord’s favors

will you both deny?

58[In beauty] like rubies and coral.

59So which of your Lord’s favors

will you both deny?

60What is the reward for goodness,

beyond goodness?°

61Which, then, of your Lord’s favors

will you both deny?

62And besides these two,

shall be two more gardens—

63which, then, of your Lord’s favors

will you both deny?

64Both hued in deepest green.

65And which of your Lord’s favors

will you both deny?

66In them both will be

two fountains, overflowing.

67Which, then, of your Lord’s favors

will you both deny?

68In them both will be fruit,

date palm, and pomegranate.

69Which, then, of your Lord’s favors

will you both deny?

70In them will be maidens,

virtuous and beautiful—

71which of your Lord’s favors

would you then both deny?

72Houris,° large eyed,

secluded in pavilions—

73and which of your Lord’s favors

will you both deny?

74Untouched before by human or jinn.

75Which, then, of your Lord’s favors

will you both deny?

76Reclining on cushions of green

and luscious carpets.

77Which, then, of your Lord’s favors

will you both deny?

78Blessed is the Name

of your Lord, forever,

in Majesty and Munificence.

SURA 56

The Inexorable Event (Al-Waqiʿa)

As with many suras, the opening verse of its 96 verses provides the title for this early Meccan invocation of “a noble Quran, in a Book well guarded” (v. 77–78). It begins with a vivid description of judgment day, then divides those arrayed into the ones nearest to God, followed by those on the right, and those on the left (vv. 10–56). Signs of God’s power and providence (vv. 57–74) underscore the universal need to acknowledge “the truth, certain,” glorifying “the Name of your Lord, Most Great” (vv. 95–96).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1When the inexorable event arrives,

2none shall deny its arrival.

3Many will it abase

and many will it exalt—

4when the earth is convulsed

to its core,

5and the mountains crumbled

6to dust, scattered wide—

7then you shall be ranked

into three groups:

8some on the right—who?°

9and some on the left—who?

10While the foremost [in faith]

shall be foremost [in place];

11these will be nearest to God°

12in gardens of bliss:

13many from the first generations,

14few from later generations,

15on couches adorned with gold,

16reclining, facing one another.

17Immortal youths shall pass

among them, [serving them]

18with goblets, jugs, and a cup

[filled] from a flowing stream,

19inducing neither headache

nor stupor;

20and whatever fruits they choose;

21and the flesh of whatever

fowl they desire;

22and houris, large-eyed,

23like pearls preserved

in their shells—

24a reward for all their deeds.

25There, they will hear neither gossip

nor sinful talk—

26only the words “Peace . . . peace.”

27Those on the right—

how will they be?

28[They will be] among lote-trees

shorn of their thorns,°

29among acacias laden with fruit,

30under spreading shade,

31with flowing water,

32and fruit in abundance

33without limit or constraint,

34seated on couches raised high.

35We created companions,

36whom We have made chaste,

37loving, and well suited°—

38for those on the right—

SECTION 2

39many from former times,

40and many from later generations.

41Those on the left—

how will they be?

42They will be in scorching wind

and scalding water,

43in the shade of black smoke

44neither cool nor soothing.

45Before this, they had indulged

in luxury,

46persisting in great sin,

47and they used to say,

“So when we die, and turn to

dust and bones, will we

really be resurrected—

48“along with our ancestors?”

49Say, “Yes, both former

and later generations

50“shall be gathered together

at an appointed time

on a stipulated day.

51“Then you who are astray,

and deny the truth,

52“shall eat from the bitter

tree of Zaqqum,°

53“filling your bellies with it,

54“while drinking scalding water,

55“slurping it like thirsty camels.”

56This will be their welcome

on the day of reckoning.

57It is We Who created you—

so why will you not accept the truth?

58Do you see the [semen]

that you emit?

59Did you create it,

or are We the Creator?

60We decreed death

to be your common lot°—

nor could We be thwarted°

61[if We wished] to transform

your form and re-create you

in forms unknown to you.

62And of course you know well

your original form of creation—

so why will you not take heed?°

63Do you see the seed

that you sow?

64Is it you who cause it to grow

or We?

65Had We wished, We could have

crushed it to rubble,

and left you musing,

66“We are deep in debt,

67“in fact, we’re dispossessed.”

68Do you not see the water

that you drink?

69Is it you who send it down

from the rain clouds—or We?

70If We willed, We could make it

bitter [and undrinkable]—

so why will you not give thanks?

71Do you see the fire

that you light?

72Is it you who produce

the tree that fuels it, or We?

73We made it a reminder,

and a provision for desert travelers.

74So glorify the Name

of your Lord, Most Great.

SECTION 3

75Indeed—I swear

by the setting of the stars°

76—this is a momentous oath,

if only you knew—

77that this is a noble Quran,

78in a Book well guarded,

79which only the pure shall touch—

80a revelation from

the Lord of the worlds.

81Would you, then,

take this message lightly?

82And do you make your living

by denying it?

83Why do you not [intercede]

when the [soul of a dying man]

wells up to his throat,

84while you merely gaze on?

85We are nearer to him

than you are—but you do not see.

86And why, if you are exempt

from judgment,

87do you not bring back [his soul],

if you are speaking the truth?

88If [that dying person] is among

those brought near to God,

89they shall have repose,

fragrant delight,

and a garden of bliss.

90And if he is one of those

on the right,

91[he shall hear the greeting]

“Peace be to you” from those

on the right.

92But if he is one of those

who denied [Our message]

and went astray,

93his welcome will be

scalding water,

94and burning in hellfire.

95This is the truth, certain.

96So, glorify the name

of your Lord, Most Great.

SURA 57

Iron (Al-Hadid)

Only 29 verses, this early Medinan sura takes its title from the mention of iron, sent down to provide “great strength and benefits for people” (v. 25). Extolling the glory of God and His messenger (vv. 1–11), it then separates the believers and hypocrites, with disparate fates awaiting each (vv. 12–20) and an appeal to believers: “Race to gain forgiveness from your Lord” (v. 21). It concludes with praise for the earlier followers of Noah, Abraham, and Jesus and emphasis on the light as a mark of God’s guidance and forgiveness (v. 28).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1All that is in the heavens and on earth

hymns the glory of God,

for He is Almighty, All Wise.

2His is the dominion

over the heavens and the earth;

He gives life and brings death,

and He has Power over all things.

3He is the First and the Last,

the Manifest and the Hidden,

Knower of all things.

4It is He Who created

the heavens and the earth

in six days, then took up the throne.

He knows what enters the earth

and what leaves it,

what descends from the sky

and what ascends to it.

He is with you wherever

you are—for God Sees

all that you do.

5His is the dominion

over the heavens and the earth,

and all affairs are returned to God.

6He fades night into day,

and day into night; and He Knows

what your hearts contain.

7Believe in God and His messenger,

and give freely° from what

He has entrusted to you. For those

of you who believe and give freely,

there is a great reward.

8Why do you not believe in God

when the messenger calls you

to believe in your Lord

—and has taken a pledge from you—

if you are truly believers?

9It is He Who sends clear signs

to His servant, so he might lead you

out of the darkness into light—

for God is Most Kind,

Ever Merciful.

10And why do you not spend

in God’s cause? For the legacy of

the heavens and the earth is God’s.

Not all among you are equal:

those who gave and fought

before the victory°

are higher in rank than those

who gave and fought afterward.

But God has promised all

a fine reward—

for God is Aware of all that you do.

SECTION 2

11Who will lend to God

a beautiful loan, that God

will multiply for them?

Theirs will be a noble reward.

12On a day when you see

the believers, men and women,

with their light moving before them,

on their right, [they will hear,]

“What joyous news for you this day—

gardens, beneath which rivers flow,

to live there forever—

that is the supreme triumph.”

13On that day, the hypocrites, both men

and women, will say to the believers,

“Wait for us! Let us share

some of your light.” They will be told,

“Go back behind and seek a light.”

Then a wall shall be raised

between them, with a door—

mercy inside it and torment outside.

14[Those outside] will call out,

“Were we not with you?

[The others] will reply,

“Yes, but you fell into temptation.

You were hesitant, in doubt,

and false desires deceived you—

until God’s command came.

The deceiver deceived you about God.

15“This day no ransom

shall be accepted of you, nor

of the disbelievers. Your home

is the fire, your true patron—

a wretched destination.”

16Has not the time come

for the believers to humble

their hearts in remembrance of God

and of the truth revealed [to them],

and not to be like those who were

given the Book earlier,

whose hearts grew hard over time,

many of whom were disobedient.

17Know that God gives life

to the earth after its death;

We have made the signs clear to you

that you might comprehend.

18For the men and women

who give in charity, and lend to God

a beautiful loan—it will be multiplied

and theirs will be a noble reward.

19Those who believe in God

and His messengers are truthful—

they will bear witness

before their Lord.

They shall have their reward

and their light.

But those who disbelieve

and deny Our signs

shall be inmates of hellfire.

SECTION 3

20Know that the life of this world

is but play and idle pastime, with

adornment and mutual boasting,

and rivalry for gain in wealth

and children. It is like the rain

bringing up [a crop],

which delights the tillers.

But then it dries, and

you see it turn yellow, then

to stubble. In the hereafter

there is severe torment, but also

God’s forgiveness and approval—

for the life of this world is nothing

but diversion, delusion.

21Race to gain forgiveness

from your Lord, and a garden

as wide as the heaven and earth,

prepared for those who believed

in God and His messengers.

This is the grace that God

grants to whom He will,

for God’s grace is great.

22No misfortune can occur

on the earth or in yourselves

without being recorded before

We brought it into being—

that is easy for God—

23so that you don’t grieve

over what eludes you, nor exult

in what He has given you,

for God does not like

the proud and boastful,

24those who are miserly and

encourage others to be so.

As for those who turn away—

God is Self-Sufficient, Praiseworthy.

25We sent down Our messengers

with clear proofs, and We sent with them

the Book and the balance°

that people might uphold justice.

And We sent down iron, which has

great strength and benefits for people—

so that God might know who will

help [His cause] and His messengers

[though He is] unseen.

For God is All Powerful, Almighty.

SECTION 4

26We sent Noah and Abraham,

and bestowed prophethood

and the Book upon their descendants.

Some among them were rightly guided,

but many were disobedient.

27Then We brought [more of]

Our messengers to follow

in their footsteps. After them

We sent Jesus, son of Mary,

to whom We gave the Gospel.

We placed compassion and mercy

in the hearts of his followers.

But they invented monasticism

—which We did not ordain for them—

to seek God’s good pleasure—

though they failed to observe it duly.°

Then we rewarded the believers

among them—but many were disobedient.

28You who believe, be mindful

of God, and believe in His messenger.

He will grant you a twofold portion

of His mercy; He will make a Light

for you, in which you shall walk,°

and He will forgive you—for God

is Most Forgiving, Ever Merciful—

29so that the people of the Book

might know that they have no power

whatsoever over the grace of God,

that this grace lies in His hands,

and He gives it to whom He will—

for God’s grace abounds.

SURA 58

The Woman Who Pleads (Al-Mujadila)

This Medinan sura of 22 verses takes its name from its subject: a woman who challenges her husband’s right to divorce her with a pre-Islamic formula (vv. 1–4). Stressing God’s omniscience and omnipotence (vv. 6–13), it also warns those who deceive or oppose Muhammad (vv. 14–21) and concludes with a promise that God will strengthen believers with His own spirit (v. 22).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1God has heard the words

of the woman who pleads with you

concerning her husband, and

refers her complaint to God.

And God hears both sides

of your exchange, for God

is All Hearing, All Seeing.

2As for those of you

who divorce their wives° by

pronouncing zihar against them

[misnaming them “mothers”]—

they are not their mothers.

Their mothers are only those

who gave them birth.

So what they say

is both wicked and false.

But God is Pardoning, Forgiving.

3But those who divorce their wives

in this way, then wish to go back

on what they have said,

should free a slave

before any mutual touching.

This is what you are enjoined to do,

for God is Aware of all that you do.

4And those without the means

[to do this] should fast for

two consecutive months

before any mutual touching.

And those unable to do this

should feed sixty poor people.

This is so you will believe in God

and His messenger, for these are

the limits set by God.

And a painful torment

awaits the disbelievers.

5Those who oppose God and His messenger

will be disgraced—like those before them.

For We have sent down clear signs.

And degrading torment awaits the disbelievers

6on the day that God raises them up together,

and informs them of all they have done.

God has recorded it though they have forgotten it.

For God is Witness to all things.

SECTION 2

7Do you not see that God knows

all that is in the heavens and

all that is on the earth—there is no

whispered converse between three people

but He is the fourth, nor between four

but He is the fifth, nor between five

but He is the sixth—nor fewer

nor more but He is with them

wherever they are. Then, on the day

of resurrection, He shall inform them

of all they have done.

For God is Knower of all things.

8Have you not seen those

who were forbidden from furtive talk

revert to doing what was forbidden,

conspiring in what is sinful, hostile,

and disobedient to the Prophet.

When they come to you,

they address you as God would never

address you,° and they say

to themselves, “Why does God

not punish us for what we say?”

Hell is enough for them, and

they shall burn in it—an evil end.

9You who believe—when you hold

secret counsel, do not conspire in sin,

hostility, and disobedience to the Prophet;

converse, rather, with a view

to righteousness and mindfulness

of God. Be mindful of God—the One

to Whom you will be gathered.

10Furtive talk is prompted by

Satan, to breed grief among believers.

But He cannot harm them at all

without leave from God.

So let the believers trust in God.

11You who believe, when told

to make room for one another

in the assemblies, do so—

God will make room for you.

And when you are told to rise, do so—

God will raise up in rank

those among you who believe

and who have been given knowledge.°

For God is Aware of all that you do.

12You who believe, when you

consult in private with the Prophet,

first offer alms. This will be better

for you, and more purifying.

But if you do not find

[the means to do this],

God is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

13Were you afraid of not being able

to give alms before consulting

with the Prophet? If you did not,

and God relents toward you,

be steadfast in prayer,

give in charity, and obey God

and His messenger.

For God is Aware of all that you do.

SECTION 3

14Do you not see those who befriend

people who have incurred God’s wrath?

They are not of you, nor you of them.

And they swear knowingly to what is false.

15God has prepared severe torment

for them; what they have done is evil.

16They have made their oaths

a screen [for their misdeeds], and

they bar [others] from the path of God—

theirs shall be a disgracing torment.

17Their wealth and their children

shall prove no use to them against God.

They are inmates of hellfire

where they shall dwell forever.

18On the day that God

raises them up together,

they will swear to Him,

as they swear to you—they think

they have something to stand on—

wrong—they are liars.

19Satan has overcome them.

making them forget remembrance

of God. They are the party of Satan—

a party that will lose out.

20Those who oppose God

and His messenger

shall be the most humiliated.

21God has decreed: “It is I

and My messengers who will prevail.”

God is All Powerful, Almighty.

22You will not find any people

who believe in God and the last day

befriending those who oppose

God and His messenger—even if

they are their fathers, sons, brothers,

or relatives. He has inscribed faith

within their hearts, strengthening them

with His own spirit.° He shall usher them

into gardens beneath which rivers flow,

to live there forever. God will be pleased

with them, and they with Him. They

are the party of God, and it is God’s party

who will surely succeed.

SURA 59

The Gathering (Al-Hashr)

A middle Medinan sura, its 24 verses stress the gathering (hence the title) of a Jewish tribe that first supported, then opposed the Prophet. The central verses concern this episode (vv. 2–17), followed by verses exhorting believers to remember God (vv. 18–21), above all to glorify Him by reciting His “Most Beautiful Names” (vv. 22–24).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1All that is in the heavens

and all that is on the earth

glorifies God,

for He is Almighty, All Wise.

2It is He Who expelled the disbelievers

among the people of the Book

from their homes,

at the first gathering of forces.°

You did not think they would go

and they themselves thought

their fortresses would defend them

from God. But God

came upon them from where

they least expected, and cast

terror into their hearts.

Their homes were destroyed by

their own hands, and the hands

of the believers. So take heed,

you who are able to see.

3Had God not decreed

banishment for them,

He would have surely

punished them in this world.

In the hereafter, they shall face

the torment of hellfire.

4That is because they

opposed God and His messenger.

Whoever opposes God—[know that]

God is Stern in Requital.

5Whether you cut down

[their] palm trees or left them

standing on their roots, it was

by God’s leave, that He might

shame the disobedient.

6You had to make no expedition

of horse or camels for the spoils God

gave to His messenger from them,

for God empowers His messengers

over whom He will, and God

has Power over all things.

7Any spoils God gave to His messenger

from the people of the towns

belongs to God, the messenger,

kinsfolk, orphans, the needy,

and the traveler—so they should not

circulate between the rich among you.

So take whatever the messenger

gives you, and refrain from

whatever he disallows you,

and be mindful of God,

for God is Stern in Requital.

8[A share is due] to the poor

among the emigrants, who were

expelled from their homes

and their possessions

while seeking the grace of God

and His good pleasure

in helping [the cause of] God

and His messenger.

These are the truthful people.

9[A share is also due]

to those, already settled

before them in their homes

[in Medina], and firm in faith,

who show love for those

who came to them for refuge,

and find in their hearts no need

for what has been given to the refugees,

preferring them over themselves,

even though they too are poor:

those who are saved from the greed

of their own souls,

are the ones who will succeed.

10Those who have come after them

say, “Our Lord, forgive us and our

brothers who came before us in faith

and don’t leave a grudge in our hearts

against those who believe. Our Lord,

You are Compassionate, Ever Merciful.”

SECTION 2

11Have you not seen the hypocrites

say to their disbelieving brothers

from the people of the Book,°

“If you are expelled, we will surely

go with you; we will never listen

to anyone who speaks against you;

if you’re attacked, we shall surely

help you.” But God bears witness

that they are lying.

12If they are expelled,

they will never go with them,

and if they are attacked,

they will not help them,

and if they did help them,

they would turn their backs:

so they would not be helped.

13You are more fearsome

in their hearts than God.

That is because they are people

who will not understand.

14They will not fight you, even when

united, except in fortified towns,

or from behind walls; their violence

among themselves is great:

you think them united,

but their hearts are divided.

That is because they are people

who are averse to reason.

15Like those who came

just before them, they have tasted

the grievous fruit of their actions,

and they shall face painful torment.

16Like Satan, when he says

to humankind, “Do not believe!”

But when humankind disbelieves,

he says, “I disown you: I do fear God,

Lord of the universe.”

17Both will end in the fire,°

to remain there forever.

Such is the reward of wrongdoers.

SECTION 3

18You who believe, be mindful

of God; and let every soul

look to [the deeds] it sends forth

for tomorrow; be mindful

of God, for God is Aware

of all that you do.

19And do not be like those

who forget God, whom He causes

to forget themselves—

they are the disobedient.

20Those in the fire

and those in the garden

are not equal—

those in the garden

are the triumphant.

21Had We sent down this Quran

upon a mountain, you would have

seen it humbled, cleave itself

into a chasm, in fear of God.

Such are the parables

We coin for human beings,

that they might reflect.

22God is He, beyond Whom

there is no god. He Knows

the unseen and the seen;

He is the All Merciful, Ever Merciful.

23God is He, beyond Whom

there is no god, the Sovereign,

the Sanctified; the Source of Peace,

the Trustworthy, the Guardian,

the Almighty, the Irresistible,

the Supreme; Glorified is He,

beyond what they affiliate with Him.

24He is God, the Creator,

the Originator, the Shaper of Forms;

His are the Most Beautiful Names.°

All that is the heavens and the earth

glorifies Him, and He is

Almighty, All Wise.

SURA 60

The Woman Tested (Al-Mumtahana)

This late Medinan sura is very brief, with the title and purpose referring to v. 10. Its 13 verses focus on categories of women caught between two groups, Muslims and their opponents, in skirmishes just before the Prophet’s reentry to Mecca in 630 CE. The purpose of testing these women is to determine the sincerity of their belief once they confirm their intent to remain with the ascendant Muslim community.

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1You who believe, do not take

as allies My enemies and yours,

offering them friendship, when they

disbelieve in the truth that came

to you, driving out the messenger

and yourselves, because you believed

in God, your Lord—if indeed

you emigrated to strive in My cause

and to seek My good pleasure.

You show them secret affection, but I know

what you conceal and reveal.

Those of you who do this

stray from the level path.

2If they gain ascendancy over you,

they will become your enemies

and reach out against you

with their hands and tongues,

with wicked resolve,

for they want you to disbelieve.

3Your relatives and children

will be of no use to you

on the day of resurrection.

He will judge between you,

for God Sees all that you do.

4You have an excellent example

in Abraham and those with him,

when they said to their people,

“We dissociate ourselves from you

and what you worship besides

the One God. We reject you,

and the enmity and hatred risen

between us shall endure until you

believe in God—and Him alone.”

Except when Abraham said to his father,

“I will ask forgiveness for you, but

I have no power at all on your behalf

with God.” [He and his people prayed,]

“Our Lord, we trust in You, we turn to You,

and our final return is to You.

5“Our Lord, do not make us

[a means] of trial for the unbelievers,

and forgive us, Our Lord.

You are Almighty, All Wise.”

6They were an excellent example

for you—for those whose hope

lies in God and the last day.

As for those who turn away—

God is Self-Sufficient, Praiseworthy.

SECTION 2

7It may be that God will induce

love between you and those

you held as enemies,

for God is All Powerful,

and God is Forgiving,

Ever Merciful.

8God does not forbid you

from being kind and just to those

who don’t fight you over religion

or try to drive you from your homes,

for God loves those who are just.

9God only forbids you from taking

as allies those who fight you,

drive you from your homes,

and help [others] to drive you out.

Those who take them as allies

are wrongdoers.

10You who believe—

when the believing women come to you

as emigrants, test them.

God best knows their faith.

Once you know them to be believers,

don’t send them back

to the disbelievers—for whom

they are no longer lawful, nor

are the disbelievers lawful for them.

Rather, give [their unbelieving husbands]

whatever they paid [as bridal dues]—

nor do you incur blame if you marry them

once you pay them their bridal dues.

Do not hold to your marriages

with unbelieving women.

Ask for return of the bridal dues

you paid, and let the unbelievers

ask for return of what they paid.

This is God’s judgment—

it is He Who judges between you,

for God is All Knowing, All Wise.

11And if any of your wives deserts you

for the unbelievers, then in your turn,

give to those whose wives have gone

what they spent [as bridal dues]—

and fear God, in whom you believe.

12Prophet, when the believing women

come to you—pledging not to

associate anything with the One God,

not to steal, commit adultery,

nor kill their children, nor forge any lie

about who has fathered their children,

nor disobey you in what is righteous—

then, accept their pledge, and ask

forgiveness for them from God,

for God is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

13You who believe,

do not seek as allies those

who have incurred God’s wrath,

and who despair of the hereafter

just as the disbelievers despair

that those in their graves

[will be brought back to life].

SURA 61

In Ranks (Al-Saff)

An early Medinan sura, it is short (14 verses). Extolling those who “fight in His cause, in battle lines (v. 4),” it invokes the examples of Moses and Jesus as stalwart messengers who helped God’s Light to shine (vv. 4–8), auguring a messenger named Ahmad with the religion of truth (vv. 6, 9), whose followers will be victorious (v. 14).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1All that is in the heavens and earth

hymns the glory of God—

He is Almighty, All Wise.

2You who believe,

why do you profess

what you do not practice?

3It is loathsome in the sight of God

that you profess

what you do not practice.

4God loves those who fight

in His cause, in ranks,

like a firmly wrought structure.

5Moses said to his people,

“My people, why do you vex me

when you know that

I am God’s messenger to you?”

When they deviated, it was God

Who caused their hearts to deviate—

for God does not guide

people who transgress.

6Jesus, son of Mary, said,

“Children of Israel, I am God’s

messenger to you, confirming

the Torah that came before me,

and bringing joyous news

of a messenger to come after me,

whose name will be Ahmad.”

Yet when he came to them

with clear signs, they declared,

“This is clearly sorcery.”

7Who does greater wrong than those

who invent a lie about God,

even when invited to submit to Him—

God does not guide

a people who do wrong.

8With their words,° they wish

to extinguish the Light of God.

But God will perfect His Light

though disbelievers may detest it.

9It is He Who sent His messenger

with guidance and the religion of truth

to exalt it over all religion,

though the polytheists may detest it.

SECTION 2

10You who believe, shall I lead you

to a transaction that will save you

from painful torment?

11Believe in God and His messenger

and strive in the cause of God

with your possessions and your lives—

that is better for you, if only you knew.

12He will forgive you your sins

and usher you into gardens

beneath which rivers flow, into

splendid dwellings in eternal gardens—

that is the supreme triumph.

13And another [favor] you will love—

help from God and imminent victory.

So, give the joyous news

to those who believe.

14You who believe, be helpers

[in the cause] of God. As when Jesus,

son of Mary, said to the disciples,

“Who will help me in God’s cause?”

They responded, “We shall.”

Of the children of Israel,

one group believed

while another disbelieved.

So We supported those

who believed against their enemy—

and they were victorious.°

SURA 62

The Friday Prayer (Al-Jumuʿa)

A short Medinan sura, its 11 verses address God’s power (vv. 1–4), then Jewish opponents (vv. 5–8), with an appeal to believers to pray and remember God (vv. 9–11) “for God is the Best of Providers” (v. 11).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1All that is in the heavens and earth

hymns the glory of God—

the Sovereign, the Holy,

the Almighty, All Wise.

2It is He Who has sent a Prophet

to the unlettered people,° one of their own,

who recites for them His signs,

who sanctifies them, teaching them

the Book and wisdom—

though before this

they were clearly astray—

3[the Prophet was sent to them and

to] others who have yet to join them.

For God is Almighty, All Wise.

4This is the grace of God

which He grants to whom He will—

for God is Full of Grace.

5Those entrusted with

bearing the Torah

and who failed in this

are like a donkey bearing books.

Wicked are the likes

of people who deny

the signs of God—

and God does not guide

a people who do wrong.

6Say, “Those of you who are Jews,

if you claim you have a bond with God°

—excluding all [other] people—

then hope for death

if you are speaking the truth.”°

7But they will never hope for death

given the deeds they have accrued°—

God Knows those who do wrong.

8Say, “The death you flee from

will overtake you. Then you will

be sent back to the Knower

of the unseen and the seen

and He will inform you

of all that you have done.

SECTION 2

9You who believe, when the call

to Friday prayer is made,

hasten to remember God

and leave your trading.

That is better for you,

if only you knew.

10And when the prayer is concluded,

disperse through the land, seeking

the bounty of God—

and remember God often,

that you might prosper.

11Yet when they see some trading

or play, they disperse, running

toward it, and leave you standing alone.

Say, “What is with God is far better

than trade or play. For God

is the Best of Providers.”

SURA 63

The Hypocrites (Al-Munafiqun)

Another short Medinan sura of 11 verses, this addresses first hypocrites (vv. 1–8), then believers (vv. 9–11), reminding the latter that “God is Aware of all that you do” (v. 11).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1When the hypocrites come to you,

they say, “We bear witness that you

are truly the messenger of God.”

God knows well that you

are His messenger—

and He bears witness

that the hypocrites are liars.

2They have made their oaths

a screen [for their misdeeds], and

they bar [people] from God’s path—

what they have done is wicked.

3That is because they believed,

then disbelieved. So a seal

has been set upon their hearts—

hence they don’t understand.

4When you see them, their looks

please you, and when they speak,

you listen to what they say.

Yet [in truth], they are like

beams of timber, propped up.

They think that every cry

is against them. But they

are the enemy, so be wary of them.

May God curse them—

how deluded they are.

5And when it is said to them,

“Come, the messenger of God

will ask forgiveness for you,”

they turn their heads aside

and turn away in their pride.

6It’s the same for them whether

you ask forgiveness for them or not—

God will not forgive them.

God does not guide

people who are disobedient.

7They are the ones who say,

“Don’t give anything to those

who are with God’s messenger—

then they will disband.”

But the treasures of the heavens

and earth belong to God, though

the hypocrites don’t understand.

8They say, “If we return to Medina

The more powerful° will expel

the weaker ones from it.” But power

belongs to God, His messenger,

and the believers,

though the hypocrites

have no knowledge [of this].

SECTION 2

9You who believe, don’t let

your wealth and your children

distract you from remembrance

of God—those who do this

will be the ones who suffer loss.

10Spend [in charity] from what

We have given you, before death

comes to any one of you,

and they should say,

“My Lord, why don’t you

grant me respite for a short term,

so that I can give in charity,

and be among the righteous?”

11But God will not grant respite

to any soul once its term becomes due.

For God is Aware of all that you do.

SURA 64

Mutual Fraud (Al-Taghabun)

Either Meccan or Medinan, its 18 verses begin with extolling God (vv. 1–4), then recall the punishment of earlier generations (vv. 5–6), before announcing the different fates of believers and disbelievers (vv. 7–10). While believers face trials and temptations (vv. 11–16), they should remain confident of God’s forgiveness—“for God is Appreciative, Forbearing—Knower of the unseen and the seen, the Almighty, the All Wise” (vv. 17–18).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1All that is in the heavens

and all that is on the earth

hymns the glory of God.

His is all dominion, and

His is all praise—

He has Power over all things.

2It is He Who created you.

Some of you are disbelievers

while others believe—

and God Sees all that you do.

3He created the heavens and earth

with true purpose, and formed you

in beautiful forms—and to Him

you shall finally return.

4He knows all that is in the heavens

and on the earth. He knows

what you conceal and reveal.

He Knows what lies hidden in hearts.

5Has word not reached you of those

who disbelieved in the past?

They tasted the evil fruit of their deeds

and theirs was a painful torment.

6For° their messengers came to them

with clear proofs, but they said,

“Shall we be guided by a mere mortal?”

and, disbelieving, they turned away.

But God does not need them, for God

is Self-Sufficient, Worthy of Praise.

7The unbelievers claim that they

will not be raised from the dead. Say,

“By my Lord, you will be raised up,

and then informed of all that you did—

this is easy for God.”

8So, believe in the One God

and His messenger, and in the Light

We have sent down.° For God

is Aware of all that you do.

9When He gathers you together

on the day of gathering—that

will be the day when you suffer

mutual fraud.

As for those who

believe in God and do good deeds,

He will absolve them

of their misdeeds,

and usher them into gardens

beneath which rivers flow,

dwelling there for eternity.

That will be the supreme triumph.

10But those who disbelieve

and deny Our Signs, shall be

cast into the fire, dwelling there

forever—a wretched destination.

SECTION 2

11No kind of calamity can strike

without God’s leave. God guides

the heart of any who believe in Him—

and God is Knower of all things.

12So obey God, and

obey His messenger;

but if you turn back,

Our messenger’s task

is only to convey

the message clearly.

13God—there is no god but He—

so let the believers trust in God.

14You who believe—some among

your wives and children may be

your enemies, so beware of them.

But if you pardon, forbear, and forgive,

God is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

15Your wealth and your children

are merely a test for you.

But the greatest reward is with God.

16So be mindful of God—

as much as you are able.

Hear, and obey, and spend

in charity—for your own sake.

Those who are saved from

their own greed are the ones

who will prosper.

17If you lend to God a beautiful loan°

He will multiply it for you,

and forgive you, for God is

Appreciative, Forbearing—

18Knower of the unseen

and the seen,

the Almighty, the All Wise.

SURA 65

Divorce (Al-Talaq)

A Medinan sura of 12 verses, this begins with a commentary on divorce laws (vv. 1–7) and then warns of punishment for disbelievers as well as blessing for believers (vv. 8–12), concluding as do many suras, with invoking Divine Names: “God has Power over all things, and that His Knowledge encompasses all things (v. 12).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1Prophet, when any of you

divorces women, do so when

their waiting period starts,°

and keep count of the period,

remaining mindful of God,

your Lord. Don’t expel them

from their homes, and they

themselves should not leave

unless they are guilty

of some clear indecency.

These are the limits set by God,

and those who transgress

those limits wrong themselves.

You do not know if God, after this,

will bring something else to pass.

2Then when their term of waiting

expires—either keep them or

part with them—in a kindly manner,

and call two just men among you

as witnesses, to give upright

testimony for the sake of God.

This is counsel for those who

believe in God and the last day.

God will find a way out for those

who are mindful of Him.

3And He provides for them

from sources they could not imagine.

God is sufficient for those

who place their trust in Him.

He brings about what He decrees

and sets a measure for all things.

4If you are in doubt, the waiting

period will be three months for

those women past menstruation

and those not yet menstruating.

For those who are pregnant,

the waiting period shall expire

when they deliver.

God will make things easy

for those who are mindful of Him.

5This is the command of God,

which He has revealed to you.

He will absolve of their bad deeds

those who are mindful of Him

and make great their reward.

6Let the women you are to divorce

live in your homes, as you can afford;

don’t harm them, to cause distress.

And if they are pregnant,

maintain them until they deliver.

If they suckle your offspring,

compensate them. Consult together

in a kindly manner,

but if you find this too arduous,

let another woman suckle the child.

7Let affluent people spend

according to their means,

and let those of spare means

spend from what God has given them.

God puts no burden on any soul

beyond the means He has given it—

and after hardship He brings relief.°

SECTION 2

8How many towns did We bring

to stern account, which rebelled against

the commandment of their Lord

and His messengers—subjecting them

to Our severe torment?

9So they tasted the evil fruit

of their deeds—and the result

of their deeds was utter ruin.

10God has prepared for them

a severe torment—so be mindful

of God, you people who understand,

who believe—God has sent down

a message to you,

11a messenger, who recites to you

clear verses from God, to lead those

who believe and do good deeds

from darkness into light.

Those who believe in God

and do good deeds shall be

urged into gardens, beneath which

rivers flow, to dwell there forever—

what an excellent provision

God has in store for them.

12It is God Who created seven

heavens and their like in earths.°

His command descends through them

to let you know that God

has Power over all things,

and that His knowing

encompasses all things.

SURA 66

Prohibition (Al-Tahrim)

This Medinan sura of 12 verses opens with directives about Muhammad’s wives (vv. 1–5). It then addresses general guidelines for believers, disbelievers, and the Prophet (vv. 6–9), closing with examples from prior times (Noah’s wife, Lot’s wife, Pharaoh’s wife, and Mary, the daughter of ʿImran; vv. 10–12).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1Prophet, why do you prohibit

what God has made lawful for you,

seeking to please your wives!

Yet God is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.°

2God has ordained that you

might be freed from such oaths,

for God is your Protector,

and He is All Knowing, All Wise.

3When the Prophet confided

something to one of his wives,

and she divulged it [to another wife],

God made this known to him,

and he confirmed part of it,

without disclosing the rest.

When he told her about it,

she asked, “Who informed you

about this?” He replied,

“I was informed by the One

Who is All Knowing, All Aware.”

4If your wives both turn

to God in repentance [it will

be better]—for your hearts

have deviated; so if you support

each other against the Prophet,°

[know that] God is his Protector—

along with Gabriel

and the righteous believers;

the angels too will support him.

5It may be that if he divorced you,

God would give him in exchange

wives better than you—who submit

to God, who believe, are devout,

repentant, worshipping, and who fast°—

both previously wed and virgins.

6You who believe, save yourselves

and your families from a fire

whose fuel is humans and stones,

over which angels stand guard

who are stern and severe, never

disobeying the commands of God,

who do as they are commanded.

7[They will say,] “Unbelievers,

don’t make excuses this day—

you are merely being requited

for all that you did.”

SECTION 2

8You who believe, turn to God

with sincere repentance. Perhaps

God will erase your bad deeds,

and usher you into gardens,

with flowing rivers beneath.

On that day, God will not

disgrace the Prophet and those

who believed with him.

Their light will precede them,

on their right, and they shall say,

“Our Lord, perfect our light,

and forgive us, for You

have Power over all things.”

9Prophet, strive hard against

the disbelievers and hypocrites,

and be firm with them. Their home

will be hell, an evil end.

10God sets outs a parable

for the unbelievers—

the wife of Noah and the wife of Lot.

They were married to two

of Our righteous servants

but they betrayed them,

and their husbands could not

help them against God.

They were told, “Enter the fire

along with the others.”

11And God sets out a parable

for the believers—

the wife of Pharaoh, who said,

“My Lord, build me a home near You,

in the garden, and save me

from Pharaoh and his deeds,

and from a wrongdoing people.”

12And Mary—the daughter of ʿImran—

who preserved her chastity.

We breathed Our spirit into her,

and she affirmed the truth of the words

of her Lord, and of His Books,

for she was among the devout.

SURA 67

Dominion (Al-Mulk)

A middle Meccan sura, its 30 verses divided into four segments: extolling God’s glory (vv. 1–4); enumerating punishment for the devil and his minions (vv. 5–11); an invocation of God’s might (vv. 13–22); and directives to the Prophet (vv. 23–30). The conclusion is capped by a reminder of divine control of even daily drinking water: “Say, ‘Have you considered—if one morning all your water were to sink into the earth, who would bring you water that is flowing and clear?’ ” (v. 30).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1Blessed is He Whose hands

hold dominion—

He Who has Power over all things—

2He Who created death

and life, that He might test

which of you is best in deeds.

He is Almighty, Forgiving—

3He Who created the seven heavens,

one above another. You will see

no flaw in the creation of

the Most Merciful. Look again—

do you see any flaws?

4Look again, a second time—

your sight will return to you

humbled and fatigued.

5And We have adorned

the lowest heaven with lamps,

making them missiles

against the devils,

for whom We have prepared

a torment of blazing fire.

6Those who denied their Lord

shall face the torment of hell,

an evil end.

7When they are thrown into it,

they will hear it bubbling,

as it boils up,

8almost bursting with fury.

Whenever some group is thrown

into it, its keepers will ask,

“Did no one come to warn you?”

9They will reply, “Indeed,

someone did come to warn us

but we denied him, saying,

‘God never sent down any message.

You are gravely mistaken.’ ”°

10And they will say,

“Had we listened,

or used our reason,

we would not now be

inmates of the blazing fire.”

11So they will confess

their sins—so much for the inmates

of the blazing fire!

12As for those who fear

their Lord, unseen—

they shall have forgiveness

and a great reward.

13And whether you conceal

your speech or proclaim it openly,

He Knows what lies

in the hearts [of humankind].

14Would He not know—

He Who created them? He is

Most Subtle, All Aware.

SECTION 2

15It is He Who has made

the earth subservient to you,

so walk in its pathways,

and eat of His provision—

[returning] to Him

you shall be resurrected.

16Do you feel assured° that

He Who is in heaven will not

make the earth swallow you up

when it shakes violently?

17Or do you feel assured

that He Who is in heaven

will not send against you

a hailstorm, that you might

know what My warning is?

18And those who came

before them also denied—

[see] how I rejected them!

19Don’t they see the birds

above them, spreading and folding

their wings? None upholds them

but the All Merciful—

He Sees all things.

20Who can help you—even

an army—besides the All Merciful?

The disbelievers are merely

sunk in delusion.

21Or who can provide for you

if He withholds His provision?

Yet they persist in insolence

and aversion to truth.

22Is someone who walks

with his face down better guided

than someone who walks upright

on a straight path?

23Say, “It is He Who

brought you into being,

and gave you hearing, sight,

and hearts—

how little you give thanks.”

24Say, “It is He Who

multiplied you throughout

the earth, and to Him

you shall all be gathered.”

25They ask, “When will

this promise be fulfilled—

if you are speaking the truth?”

26Say, “God alone has

[that] knowledge. I am merely

one who gives clear warning.”

27But when they see it near them,

the disbelievers’ faces shall

be distressed, and they will be told,

“This is what you called for.”

28Say, “Have you considered—

if God were to destroy me

and those with me, or if He

were to have mercy on us—

who could save the disbelievers

from painful punishment?”

29Say, “He is the All Merciful.

We believe in Him,

and trust in Him.

Soon, you shall know

who is clearly wrong.”

30Say, “Have you considered—

if one morning all your water

were to sink into the earth,

who would bring you water

that is flowing and clear?”

SURA 68

The Pen (Al-Qalam)

A Meccan sura, probably very early, of 52 verses, this extols the pen (v. 1) before offering a retort to the challenge that Muhammad is “possessed,” posed by some wealthy but vitriolic Meccan opponents (vv. 2–18). There follows a parable of proud owners of a garden (vv. 13–34), and the sura closes with a vigorous polemic (vv. 35–46) and invocation of Jonah’s good fortune (vv. 48–50), a reminder to those who think Muhammad possessed (vv. 51–52).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1Nun.° By the pen,

and by what they write—

2by the grace of your Lord,

you are not possessed;

3and for you there will be

unending reward.

4for you are most exalted

in moral character.

5Soon you shall see

—and they shall see—

6which of you is afflicted

[with madness].

7It is your Lord who best knows

who has strayed from His path,

and it is He Who knows best

who is rightly guided.

8So, don’t heed those

who deny the truth.

9They want you to compromise

so they can compromise.

10And don’t heed some wretched

swearer of oaths,

11some slanderer, spreading

malicious gossip,

12a sinful transgressor,

thwarting what is good,

13cruel, and above all, ignoble°—

14all on account of his wealth and sons.

15When Our signs are recited

to him, he cries,

“Fables of the ancients!”

16Soon We shall brand him

on the snout.

17We tested them, just as

We tested the owners of the garden

when they swore to pluck its fruit

in the morning,°

18without making allowance

[for God’s will].

19So a calamity from your Lord

struck the garden

while they were sleeping,

20[and the orchard was desolated,]

as though it had been harvested.

21As morning broke, they called

out to one another,

22“Go to your crop early

if you want to harvest its fruits.”

23So they went, whispering,

24“Let no poor person

enter the garden today

[without your consent].”

25And they went early,

strong in this resolve.

26But when they saw the garden, they said,

“We must have lost our way.

27“Oh no—we are ruined.”

28One of them, more moderate than the rest,

said, “Did I not tell you to glorify God?”

29They said, “Glory be to our Lord.

We have done wrong.”

30Then they turned to blame one another,

31saying, “Alas, we have transgressed.

32“But perhaps our Lord

will replace this garden

with something better, for

we turn to Him, in hope.”

33Such is the punishment

in this life. But in the hereafter

it will be greater still—

if only they knew.

SECTION 2

34Those mindful of God

shall have gardens of bliss

with their Lord.

35Would We treat alike

those who submit [to God’s will]

and those who sin?

36What is wrong with you?

On what grounds do you judge?

37Or, do you have a Book

from which you learn

38that you can have there

whatever you choose?

39Or do you have a covenant

with Us, enduring until the day

of resurrection, that you will have

what you deem [to be yours]?

40Ask them, which of them

will guarantee this?

41Or do they have some divine partners?

Then let them bring forward these partners,

if they are speaking the truth.

42On the day of apocalypse,

they shall be called

to bow down—but will be unable.

43Their eyes downcast,

shame will fall over them—

they were called to bow down

when they were sound [in body].

44So, Prophet, leave to Me

those who deny this message:

We shall lead them on, step by step,

in ways they can’t imagine.

45I will grant them some respite—

My intent is resolute.

46Or, is it that you ask of them

some payment, that would

burden them with debt?

47Or is the unseen within their grasp,

so they can transcribe it?

48Await patiently, then,

your Lord’s judgment, and

don’t be like Jonah in the whale°

who called out in distress—

49had his Lord’s grace

not reached him, he would have been

cast on the naked shore, disgraced.

50But his Lord chose him,

and made him one of the righteous.

51When the unbelievers hear

this message, they would almost

strike you down° with their glances,

and they say, “He is possessed.”

52But this is nothing less

than a reminder for all the worlds.

SURA 69

Reality (Al-Haqqa)

A Meccan sura, in 52 verses, this references several previous peoples who disbelieved and were destroyed (vv. 1–12). The sura describes the joy of judgment day for believers (vv. 13–24), with the opposite fate for sinners (vv. 25–37), culminating in a paean to the Quran (vv. 38–52), announced as “certain truth” (v. 51).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1The reality [of resurrection].

2What is the reality of resurrection?

3What would make you grasp

the reality of resurrection?

4The people of Thamud and ʿAd

denied the thundering calamity.°

5So the Thamud were destroyed

by an overwhelming blast,

6and the ʿAd were destroyed

by a screaming, violent wind.

7He made it rage against them

for seven nights and eight days

together—so you see its people

fallen down dead, like trunks

of hollow palm trees.

8Do you see any trace of them now?

9Pharaoh and those before him,

and the overturned cities

all committed grave sins,

10and disobeyed each

messenger of their Lord,

so He seized them

with a deathly grasp.

11When the water flooded,

We carried you in the floating ark,

12to make it a reminder for you—

so listening ears might take heed.

13Then, when a single blast

blares from the trumpet,

14and the earth and mountains

are raised and crushed

with a single stroke—

15on that day the event will come,

16and the sky will be torn asunder,

for it will be frail that day.

17and on its verges, the angels

will stand, and eight of them,

that day, shall bear above them

the throne of your Lord.

18On that day, you shall be

exposed, and no secret of yours

shall stay concealed.

19Then those given their record

in their right hand will each say,

“Here, read my record;

20“I was certain that I would

come to my reckoning.”

21And he will be

in a pleasing life,

22in a high garden,

23with its clusters of fruits

hanging near.

24“Eat and drink to your content—

for the deeds you accrued

in days gone by.”

25And those given their record

in their left hand will each say,

“I wish I were not given my record,

26“and that I did not know

what my reckoning was.

27“I wish that death had made

an end of me!

28“My wealth is of no use to me.

29“My power has gone from me.”

30[A voice will say,] “Seize him

and shackle him,

31“then burn him

in the blazing fire,

32“and bind him in a chain

of seventy cubits—

33“he would not believe

in God, the Supreme,

34“and never urged the feeding

of the poor,

35“so he has no friend here today,

36“nor any food except the pus

37“that only sinners eat.”

SECTION 2

38Yes—I swear by what you see

39and what you do not see,

40that this is the word

of a noble messenger;

41it is not the word of a poet—

how little you believe!

42Nor the word of a soothsayer—

how little you pay heed!

43This is a message revealed

from the Lord of the worlds,

44if the messenger had contrived

any statements in Our Name,

45We would seize him

by his right hand,

46and cut off his heart’s aorta—

47nor could any of you

prevent him from this.

48But this is a message for those

who are mindful of God,

49and We know that some

among you deny it—

50it is a cause of dismay

to those who disbelieve,

51but it is the certain truth,

52so glorify the Name of your Lord,

the Supreme.

SURA 70

The Paths of Ascent (Al-Maʿarij)

A Meccan sura, with some later interpolations, its 44 verses include an opening query about paths of ascent (v. 3) with a command for patience (vv. 5–7), followed by a recapitulation of judgment day (vv. 8–35). It extols those on the right (vv. 22–35), but closes with a warning to those on the left (vv. 36–44).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1Someone inquired about

the punishment to come—

2it will fall upon the disbelievers—

none can avert it—

3from God, Who controls

the paths of ascent.

4The angels and the spirit

ascend to Him on a day whose span

is fifty thousand years.°

5So practice patience—

beautiful patience.

6They see the day

as far away,

7while We see it

as near—

8a day when the sky will be

like molten brass,

9and the mountains

like carded wool,

10no friend will ask

after any friend,

11even though they are placed

within sight of each other.

The sinner would ransom himself

from the torment of that day

by offering his children,

12his spouse and his brother,

13his near kin who sheltered him,

14and everyone on the earth—

if this could save him.

15No—it will be

a flame of hell

16that strips his scalp,

17calling to all those

who turned their backs

and turned away,

18amassing wealth, only

to hoard it.

19Humans are created anxious,

20fretful when misfortune

touches them,

21and miserly when good fortune

reaches them—

22except those who pray,

23who remain constant

in their prayers,

24and those whose wealth

bears an acknowledged share

25for the beggar

and the deprived,

26those who accept the truth

of the day of reckoning,

27and are fearful

of their Lord’s punishment

28—from which none

can feel secure—

29and those who preserve

their chastity,°

30except with their wives

or their slaves—for which

they incur no blame

31—but those who venture

beyond this are transgressors—

32while those who fulfill

their trusts and covenants,

33those who are upright

in their testimonies,

34and those who preserve

the practice of their prayers

35shall all be

in gardens, honored.

SECTION 2

36What is it with the disbelievers—

who rush toward you, Prophet,

37from the right, from the left,

in crowds?

38Does every one of them

long to enter the garden of bliss?

39No—they know

from what We created them!

40No—I swear by the Lord

of every sunrise and sunset°

that We have the Power

41to replace them with others,

who are better—and

nothing can thwart Us.°

42So leave them to gossip

and frolic, until they encounter

their day—as promised°—

43a day when they will rush out

from their graves, as if racing

toward a goal,

44eyes downcast, and covered

in disgrace—this is the day

they were promised.

SURA 71

Noah (Nuh)

Likely a Meccan sura, this recalls and lauds the encounter of God with Noah, ending with a plea from Noah that crowns its 28 verses: “My Lord, forgive me, my parents, those who enter my house as believers and all believing men and women” (v. 28).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1We sent Noah to his people:

“Warn your people before

painful punishment falls on them.”

2He said, “My people,

I give you clear warning

3“that you should worship God,

be mindful of Him, and obey me.

4“He will forgive you your sins

and grant you respite for

an appointed term.

When that term from God expires,

it cannot be prolonged—

if only you knew.”

5He said, “My Lord, I have called

to my people night and day,

6“but my call merely makes them

fly further away,

7“And every time I call them

—so that you might forgive them—

they block their ears with their fingers

and hide their heads in their robes,

obstinate, inflated with pride.

8“So I called to them openly,

9“declaiming to them in public

and addressing them in private,

10“urging them,

‘Seek forgiveness from your Lord,

for He is Ever Forgiving.

11“ ‘He will send you

abundant rain from the sky,

12“ ‘bestow wealth and children

upon you, and grant you

gardens and rivers.

13“ ‘What is wrong with you—

Why don’t you look toward

the majesty of God?

14“ ‘Who created you in stages?

15“ ‘Do you not see how

God created the seven heavens,

one above the other?

16“ ‘And made the moon

a light within them,

and the sun a lamp?

17“ ‘And made you grow, surging

out of the earth?°

18“ ‘And will return you into it

and bring you out again, anew?

19“ ‘God made the earth

an expanse for you,

20“ ‘That you might wander

along its wide paths.’ ”

SECTION 2

21Noah said, “My Lord,

they have disobeyed me

and they follow those

whose wealth and children

merely increase their loss.

22“And they have devised

a great plot,

23“saying, ‘Don’t abandon

your gods—Wadd, Suwaʿ,

Yaghuth, Yaʿuq, and Nasr.’°

24“They have misled many—

let the wrongdoers

sink only deeper into error.”°

25On account of their sins

they were drowned, and made

to enter the fire. They found

none to help them besides God.

26And Noah said, “My Lord,

don’t leave a single one

of the disbelievers on earth!

27“For if you leave them,

They’ll mislead your servants,

and they’ll breed nothing

but wicked disbelievers.

28“My Lord, forgive me,

my parents, those who enter

my house as believers,

and all believing men and women—

but let the wrongdoers

sink only deeper into ruin.”

SURA 72

The Jinn (Al-Jinn)

Middle or late Meccan, this sura of 28 verses is unusual in that it addresses the jinn as curious listeners, then converted believers. Its style is also unusual, with the first fifteen verses directed to the Prophet, and then the remainder (vv. 16–28) a string of dicta he addresses to the jinn.

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1Say, Prophet, “It has been

revealed to me that a group of jinn°

listened to [to a recitation] and said,

‘We’ve heard a wondrous Quran,

2“ ‘that guides to the right path,

so we believe in it, and shall never

associate any other with our Lord;

3“ ‘and that He—exalted be

the Majesty of our Lord—

has neither spouse nor son.

4“ ‘but that some foolish one

among us would say

outrageous things about God,

5“ ‘and that we had thought

no human or jinn

would ever lie about God.

6“ ‘and that some humans

sought shelter with the jinn,

merely increasing their

misguidance,

7“ ‘and that they thought,

as you did, that God would

never raise anyone back to life.

8“ ‘and that we tried to reach heaven,

but we found it full of stern guards

and flaming stars.

9“ ‘and that we would sit there

at various stations, trying to hear.

But any who tries to listen now

will find a flaming star

waiting for him.°

10“ ‘And that we don’t know whether

evil is meant for those on earth

or whether their Lord means

them to be rightly guided.

11“ ‘And that some among us

do good deeds while others do not—

we follow divergent paths.

12“ ‘And that we recognized

we could not escape God on earth

nor escape Him by flight.

13“ ‘And that when we heard

the message of guidance,

we believed it. And that whoever

believes in their Lord shall fear

neither loss nor injustice.

14“ ‘And that among us are some

who submit their will to God

while others are unjust.

Those who submit have

sought the right path.

15“ ‘But those who are unjust

shall be fuel for hellfire.’ ”

16Had they stayed steadfast

on the right path, We would have

given them abundant rain,

17a test for them. As for those who

turn away from their Lord’s message—

He will give them severe torment.°

18Know that the places of worship

are for God alone, so do not call

on any but the One God.

19Yet when God’s servant°

stood to pray, they almost

crowded in upon him.

SECTION 2

20Say, “I call only upon my Lord,

and I associate none with Him.”

21Say, “It is not in my power

either to harm you

or to make you upright.”

22Say, “None can protect me

from God, nor can I find

any refuge except in Him.

23“I only convey what is from God

and His messages. Those who

disobey God and His messenger

shall face the fire of hell,

to dwell there forever.

24“When they see for themselves

what was promised them,

they will know whose helpers

are weaker and who are fewer.”

25Say, “I do not know whether

what you are promised is near

or whether my Lord has fixed

a distant term for it.

26“He alone is Knower

of the unseen, and He reveals

to none what lies in the unseen,

27“except a messenger He chooses,

placing a guard

before him and behind him°—

28“so he might know that

each messenger has conveyed

the messages of his Lord.

He Encompasses everything

about them,

and He reckons all things.”

SURA 73

The One Enwrapped (Al-Muzzammil)

One of the earliest Meccan revelations, its last verse (v. 20) is clearly Medinan, expanding the conditions but also exemptions for Quran recitation. Initially addressed to the Prophet alone (vv. 1–8), these exemptions are extended to all believers, including those “fighting in God’s cause” (v. 20), a reference to jihad that took place only after the hijra (622 CE).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1You, who lie enwrapped

in your mantle—

2stand in prayer°

for the night,

all but a small part—

3half of it, or a little less,

4or more, reciting the Quran

in clear, rhythmic measure.

5Soon We shall send down

to you a Word

of momentous weight.°

6Rising in the night is austerer,

[achieves deeper self-harmony,]

more suited to

reciting of the Word.

7During the day you are

occupied at length,

8but remember the Name

of your Lord, and devote

yourself wholly to Him—

9Lord of the East and the West;°

there is no god but He,

so take Him as your Guardian.

10Bear patiently what they say,

and depart from them, graciously,

11and leave to Me

those who disbelieve,

the ones who live in ease—

and endure them for a while.

12We have shackles for them

and a blazing fire,

13as well as food that chokes,

and a painful torment

14on a day when the earth

and the mountains shake,

and the mountains crumble to

heaps of sand.

15People, We have sent

a messenger, as a witness to you,

as We sent a messenger to Pharaoh.

16But Pharaoh disobeyed

the messenger, so We brought

ruinous torment upon him.

17If you disbelieve, then,

how can you be mindful

of a day that will turn

the hair of children gray,

18when the sky is torn asunder,

and the promise of God fulfilled?

19This is a reminder—

so, let those who desire it

take a path to their Lord.

SECTION 2

20Your Lord knows that you

stand in prayer almost two-thirds

of the night, and sometimes a half

or a third of it, along with a group

of those with you. God determines

night and day in due measure.

He knows that you cannot

keep count, so He turns to you,

relenting. Recite, then, as much

of the Quran as you can with ease.

He knows that some of you are ill,

or traveling the earth seeking

the bounty of God, or fighting

in God’s cause.° So read as much as

you can with ease, be steadfast

in prayer, and give what is due

in charity—lend to God a beautiful

loan.° For whatever good you accrue

in your deeds, you shall find it

there with God—better, and greater,

in reward. And seek God’s forgiveness,

for He is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

SURA 74

The One Enfolded (Al-Muddaththir)

The opening verse from this very early Meccan sura of 56 verses refers to the Prophet as wearing a dithar or mantle. It enjoins him to patience (v. 7) but also excoriates one who opposes him (vv. 11–31), detailing the punishment of hellfire with reference to its nineteen custodians (v. 30). The remainder of the sura expands the warning to humankind, with a decisive reminder that God alone is “the Source of Mindfulness, the Source of Forgiveness” (v. 56).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1You who are enfolded

in your mantle,°

2arise and warn!

3And magnify your Lord,

4keeping your garments

pure,

5shunning uncleanliness.

6Do not give

in order to seek gain,

7but be patient in the cause

of your Lord.

8When the trumpet is sounded,

9that day will be a harsh day

10with no ease

for those who disbelieve.

11Leave me to deal with

the person I created,° alone,

12to whom I granted

extensive wealth,

13and children by his side,

14he for whom I laid out

a path of ease,

15still, he wishes that I give more!

16No—for he has stubbornly

defied Our signs.

17Soon I will place him

in steep hardship,

18for he pondered

and plotted—

19may he perish

for the way he plotted,

20yes, may he perish

for how he plotted.

21First, he looked,

22then he frowned and scowled,

23then turned away

in his pride,

24saying, “This [Quran]

is but old-style sorcery,

25“it is nothing but

the speech of a mortal.”

26Soon I shall burn him

in the fire of hell.

27And what would make you grasp

what the fire of hell is?

28It spares none,

and it leaves none,

29scorching the flesh of humans.

30Nineteen guardians stand over it.°

31And We have placed none

but angels as guardians of the fire;

We have fixed their number

only as a trial for disbelievers,

so that those given the Book

will be certain, and that believers

might be stronger in faith.

Neither those given the Book

nor the believers will harbor doubt,

but those whose hearts are diseased

and the disbelievers will say,

“What does God mean by this parable?”

In this way, God lets stray whom

He will, and guides whom He will—

and none knows your Lord’s forces

but He; and this is nothing less

than a message for all humankind.

SECTION 2

32No—by the moon,

33and by the night

as it recedes,

34by the dawn

as it rises into light,

35This is one of the greatest signs,

36a warning to humankind,

37to any among you who

advances or retreats,

38Every soul will be bound

by its deeds,

39except for those on the right,

40who will be in gardens—

asking one another

41concerning the sinners,

42“What led you into

the fire of hell?”

43They will answer, “We were

not among those who prayed,

44“nor did we feed the poor,

45“rather, we indulged

with others in idle talk,

46“and denied the day

of reckoning,

47“until there came upon us

the certainty [of death].”°

48Then no intercession

by any intercessors

shall help them.

49What is wrong with them—

what makes them turn away

from the message?

50As if they were

frightened wild asses

51in flight from a lion?

52Yes, each one of them

wants to be furnished with

scrolls, unfurled.°

53No—they have no fear

of the hereafter.

54Yes—this is a reminder—

55Let those who will

keep it in mind.

56Yet none will keep it

in mind, except as God wills—

He is the Source of Mindfulness,

the Source of Forgiveness.°

SURA 75

Resurrection (Al-Qiyama)

A series of short passages, this early Meccan sura of 40 verses deals with familiar themes of resurrection (vv. 1–15) and judgment (vv. 20–30). It also contains instruction on Quran recitation (vv. 16–19) and the rebuke of a denier (vv. 31–35), with reminders for all humankind (vv. 36–40).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1Indeed, I swear by the day

of resurrection,

2and indeed I swear by the

self-reproaching soul—

3do humans think We won’t

reunite their bones?

4In fact, We’re able to remold

their very fingertips.

5Yet humans want to deny

what lies before them,

6asking, “When is the day

of resurrection?”

7When their sight is dazzled,

8and the moon eclipsed,

9and the sun and moon

are joined together—

10that day, people will say,

“Where is any escape?”

11But no—there will be no refuge.

12That day, the only repose

will be with your Lord.

13That day humans will be told

what they did and did not do.°

14Yes, humans will

witness against themselves,

15though they offer

their excuses.

16Prophet, do not scramble

your tongue, hurrying

[to recite the Quran];

17it is We who will ensure its

collection and recitation.

18When We recite it,° follow

the recital precisely;

19then it is for Us

to make it clear.°

20Yet you still love the now,

all of you,

21and neglect the hereafter.

22Some faces, that day,

will be gleaming,

23as they look toward their Lord,

24and other faces, that day,

will be filled with gloom,

25imagining the calamity

about to crush them.

26When the soul rises up

to the throat

[on its way out of the body],

27and it is asked,

“Who can convey him?”°

28and when he grasps that

this is the parting

[of soul from body]

29his legs locked together—

30on that day, he will be driven

toward your Lord.

SECTION 2

31He neither believed

the truth nor prayed.

32Rather, he denied the truth

and turned away,

33going back to his people,

swaggering,

34Closer and closer

to you is woe,

35closer still and closer.°

36Do humans think

they will be left unquestioned?

37Were they not at first

a drop of ejected sperm

38that became a clot?

God created and shaped it,

39making from it two sexes,

male and female.

40Is He, then, not Able

to bring the dead back to life?

SURA 76

Humankind (Al-Insan)

A middle Meccan sura of 31 verses, this extols creation and reprimands the disbeliever (vv. 1–5) before detailing how the righteous will be rewarded (vv. 5–22). It closes with a firm reminder of the Prophet “to wait patiently for your Lord’s judgment” (v. 24) and to trust the will of God, Who is “All Knowing, All Wise” (v. 30).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1Was there not a time when

when humankind was nothing

to speak of?

2We created humankind

from a drop of mingled sperm,

to try them. We gave them

hearing and sight.

3We have shown them the way—

whether they are grateful or not.

4For the disbelievers

We have prepared chains,

shackles, and a blazing fire.

5The righteous shall drink

from a cup tinged with camphor,

6a fountain where God’s

servants drink, flowing

freely at their will.

7They fulfill their vows, and fear

a day whose misery shall be

spread far and wide;

8and, despite their love of it,

they donate [their] food

to the poor, the orphan,

and the prisoner of war,

9saying, “We feed you,

seeking only the Face of God;

we desire from you

neither reward nor thanks.

10“We only fear, from our Lord,

a day of wrath and distress.”

11But God will save them

from the misery of that day,

and will cast over them

radiance and joy.

12He will reward them

for their patience—with a garden

and robes of silk.

13Reclining there on couches,

they shall know neither burning sun

nor biting cold.

14The shades of the gardens

shall spread over them, its fruits

lowered before them.

15And there shall be passed

among them vessels of silver

and goblets of crystal—

16crystal clear, silver,

in what measure they will—

17they will be given drink

from a cup flavored with ginger

18from a fountain there

called Salsabil.°

19And there shall pass among them,

immortal youths to serve—

to see them, you would think

they were pearls, scattered.

20And when you look,

you will see there only bliss

and a glorious kingdom.

21They shall be robed

in garments of green silk

and rich brocade, adorned

with bracelets of silver;

and their Lord will give them

a pure drink,

22[saying,] “This is your reward,

your endeavor is commended.”

SECTION 2

23It is We Who have revealed

to you the Quran in stages.°

24So, wait patiently

for your Lord’s judgment;

take no heed of the sinners

and disbelievers among them.

25And remember the Name

of your Lord, morning and evening;

26bow down to Him

in the night, glorifying Him

during the long hours of night.

27These people love

the life here, leaving aside

all thought of a coming day

that shall weigh heavily.

28It is We Who created them

and strengthened their forms;

but whenever We will,

We can replace them.

29This is but a reminder—

let those who will, take a path

toward their Lord.

30Yet you do not will

except as God wills—for God

is All Knowing, All Wise.

31He will admit into His mercy

whom He will; but for wrongdoers

He has prepared a painful torment.

SURA 77

Those Sent Out (Al-Mursalat)

An early Meccan sura, its 50 verses set forth the signs and certainty of the day of decision (v. 13), before elaborating on the calamities that will befall schemers, deniers, and liars on that day (vv. 14–50).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1By the [winds] sent out,

one after another,

2which storm violently,

3scattering widely,

4and those who distinguish

by a criterion,°

5bringing down a reminder

6forestalling all excuse or

issuing warning—

7what you are promised

shall come to pass.

8When the stars are

extinguished,

9when the sky is

torn asunder,

10when the mountains are

blown away in dust,

11when the messengers are

gathered at a chosen time—

12for which day

are these events held back?

13For the day of decision.

14And what would make you grasp

what the day of decision is?

15Woe, that day, to those

who deny the truth.

16Did We not destroy

earlier peoples?

17And shall We not make

later peoples follow them?

18This is how We deal

with sinners.

19Woe, that day, to those

who deny the truth.

20Did We not create you

from a lowly fluid

21which We lodged in a

secure home

22for a decreed time?

23It is We Who decree—and

how superlatively!

24Woe, that day, to those

who deny the truth.

25Did We not make

the earth a vessel

26for the living and the dead,

27and place there sturdy,

high mountains, and give you

sweet water to drink?

28Woe, that day, to those

who deny the truth.

29They will be told, “Go—

to what you always denied.

30“Go—to the shadow of smoke

rising in three pillars,°

31“that yields no shade,

and will be of no help

against the flame.

32“It throws out sparks

as large as castles,

33“as if they were

yellow camels.”

34Woe, that day, to those

who deny the truth.

35That will be a day

they are unable to speak,

36nor will they have leave

to make pleas.

37Woe, that day, to those

who deny the truth.

38That will be the day

of decision. We shall gather

you and those before you.

39So if you have a scheme,

scheme against Me [now]!

40Woe, that day, to those

who deny the truth.

SECTION 2

41The righteous shall be

among shades and springs,

42with whatever fruits they desire.

43“Eat and drink, to your content,

[a reward] for all your deeds.”

44In this way, We reward

those who do good deeds.

45Woe, that day, to those

who deny the truth.

46They will be told,

“Eat and enjoy for a while—

you who are sinners.”

47Woe, that day, to those

who deny the truth.

48And when they are told,

“Bow down,”

they do not bow.

49Woe, that day, to those

who deny the truth.

50In what message, ever,

will they believe after this?

SURA 78

The Announcement (Al-Nabaʾ)

Middle Meccan, this sura of 40 verses opens with a pronouncement of imminent judgment (vv. 1–5) before citing God’s might and majesty (vv. 6–16) and then concluding with a vivid scenario of the day of decision (vv. 17–40).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1About what

do they ask one another?

2About the momentous announcement

3over which they dispute.

4Indeed, they shall find out—

5yes, they shall soon find out.

6Did We not spread out

the earth like a couch?

7And anchor the mountains like posts?

8Did We not create you in pairs,

9and make your sleep for rest,

10the night a cover,

11the day for livelihood?

12Have We not built above you

seven secure heavens,

13placing there a flaming lamp?

14And do We not send down

water from the rainclouds,

pouring profusely,

15to bring forth grain and greenery,

16and gardens with luscious growth?

17The day of decision

has an appointed time—

18a day when the trumpet shall be sounded

and you will come forward in crowds;

19the sky will be opened like doors,°

20and the mountains moved,

vanishing into a mirage.°

21Hell, for sure, lies waiting—

22the final end for transgressors

23where they will stay for eons.

24They will taste nothing cool there,

nor any drink,

25just scalding water and purulence—

26a fitting recompense.

27For they never expected

any reckoning

28and utterly denied Our signs.

29We have recorded all things

in a Book.

30“So taste this—We will grant you

only more torment.”°

SECTION 2

31Those who were mindful of God

shall flourish

32in gardens with grapevines

33with companions, well suited,

34and a cup overflowing.

35There they shall hear

no idle talk nor falsehood—

36a reward from your Lord,

a fitting gift

37from the Lord of the heavens and the earth,

and all that lies between them—the All Merciful—

none shall have power to address Him—

38on the day that the Spirit°

and the angels stand in ranks,

none shall speak but those

permitted by the All Merciful—

and they will say only what is right.

39That will be the day of truth—

so let those who wish, take a path

back to their Lord.

40We have warned you

of impending torment, on a day

when every person will see

[the deeds] his hands have wrought,

when the disbelievers cry, “Alas,

I wish I were nothing but dust!”°

SURA 79

Those Who Force Out (Al-Naziʿat)

This early, possibly middle Meccan sura, 46 verses long, begins with a series of invocations, likely angels commanding souls, on the day of resurrection (vv. 1–14). It then shifts to the story of Moses (vv. 15–26) before an appeal to nature as God’s masterpiece (vv. 27–33) and ending with a reminder of the imminent hour (vv. 34–46).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1By the angels who force out

[the souls of the wicked];

2by those who ease out

[the souls of the blessèd];

3by those who glide, swimming,

4and those who strive, racing

5to arrange the world’s affairs

[as commanded]—

6the day when all shall shake

in violent convulsion

[with the first trumpet sound],

7and more convulsion

[with the second sound]—°

8Hearts shall quake that day,

9their eyes downcast, [in dread].

10Now they say, “Shall we

really be brought back

to our former state

11“when we are rotting bones?”

12They say, “This would be

a ruinous return.”

13There will be but a single

deafening blast

14and they shall rise, on a wide expanse.

15Has the story of Moses

reached you,

16when his Lord called to him

in the sacred valley of Tuwa?°

17“Go to Pharaoh,

for he has transgressed,

18“and ask, ‘Are you willing

to purge yourself

19“ ‘and have me guide you

to your Lord,

whom you might then fear?’ ”

20Then Moses showed him

a most stupendous sign°

21but Pharaoh denied it

and disobeyed;

22then he turned his back,

striving [against God].

23He gathered his people,

declaring to them,

24“I am your Lord,

the Most High.”

25So God punished him

as an example, in this life

and the next.°

26In this is a lesson

for those who fear God.

SECTION 2

27Are you harder to create

than the sky that God made?

28He raised its canopy

and proportioned it,

29immersing its night in darkness

and revealing its morning light.

30And after this,

he spread out the earth,

31bringing out its water

and its pasture;

32—anchoring the mountains—

33to provide for you

and for your herds.

34When the great calamity strikes

35on the day that humankind

recalls all that it strove for,

36and the fire of hell appears

for all to see.

37Then, those who transgressed,

38and preferred the life

of this world,

39shall have the fire of hell

as their home.

40But those who feared [the day]

when they would stand before their Lord,

and restrained the desires of self,

41shall have the garden

as their home.

42They ask you about the hour—

“When will it come?”

43But how would you speak of this?

44Its time is known only

to your Lord.

45You merely warn those

who fear it.

46The day they see it,

it will seem as though

they had stayed [on earth]

for but an evening

or a morning.

SURA 80

He Frowned (ʿAbasa)

An early Meccan sura of 42 verses, this offers a divine rebuke to Muhammad for ignoring a blind man (vv. 1–10). It then proceeds to extol scripture as “honored scrolls” (v. 13b) and to chastise humankind as ungrateful (vv. 17–23), even for the food they consume (vv. 24–31), before evoking a scene of the last day (vv. 33–42).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

1[The Prophet] frowned,

and turned away°

2because the blind man

came to him.

3Prophet, how would you know—

perhaps he might purge himself of sin,

4or heed the teaching°

that might profit him?

5Yet some uncaring person°

6claims your attention

7—though you are not to blame

if he fails to purge himself of sin—

8while the one who came to you

[eagerly] in haste,

9and in awe,

10you dismiss.°

11Why, no! This is a reminder

12for any who would heed it,

13[inscribed] in honored scrolls,

14exalted, and kept pure,

15borne by the hands of scribes

16who are noble and righteous.

17Woe to humankind—

how ungrateful they are!

18From what did He create them?

19He created them from

a sperm drop

and proportioned them,

20then made their path easy.

21Then He caused them to die,

brought them into their grave;

22then, when He wishes,

He will raise them up again.

23Yet they have not fulfilled

what God commanded them.

24Let humankind consider

the food they consume:

25We pour down water

plentifully,

26then We cleave the ground,

27bringing out of it grain,

28vines and vegetation,

29olives and date palms,

30with lush gardens,

31fruits and pasture,

32to provide for you

and your livestock.

33But when the deafening blast comes,

34that day, a man will flee

from his own brother,

35from his mother and father,

36his spouse and his children.

37Each of them, that day,

will be immersed

in their own concerns—

38a day on which some faces

shall beam,

39laughing, rejoicing,

40while other faces that day

shall be covered with dust,

41shrouded in darkness—

42these will be the disbelievers,

the iniquitous.

SURA 81

The Folding Up (Al-Takwir)

A Meccan sura, its 29 verses open with a vivid scene of the last day (vv. 1–14) conveyed to underpin Muhammad’s authority against his critics (vv. 15–29), vouchsafed by the will of God, Lord of the universe (v. 29).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

SECTION 1

1When the sun is folded up,

2when the stars fall down, scattered,

3when the mountains

move, [vanishing,]°

4when camels, pregnant to term

are left untended,

5when the wild beasts

are herded together,

6when the oceans boil over,

7when souls are paired;°

8when the infant girl,

buried alive, is asked

9for what crime she was killed,

10when the scrolls of deeds

are opened wide,

11when the sky is

torn away,

12when the fire of hell

is set ablaze,

13and when the garden

is brought near—

14then each soul shall know

what it has wrought.

15So, I swear by

the receding [stars]

16that sail and disappear

17and by the night

as it fades away,

18and by the dawn

as it breathes,

19this is the word

of a noble messenger, °

20imbued with strength,

honored by the Lord of the throne,

21obeyed and deemed

worthy of trust.

22Your companion

is not possessed,

23for he saw the Archangel

on the clear horizon,°

24and he does not withhold

what he knows of the unseen.

25Nor is this the word

of some accursed demon.

26So, where are you all heading?

27This is nothing less

than a message

for the whole universe,°

28for those among you who wish

to follow a straight path,

29But you shall not will

except as God wills—

Lord of the universe.

SURA 82

The Cleaving Asunder (Al-Infitar)

An early Meccan sura of 19 verses, this registers the day of reckoning as a celestial cataclysm (vv. 1–4). Its reckoning certain for each soul (vv. 5–16), it will be “the day when God’s command is absolute” (v. 19).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

1When the sky

is cleaved asunder,

2when the stars

are scattered,

3when the oceans burst

over their shores,

4when graves are turned

upside down—

5then each soul shall know

[the good deeds] it has accrued,

and those it has left undone.

6Humankind, what has misled you,

away from your Noble Lord,

7Who created you, shaped you,

and proportioned you,

8molding you into

whatever form He wished?

9Yet still you deny

the reckoning.

10But watching over you

are angels,

11noble recorders,

12who know all that you do.

13Those who were righteous

shall be in bliss,

14while the wicked

shall be in hellfire,

15where they will burn

on the day of reckoning,

16nor will they be

removed from it.

17What would make you grasp

what the day of reckoning is?

18Yes, what could make you grasp

what the day of reckoning is?

19The day when no soul

can help another soul at all,

the day when God’s command

is absolute.

SURA 83

Those Who Defraud (Al-Mutaffifin)

It’s uncertain whether this is an early or late Meccan sura. It begins by denouncing those who cheat others (vv. 1–17), reminding them of how they will be evaluated “on a momentous day” (v. 5). The second segment of its 36 verses lauds the pious (vv. 18–28) before declaring that they, not the disbelievers, will have the last laugh (vv. 29–36).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

1Woe to those who defraud,

2who, when receiving from people,

exact full measure,

3but when giving or weighing

for them, fall short in measure.

4Do they not reckon

that they will be resurrected

5on a momentous day,

6a day when humankind shall stand

before the Lord of the universe?

7Indeed, the record of the wicked

is housed in Sijjin.°

8And what would make you grasp

what Sijjin is?

9—a record, inscribed.

10Woe on that day to those

who deny—

11those who deny

the day of reckoning.

12And none will deny it

but sinful transgressors.

13When Our signs are recited

to them, they exclaim,

“Tales of the ancients!”

14Their hearts are covered with rust

by all that they have done.

15On that day, they shall be

veiled from their Lord,

16then they shall burn

in the fire of hell.

17They will be told,

“This is what you denied.”

18Indeed, the record of the righteous

shall be housed in Illiyyun.°

19And what would make you grasp

what Illiyyun is?

20—a record, inscribed,

21to be witnessed by those

close to God.

22The righteous shall

be in bliss,

23on couches, observing all—

24you will know in their faces

the radiance of bliss.

25They shall be served

with pure wine, sealed,

26with the seal of musk.

Let all who strive, strive for this.

27It will be mixed

with the water of Tasnim,°

28a spring, from which those drink

who are close to God.

29Those given to sin would laugh

at those who believed,

30winking at one another

whenever they passed by them;

31and would return jesting

to their own people;

32and whenever they saw believers,

they would say,

“These are the ones who are astray.”

33But they were not sent

as custodians

over the believers

34And on this day, the believers

will laugh at the disbelievers

35on couches, observing all,

36[they will say to one another,]

“Are not the disbelievers

requited for what they did?”

SURA 84

The Splitting Asunder (Al-Inshiqaq)

An early Meccan sura of 25 verses, it opens with sky splitting asunder on the day when humans meet their Lord (vv. 1–15). There follows another invocation of the twilight, night and moon (vv. 16–18) before disbelievers face a painful punishment (vv. 19–24) while believers are rewarded (v. 25).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

1When the sky is split

asunder,

2hearing its Lord,

as it must;

3when the earth

is spread out,

4casting out its contents,

empty,

5hearing its Lord,

as it must;

6you humans—laboring toward

your Lord—will meet Him.

7Then those given their record°

in their right hand

8will have an easy reckoning

9and will turn to their people

rejoicing.

10But those given their record

behind their backs

11will cry for their end

12and burn in blazing fire.

13They went among their people

rejoicing.

14They thought they would

never return [to Us].

15But no—their Lord was always

watching them.

16I swear by the gleaming twilight,

17by the night and what it enfolds,

18by the moon in its fullness—

19you will journey

from stage to stage.

20So why will they not believe?

21And when the Quran

is read to them,

why do they not bow down?

22But no . . . the disbelievers deny it.

23But God knows best

what they keep within themselves.

24So announce to them

a painful torment,

25except for those who believe

and do good deeds—theirs shall be

a reward without end.

SURA 85

The Constellations (Al-Buruj)

Early Meccan, this sura consists of 22 verses that begin with the constellations as witness (vv. 1–3). It evokes the story of a pit made in pre-Islamic times for the murder of Christians. The account of Pharaoh and Thamud (vv. 17–18) is a reminder that God encompasses disbelievers from all sides (vv. 19–20), and that He is custodian of “a glorious Quran, inscribed on a preserved tablet” (vv. 21–22).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

1By the heaven, that holds

the constellations;

2by the promised day;

3by the Witness

and what is witnessed—

4may they perish who made the pit°

5with fire full of fuel

6while they sat around it,

7bearing witness to all they did

against the believers—

8whom they begrudged

only because they believed in God,

the Almighty, the Praiseworthy,

9to Whom belongs dominion

of the heavens and the earth;

God is Witness to all things.

10Those who persecute

the believing men and women

and do not then repent—

theirs shall be the torment of hell;

theirs the torment of blazing fire.

11As for those who believe

and do good deeds—

theirs shall be the gardens

with rivers flowing beneath—

that is the great triumph.

12Your Lord’s onslaught

is severe.

13It is He Who brings life

and restores life;

14for He is Forgiving, Loving,

15Lord of the glorious throne,

16Who does all that He intends.

17Have you heard the story

of the forces

18of Pharaoh and Thamud?°

19Yet the disbelievers

persist in denying.

20But God Encompasses them

from all sides.°

21For this is a glorious Quran,

22inscribed on a preserved tablet.°

SURA 86

The Night Traveler (Al-Tariq)

A Meccan sura of 17 verses, this opens with a celestial oath (vv. 1–4) before graphically depicting human creation (vv. 5–7) as a reminder that return to God is as inevitable as “the sky and its cycle of rain” (v. 11). Just as the Quran is “a decisive Word, not to be taken lightly” (vv. 13–14), so God is the ultimate schemer whom disbelievers cannot escape (vv. 15–17).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

1By the sky and the traveler

by night—

2what would make you grasp

what the night traveler is?

3It is the star of piercing light.

4Every soul has its guardian.

5Let humans consider

from what they were created—

6from a drop of fluid, ejected,

7arising between

the backbone and the ribs.

8God indeed has the Power

to bring it back to life.

9On the day when the secrets

of humankind are exposed,

10they shall have no power,

and no helper.

11By the sky

and its cycle of rain,°

12and by the earth

bursting with greenery,

13this is a decisive Word,

14not to be taken lightly.

15The disbelievers are scheming,

16but I am outscheming [them].

17So give respite

to the disbelievers;

give them respite

for a short while.

SURA 87

The Most High (Al-Aʿla)

A paean to the Most High (one of God’s Beautiful Names), this Meccan sura of 19 verses recalls creation and destruction (vv. 1–5) before commanding recitation (vv. 6–9), mindful that some will heed and others will not (vv. 10–13). Not only the Quran but “the scriptures of Abraham and Moses” are commended (v. 19).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

1Glorify the name of your Lord,

the Most High,

2Who created and proportioned

[all things],

3Who determined [their destinies]

and guided them,

4Who brings forth pasture,

5then turns it to dark stubble.

6We shall teach you to recite

so you do not forget,

7except as God wills.

He knows what is open

and what is hidden.

8And We shall make

your path easy.

9So remind people,

if this should profit them.

10Those who fear God

will heed it.

11But the wretched will

avoid it—

12those who will burn

in the great fire,

13where they will

neither die nor live.

14But those who purify themselves

shall flourish,

15those who remember

the name of their Lord,

and pray.

16But no—you prefer the life

of this world,

17though the hereafter

is better and enduring.

18This is indeed

in previous scriptures,

19the scriptures of

Abraham and Moses.°

SURA 88

The Overshadowing Event (Al-Ghashiya)

This early Meccan sura of 26 verses is divided into two sections. The first (vv. 1–16) contrasts the fates of disbelievers and believers on “that day” (vv. 2, 8). The second part (vv. 17–26) invokes nature’s signs before underscoring Muhammad’s sole duty to remind disbelievers; it will be for God “to call them to account” (v. 26).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

1Have you heard about

the overshadowing event?

2Some faces, that day,

will be downcast,

3laboring, weary,

4they shall burn in a blazing fire,

5given drink from a boiling spring,

6with no food but bitter thorns

7which will neither nourish

nor quell hunger.

8Other faces, that day,

will be joyful,

9pleased with their striving,

10in a lofty garden,

11where they shall hear

no idle talk;

12where there shall be

a flowing spring,

13and raised couches,

14and goblets laid out,

15with cushions arrayed

in rows,

16and carpets spread out.

17Do they not look at camels,

and how they are created?

18And at the sky, and

how it is raised high?

19At the mountains, and

how firmly fixed they are?

20At the earth, and

how it is spread wide?

21So, remind people—

you are only one who reminds.

22You don’t control

their affairs.

23But those who turn away

and deny God—

24God will punish them

with great torment.

25To Us they will return,

26then it will be for Us

to call them to account.

SURA 89

The Breaking Dawn (Al-Fajr)

Early Meccan, this sura of 30 verses begins with a nocturnal oath (vv. 1–4) that segues into a recap of how two Arab tribes, ʿAd and Thamud, along with Pharaoh, meet with torment for their transgressions (vv. 5–14). Honor and humility are lauded (vv. 15–16), and these virtues entail respecting orphans and feeding the poor (vv. 17–18). Those who neglect such directives will be punished (vv. 19–26) while others, their soul content (v. 27), will be told: “enter among My servants, enter My garden” (vv. 29–30).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

1By the breaking dawn,

2by ten nights,°

3by the even and the odd,°

4and by the night

when it fades—

5is this oath not enough

for those who understand?

6Have you not considered

how your Lord dealt

with the people of ʿAd,

7of the city of Iram

with its towering columns,

8the likes of which

were not wrought in any city,

9and with the people of Thamud°

who hewed rocks within the valley,

10and with Pharaoh,

with his great forces?°

11All of these transgressed

in their lands

12where they spread great corruption.

13So your Lord poured upon them

a scourging torment,

14for your Lord is Ever Watchful.

15As for humankind—

whenever their Lord tries them,

honoring and favoring them,

they each say,

“My Lord honors me.”

16But when he tries them

by reducing their provisions,

they each say,

“My Lord humiliates me.”

17But no—you do not

respect orphans,

18nor do you urge one another

to feed the poor;

19rather, you greedily devour

entire inheritances,

20and you love wealth

with excessive love.

21No—when the earth

is pounded into powder,

22and your Lord comes

with His angels, row upon row,

23and hell, that day, is brought

before them—that day, humankind

will take heed, but of what use

will it be for them?

24They will each say, “If only

I had accrued good deeds

for the life to come.”°

25For on that day, He will punish

as no other could punish,

26and He will bind

as no other could bind.

27“You, serene of soul,

28“return to your Lord

well pleased, and pleasing Him,

29“enter among My servants,

30“enter My garden.”

SURA 90

The City (Al-Balad)

An Early Meccan sura, its 20 verses invoke the city to warn against the ease of abundant wealth (vv. 1–10) and to enjoin instead “the steep path’ ” (vv. 11–12), requiring right action as well as true belief, assisting others who are “on the right” (vv. 13–18), remembering that fire closes in those on the left (vv. 19–20).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

1I swear by this city,

2this city, in which you live freely,

3I swear by parent and child,

4We have created humankind

for toil and labor.

5Do they think that none

has power over them?

6They might each say,

“I have thrown away wealth

in abundance.”

7Do they think that none

sees them?

8Have We not made for them

a pair of eyes,

9a tongue, and a pair of lips,

10and shown them the two paths?

11But they have not ventured

on the steep path.

12And what would make you grasp

what the steep path is?

13It is freeing a slave,

14or giving food at a time

of severe hunger,

15to an orphan, near of kin,

16or to the poor,

mired in misery,

17and to be one of those

who believe, and urge one another

to patience and compassion.

18These shall be on the right,

19but those who deny Our signs

—they shall be on the left

20with fire closing in

around them.

SURA 91

The Sun (Al-Shams)

This brief early Meccan sura (15 verses) begins with an oath invoking celestial elements (vv. 1–7) to stress the vigilance required for purifying the soul (vv. 8–10). The example of those who fail to take heed are the people of Thamud, who hamstrung a she-camel, bringing divine retribution (vv. 11–15).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

1By the sun

and her splendor;

2by the moon

as it trails her;

3by the day as it

displays her;

4by the night as she

veils her;

5by the heaven and He

Who framed her;

6by the earth and He

Who extended her;

7by the soul and He

Who proportioned her;

8for He inspired her

to know the evil

and the piety within her;

9He surely succeeds

who purifies her,

10and he fails

who defiles her;

11the nation of Thamud

denied [their prophet Salih],°

for they were transgressors,

12when they deputed

their most wicked offender

[to denounce him].

13God’s messenger

advised them:

“This is a she-camel of God,

so let her drink.”

14But they denied him

and hamstrung her.

So for their sin, their Lord

destroyed [their nation],

and leveled it.

15Nor does He fear

what will become of it.

SURA 92

Night (Al-Layl)

An early Meccan sura, its invocation (vv. 1–4) precedes a listing of right and wrong behavior, with good and bad outcomes detailed in the remaining verses (vv. 5–21).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

1By the night when it cloaks

the light,

2by the day when it breaks

into splendor,

3by Him Who created

male and female—

4you strive for widely

diverging ends:

5those who give in charity

and are mindful of God,

6and affirm what is best—

7We will make smooth for them

the path to ease.°

8But those who are miserly,

self-satisfied,

9and reject what is best—

10We will make smooth for them

the path to hardship;

11nor will their wealth help them

when they fall [into the fire].

12It is for Us to guide,

13and to Us belong both

end and beginning.

14So I warn you

of a blazing fire,

15in which none shall burn

but the most wretched,

16those who deny the truth and

turn away.

17But the most righteous shall be

turned aside from it—

18those who give away their wealth

to purify themselves,°

19not as recompense for favors

received from someone,

20but only to seek

the Face of their Lord,

the Most High;

21And they shall be

well pleased.

SURA 93

Morning Light (Al-Duha)

One of the earliest Meccan suras, its 11 verses crystallize the patient persistence required of the Prophet. Morning and night are invoked (vv. 1–2) to ensure God’s providence (vv. 4–5) before the specific promises of shelter, guidance, and sufficiency (vv. 6–8), echoing a command for all believers to care for the orphan, heed the beggar, and proclaim God’s grace (vv. 9–11).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

1By the morning light

in its brilliance;°

2by the darkening night

in its stillness;

3your Lord has not abandoned you,

nor is He abhorring [you].°

4What comes hereafter

will prove finer for you

than what came before;

5and your Lord will provide,

satisfying you.

6Did He not find you orphaned

and give shelter?

7find you seeking and give guidance?

8find you needing and suffice you?

9So, do not oppress the orphan,

10nor reproach the one who asks,

11but proclaim the grace

of your Lord.

SURA 94

The Broadening (Al-Sharh)

A very short Meccan sura, its 8 verses console the Prophet for the burden of his task (vv. 1–4) and promise a relief from hardship for all who seek God in earnest (vv. 5–8).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

1Have We not made your heart

broader than before,

2and taken from you

the burden° you bore,

3that weighed sore

upon your back,

4making your name soar

in esteem?°

5With every hardship comes ease—

6yes, with every hardship

comes ease.

7So, when you cease

your task, increase

your striving,

8and seek your Lord

eagerly.°

SURA 95

The Fig (Al-Tin)

This very early Meccan sura of 8 verses invokes Mount Sinai to underscore human potential and weakness (vv. 1–5), heralding the certainty of reckoning by “the Most Just of Judges” (vv. 6–8).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

1By the fig

and the olive,

2by Mount Sinai,

3and this secure city,°

4We created humankind

in the best of forms;

5then We reduced them to

the lowest of the low

6except those who believe

and do good deeds—

theirs shall be a ceaseless reward.

7What, after this, could make you

deny the reckoning?°

8Is not God the Most Just

of Judges?

SURA 96

Clot of Blood (Al-ʿAlaq)

The first five verses of this sura are heralded as the initial revelation to Muhammad in the cave of Hira, with the remaining fourteen verses (vv. 6–19) focused on the disbelief and opposition of one of Muhammad’s early enemies.

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

1Read—in the Name of your Lord

Who created—

2created humankind from a clot

of blood.

3Read—for your Lord

is Most Bountiful,

4Who taught by the pen—

5taught humankind

what it did not know.

6But humans transgress

all bounds,

7thinking themselves

self-sufficient—

8all shall return to your Lord.

9Do you observe the person

who prevents°

10Our servant from prayer?

11Do you see whether he is guided

12or enjoins mindfulness of God?

13Do you see whether

he denies the truth

and turns away?

14Does he not know

that God observes?

15Let him beware—

if he does not stop, We shall

drag him by the forelock—

16a lying, sinful forelock.

17Let him call his companions—

18We will call the angels of hell.

19No—do not heed him,

but bow down, and come

closer to God.

SURA 97

The Night of Decree (Al-Qadr)

Likely Meccan, this sura condenses into 5 verses the disclosure of the Quran as celestial decree, honored as a special night of vigil during Ramadan, when angels with the spirit descend and linger until dawn (vv. 4–5).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

1We revealed this Word°

on the night of decree.

2And what would make you grasp

what the night of decree is?

3The night of decree is better

than a thousand months.

4In this night the angels

with the spirit descend

by their Lord’s leave

for every task.

5Peace reigns until

the rise of dawn.

SURA 98

Clear Proof (Al-Bayyina)

A sura that is Medinan in origin, its 8 verses trace the divisions caused by disbelievers and polytheists (vv. 1, 5–6) despite the clear proof brought by the Prophet (vv. 2–4), with a reminder that those who believe and do good deeds will have their reward (vv. 7–8).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

1The disbelievers among

the people of the Book

and the polytheists

were not going to leave their ways

until clear proof came to them—

2a messenger from God

reciting from untainted scrolls,

3containing unerring scriptures.

4Those given the Book

did not fall into factions until

clear proof had come to them.

5They were merely commanded

to worship God, the One God,

sincere in faith to Him alone,°

to be steadfast in prayer

and to give in charity—

for this is the upright religion.

6The disbelievers among

the People of the Book

and among the polytheists

shall be in the fire of hell

to dwell there forever.

They are the worst of creatures.

7But those who believe

and do good deeds

are the best of creatures.°

8Their reward rests with God—

eternal gardens, beneath which

rivers flow, to dwell there

eternally. God shall be pleased

with them, and they with Him—

all this for those who fear their Lord.

SURA 99

The Earthquake (Al-Zalzala)

This sura is early Meccan, and in 8 verses it heralds the end of time (vv. 1–5), capping the news of that day with anticipation of serial, individual judgment, focused on the smallest of deeds (vv. 6–8).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

1When the earth is shaken

with a great earthquake,

2and she lays bare

all her burdens,

3and humankind cries,

“What is happening to her?”

4On that day she will

proclaim her story,°

5for your Lord inspired her.

6On that day humankind

will emerge in scattered groups

to be shown what they have done.

7Then whoever has done

an atom’s weight of good

shall see it.

8And whoever has done

an atom’s weight of evil

shall see it.

SURA 100

Racing Steeds (Al-ʿAdiyat)

This sura is probably Meccan; its 11 verses begin with a stunning image of galloping horses (vv. 1–5), likely referring to uncontrolled human desires (vv. 6–8). Talking of the human lust for wealth, the sura issues a warning that on the day of judgment all will be revealed because God is “fully Aware” (vv. 9–11).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

1By those racing

like steeds, panting,°

2striking sparks with their hooves,

3raiding at dawn,

4raising clouds of dust,

5thrusting through the center

of enemy lines—

6humans are ungrateful

to their Lord,

7as they themselves

bear witness,

8and their love of [the world’s] good

is intense.

9Do they not know—

when what is buried in graves

bursts out,

10and what lies in human hearts

is exposed—

11that on that day, their Lord

shall be fully Aware of them?

SURA 101

The Thundering Calamity (Al-Qariʿa)

Early Meccan with 11 verses, this sura evokes the day of judgment in stark terms, with opposite outcomes for those with heavy scales (i.e., good deeds) and those with light scales (i.e., few deeds counted as “good”), vv. 6–9.

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

1The thundering calamity°—

2What is the thundering calamity?

3What would make you grasp

what such calamity is?

4—the day when humankind

shall be like moths, scattered,

5and the mountains

like carded wool—

6then those whose balance

is heavy,

7will find themselves

in a pleasing life.

8But those whose balance

is light

9shall find their home

in the abyss.

10And what would make you grasp

what that is?

11It’s a fire—blazing.

SURA 102

Competing for Worldly Gain (Al-Takathur)

The 8 verses of this early Meccan sura dismiss and condemn the unbridled pursuit of wealth and status, counterposed to certain knowledge (v. 5) and assured vision (v. 7).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

1Competing for worldly gain

distracts you—

2until you reach your graves.

3But soon you shall know.

4Yes, soon you shall know.

5Indeed, if you had

sure knowledge,°

6you would see the fire of hell.

7Yes, you would see it

with sure vision.°

8Then, on that day,

you shall be asked

about your worldly bliss.

SURA 103

Time (Al-ʿAsr)

Early Meccan, this sura has only 3 verses. Two short verses are followed by a longer final verse highlighting the collective effort to believe and do good—to wit, urging others to truth and to patience.

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

1By time, passing,

2humankind is in a state

of loss,

3except those who believe,

and do good deeds, urging

one another toward truth,

and urging one another

toward patience.

SURA 104

The Backbiter (Al-Humaza)

Early Meccan, its 9 verses focus on the person of a wealthy slanderer, likely referring to numerous Meccan opponents, reminding them of not just hellfire but the fire of God that will close upon them (vv. 6–8).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

1Woe to every backbiting slanderer

2who amasses wealth,

always counting it—

3thinking that his wealth

will make him live forever.

4No—he will be thrown

into the pulverizing fire.

5And what would make you grasp

what such a fire is?

6—A fire that God has kindled,

7which pierces people’s hearts.

8It will close upon them,

9in soaring pillars.°

SURA 105

The Elephant (Al-Fil)

Early Meccan with 5 verses, this sura refers to a historical event, the unsuccessful attack of a Yemeni ruler on the Quraysh, possibly just before Muhammad’s birth (ca. 570 CE). The Quraysh response is given in the next sura.

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

1Have you not considered

how your Lord dealt

with the people of the elephant?°

2Did He not confound

their plot?

3He sent against them

birds in flocks,

4pelting them with stones

of baked clay.

5Then He left them

like stubble—chewed up.

SURA 106

Quraysh (Quraysh)

Early Meccan, its 4 verses depict the twofold gratitude expected of the Quraysh after their rescue from Yemeni attack (Sura 105): for food when hungry, and for safety when afraid (v. 4).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

1[In gratitude] for the safety

of the Quraysh°—

2safe for both their journeys,

winter and summer—

3Let them worship the Lord

of this House,

4Who has given them food

to forestall hunger,

and safety, to forestall fear.

SURA 107

Small Kindnesses (Al-Maʿun)

An early Meccan sura of 7 verses, this underscores the double ethical mandate—to heed the orphan and feed the poor—as requisite for “the reckoning to come” (v. 1).

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

1Have you seen the person who

denies the reckoning to come?

2This is the one who

pushes aside the orphan,

3and does not urge others

to feed the poor.

4Woe, then, to those who pray,

5but don’t heed their prayer,

6those who do it

just to be seen,

7yet refuse even small deeds

of kindness.

SURA 108

Abundance (Al-Kawthar)

Early Meccan, this sura of 3 verses is the shortest sura yet it uplifts the Prophet’s spirit, reassuring him that progeny is more than siring a son.

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

1We have given to you

in abundance°—

2So pray to your Lord

and make sacrifice,

3for it is your enemy

who will be cut off.°

SURA 109

Those Who Disbelieve (Al-Kafirun)

Early Meccan, its 6 verses set the marker for confirming, and upholding, the gap between believers and disbelievers.

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

1Say, “You who disbelieve,

2“I do not worship

what you worship,

3“nor are you worshippers

of what I worship,

4“and I am not a worshipper

of what you worship,

5“nor are you worshippers

of what I worship—

6“you have your religion

and I have mine.”

SURA 110

Help (Al-Nasr)

A Medinan sura, this is perhaps the last sura to be revealed. In 3 verses it assures the Prophet of victory, for himself and his community, and the proper response should be not gloating over success but praising God and asking for forgiveness.

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

1When God’s help comes

and His victory,

2and you see people flocking

in multitudes

to the religion of God,

3hymn the praise of your Lord

and seek His forgiveness;

He is the Ever Relenting.

SURA 111

The Palm Fiber (Al-Masad)

Early Meccan, its 5 verses are the only direct diatribe against one of the Prophet’s opponents, and his wife, also a fierce detractor of the Prophet in word and deed.

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

1Perish the hands

of Abu Lahab, Father of Flame!°

And may he perish!

2He’ll profit nothing

from all his wealth,

and all his gains.

3Soon he shall burn in a fire

blazing with flame.

4His wife shall bear the wood,

5a rope of palm fiber

twisted about her neck.

SURA 112

Unity/Sincerity (Al-Ikhlas)

Early Meccan, its 4 verses are heralded as the epitome of the Quranic message. It stresses God’s oneness, immutability, and uniqueness. Also apotropaic, its power is in direct proportion to the sincerity (ikhlas) of its reciter.

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

1Say, He is God, the One,

2God, the Absolute.°

3Neither did He beget,

nor was He begotten.

4His like or equal there is none.

SURA 113

The Dawn (Al-Falaq)

Early Meccan, like the next sura with which it is linked, this sura of 5 verses is apotropaic, seeking God’s protection from evil.

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

1Say, “I seek refuge with the Lord

of the breaking dawn,°

2“from the evil in those°

He created;

3“from the evil in darkness

when it descends;

4“from the evil of those°

who blow on knots;

5“and from the evil

of the envier, when he envies.”

SURA 114

Humankind (Al-Nas)

The final sura, also early Meccan and apotropaic, its 6 verses stress that jinn as well as humankind must seek refuge in God from sinister forces.

In the Name of God, the All Merciful, Ever Merciful

1Say, “I seek refuge

with the Lord of humankind,

2“the Ruler of humankind,

3“the God of humankind,

4“from the evil of the one

who whispers°, and recoils

[from the Name of God]—

5“the one who whispers

into the hearts of humankind—

6“from among jinn,

and humankind.”

Acknowledgments

This translation represents a journey spanning some ten years. Traveling on that path together, we have incurred profound debts to those who aided us in navigating its sometimes arduous and steep terrain. We would both like to thank:

—those who shared their Quranic expertise with us: the scholars of the University of al-Azhar in Cairo, Ahmad Elezabi, Amr Saleh, and the late Ahmed Shafik al-Khatib; the Quranic scholars Carl W. Ernst, Shawkat Toorawa, Azdeddine Chergui, Omid Safi, Michael Sells, Brett Wilson, Ulrika Martensen, Khalid Saqi, Marianna Klar, Assya Elhannaoui, and Musharraf Hussain;

—those who gave us inspired feedback on our rendering: Jerry and Betty Eidener, Carl and Janet Edwards, Harry and Peregrine Kavros, Scott Kugle, Sohaib Khan, Safaa Al-Saeedi, Michael Beard, J. T. Barbarese, Ernest Hilbert, Kimberly V. Adams, Aaron Hostetter, Piers Smith, Daniel Simmons, Nader El-Bizri, Irfaan Nooruddin, Reza Aslan, Magda Hasabelnaby, Leonard Neidorf, Ali Ansari, Areej Al-Harbi, Rahaf Al-Mubarak, Norah Roudhan, Wadha Alessa, Waed Al-Azemi, Muntassir Ibrahim Altamy, Adrian Day, and Siddiqua Shabnam;

—those who facilitated presentations and conferences for us: Sahar Muradi and the high school teachers of City Lore and Poets House in New York City; M. A. S. Abdel Haleem of the School of Oriental and African Studies in London; Mohamed Ben-Madani, for allowing us to use material from the Maghreb Review; Omar Ali de Unzaga of the Institute of Ismaili Studies in London; Rob Gleave, Mustafa Baig, and William Gallois, who organized a Quran conference at the University of Exeter in England; Recep Senturk, Heba Raouf, and Ercument Asil, who invited us to present at the Alliance of Civilizations Institute (MEDIT) at Ibn Haldun University in Istanbul; Mohammed Ben Romdhane and Shahd Al-Shammari who helped us obtain a generous grant from KFAS to present at the Gulf University of Science and Technology in Kuwait; and Salwa El-Awa, who invited our participation in a conference at the University of Swansea;

—those who merit a very special note of gratitude for their countless hours of dedication and expertise in helping us negotiate the Arabic text of the Quran: Ismail Lala and Ahmed Zafar;

—the wonderfully insightful editorial team at Liveright, including our editor Peter Simon, whose feedback at every stage was crucial; our meticulous copyeditor, Trent Duffy; our project editor, Robert Byrne; and the project’s various editorial assistants over the years, including Katie Pak, Olivia Atmore, and Zeba Arora—as well as the talented professionals who made this book so beautiful: our production director, Anna Oler, and our art director, Ingsu Liu. Although our journey with them has barely begun, we also wish to thank the extraordinary publicity and marketing team at Liveright who will help get this book into readers’ hands: Peter Miller, director of publicity; Fanta Diallo, publicist; Clio Hamilton, publicity assistant; and Nick Curley, marketing director;

—our respective life partners: miriam cooke, whose deep expertise in Arabic and warm and friendly help over the years were an endless source of inspiration; and Yasmeen Habib, who was lovingly supportive, sharing her insights into the rules of recitation and the system of pauses in the Quranic script.

The journey is far from over. No translation of the Quran can ever hope to do more than gesture toward the inimitable splendor of the original. The voyage that began as a voice on a mountain in the lonely cave of Hira is one which will continue through many voices, into many futures, forever echoing down from the sublimity of that height.

M. A. R. Habib and Bruce B. Lawrence

Glossary

The following are often-cited, important Arabic terms in the Quran. These notes explain why some are rendered consistently throughout this translation while others vary according to context. A selective list is provided of the occurrence of each term in Quranic verses.

ahl al-kitab — “people of the Book.” This term refers to the Jews and Christians (and also Muslims). See 2:41ff., as well as 3:3, 4:47, 5:46, 6:92, and 89:91. The first reference (2:41ff.) is dedicated to retelling the story of the Children of Israel. Ahl is also the first of five technical terms referring to “people.” Each has its own nuance, with ahl closest to familial, qawm to tribal, while umma accents collective coherence apart from family or tribe. Both nas and insan refer to humankind at large.

ajal — “a period” / ajal musamma: “a fixed period.” These terms are used specifically in some suras and by implication in others. Either one can refer to the destined period of existence for individuals (6:2), communities (23:43), and the entire universe (46:3). This period lies within the purview of God’s omniscience; it can be lengthened or shortened only by His direction (35:4). It can also be elided with the Mother of the Book (umm al-kitab; see below), a relationship depicted in 13:38–39.

ʿalamin — “universe” (1:2 – genitive plural of ʿalam, world), denoting the fact that all the “worlds” created by God ultimately comprise a unity; also rendered as “all peoples” (3:33), “all the worlds” (5:20, 115), “all worlds” (5:28; 10:10, 37; and 12:104), “[created] beings” (29:6), “creatures” (29:10, 28), and “peoples” (37:79). In each case, the sense of the surrounding passage dictates the choice of translation. At 1:2, the original Arabic refers to ʿalamun (nominative pl. of ʿalam), literally, “the worlds, or all worlds”; it connotes “universe” because it covers the spectrum of creations in the heavens and earth, land and sea, while at the same time including other creatures who are nonhuman, both jinn (see below) and angels.

amr — literally, “command” (16:2), but also “clear signs” as in 2:87, 253; 5:110; 16:2; 40:15; 42:52; 65:12; and 97:4.

al-asmaʾ al-husna — “the Beautiful Names” / asmaʾ Allahi al-husna: “the Beautiful Names of God.” The Beautiful Names, sometimes known as the Most Beautiful Names or the Beautiful Divine Names, are invoked in prayer by multiple names. Some have said that the Beautiful Names number ninety-nine, while others reckon that they are beyond calculation; in either instance, they are lodestones of memory and pious mimesis, both in the Quran and in Muslim ritual devotion. In this rendition, the Beautiful Names have been capitalized in every instance where they occur or can be inferred. For further details, see pages li–lvii as well as The Beautiful Names (page 534).

ayat — literally, “signs” (of God and God’s power), but also “verses” or “words” (of God), as in 3:112–13. In one case (26:128), the singular aya means “altar” or “monument.”

barzakh — a Persian word. At 23:100 and 25:53, it’s rendered as “barrier,” but at 55:20, it’s rendered as a “limit,” since it is both a barrier and a bridge, not mixing yet connecting two distinct elements or states or levels of existence.

dhikr — “remembrance” (of God or the Quran), “reminder,” or “message.” It is used almost three hundred times in reference to either God or the Quran.

din — “reckoning” or “religion.” As discussed in the note for 1:4, in the phrase malik yawm al-din it is clearly the final day or the day of reckoning, with the promise of reward or punishment. Elsewhere, the word is best rendered as “faith” (e.g., 9:11, 122). Another example of din as “reckoning” occurs in 37:20, “day of reckoning,” similar to yawm al-qiyama, “day of resurrection.”

furqan — 2:53; 3:2 and 25 (passim), with multiple meanings. Often translated as “measure” or “criterion,” furqan is a technical term indicating an absolute dividing line or demarcation between two opposites or binaries, especially the good and the bad.

al-ghaib — what lies beyond human knowing, i.e., “the unseen,” as in 2:33; 6:50, 59; 7:188; and 13:9.

hanif — “one pure in faith” (3:67, 95) or “monotheistic in faith” (10.105 and also 16:120–23). It is the antonym of kafir (see under kufr, below).

haqq/haqqa — “truth” or “reality,” but also “right” or “duty.” Haqq can refer not just to truth but the possession of right, as in 9:13, 146, and 33:37, where God is cited as having “more right” to be feared than others. In terms of duty, see 2:180, where making provision for one’s survivors is “a duty upon those who are mindful of [the One] God.”

Iblis — see Shaytan below.

al-insan — “person” (36:77), “man” (55:3), or “humankind” (12:5 and 55:14, 33). To be gender inclusive, insan has often been rendered as “humans” (instead of the singular) or “humankind.” Also see ahl under ahl al-kitab, above.

islam — “submission” / muslim: “one who submits” (to God). See, however, 5:3, where the name “Islam” is used; see also 2:128 and 3:85. The root verb, s-l-m, refers both to peace (salam) and submission (islam). In the period when the Muslim movement had not yet coalesced into a community aware of itself as such, the emphasis was on submitting to God and to God’s will, both as individuals and as a group. Multiple references to muslimun (i.e., “muslims”) are to those who submit from every tradition honoring the One God, not solely to those who follow Muhammad and later become part of Islam.

jinn — “spirits.” Neither angelic nor human, yet both at once. They abound in literary circles of the premodern world, with their equivalent in English being “genie.” They can be either evil or good, depending on circumstance. See especially suras 55 and 72.

kufr — “disbelief” or “lie,” but also “ingratitude.” Hence a kafir is a disbeliever and kafirin are liars, but all are, firstly, ungrateful. The contrast is between kufr and shukr (“gratitude”), as in 2:152: “Show thanks to me, and do not be ungrateful.”

al-mathal — “parable” (36:13), “simile,” or “comparison” (36:78).

muqattaʿat — “disconnected” / al-huruf al-muqattaʿat: “disconnected letters.” These Arabic letters that appear at the beginning of several suras have become the subject of extensive commentary, with occasional efforts to translate them (as in Sura 36, Ya Sin). They are often termed mystical or mysterious letters whose meanings are known only to the Lord of all that is seen and unseen. There is a suggestive tone of authority in several suras; it comes in the phrase right after the opening letters. In 2:2 we are told that the Book “provides guidance for those mindful of the Divine”; elsewhere it can refer to the Book as clear and decisive (e.g., suras 15, 36, 38, and 50) or to the process of revelation (e.g., suras 3, 7, and 40–46). Because this last group (40–46) all start with the same letters (ha and mim), they are often called the Hawamim.

muslim — “one who submits” (to the will of God). See islam above on the variability of islam/muslim as both terms evolved during the early decades of the Quranic revelation.

muttaqi — “one mindful of God.” Also see taqwa below.

nas — “people,” “man,” “humankind” (10:2, 11, 19, 21, and 23; 24:3; and 114 passim), but also “human beings” (10:44), or “humans” (10:44). See ahl under ahl al-kitab, above.

naskh — “abrogation” (2:106 and 3:7). The replacement of one verse by other verses, it has become the basis for juridical efforts to see shifts within the Quran at several points. However, other commentators have disputed whether the Quran itself changes or if it instead challenges each reader/believer/submitter to explore depths of meaning not readily apparent in God’s Word. See also 3:7 for the Quran’s own distinction between verses clear in meaning and those deemed allegorical or metaphorical. One needs to be constantly aware of how images, such as the Hand of God (e.g., 48:10) or the Face of your Lord (e.g., 55:27), are metaphorical rather than literal.

qawm — “peoples” (10:74) or “nation” (10:75). The Quran speaks of humankind as one people (in 2:213), but as many elsewhere: 5:48, 11:118, 16:93, 42:8, 43:33, and especially 10:19. Also see ahl under ahl al-kitab, above.

ruh — “spirit.” Suras 4:171, 16:2, 17:85, 19:17, 40:15, 42:52, 58:22, and 78:38 all include reference to ruh al-quds (“holy spirit”), not be confused with “the Holy Spirit,” a central component of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity (eschewed by Muslims). Wherever the text refers to the Arabic ruh al-quds (literally, “spirit of the holy” or “holy spirit”), Gabriel is the agent.

Shaytan — Iblis is another name for Shaytan (Satan), the enemy of humankind. Iblis’s refusal to bow down to Adam is cited in several passages: 2:34, 7:11, 17:61, 18:50, 20:116, and 38:74–75.

sihr — “magic” (5:110 and 20:71, 73), “magician” (20:69 and 38:4), “magicians” (20:70), “sorcery” (6:7, 11:7, 20:63, 37:15, 43:30, and 54:2), “sorcerer” (43:49 and 51:39, 52), “manifest sorcerer” (10:2), or “sorcerers” (20:63). See also 5:110, 27:13, 34:43, 46:5, 61:6, and especially 10:75–81.

sura — sura, referring to the sections into which the Quran is divided (24:1). See also 10:38 and 11:13.

taqwa — “mindfulness of God” / muttaqi: “mindful of God or in 2:2 “mindful of the Divine.” Also rendered as “fear of God” (9:108–9, 115) and “God-fearing” (19:97 and 41:18).

umm al-kitab — literally, “the Mother of the Book.” In 3:7 and 13:39 it is rendered as “the origin of the Book,” while in 43:4 it is described as “the archetypal Book” that records all deeds of humankind, and is also the source of all scripture.

umma — “community” (7:34, 10:19, and 43:21), “nation” (10:47, 49, and 16:120), or “people” (5:48 and 42:8). The plural is umam. Note two further uses—11:8: illa ummatin maʿdudatin, “for a definite term”; and 12:45: baʿd ummatin, “after all this time.” See also ahl under ahl al-kitab, above.

zabur — the Psalms (4:163, 17:55, and 21:105), but also “scriptures” in general (3:184; 16:44; 23:53; 26:196; 35:25; and 54:43, 52).

The Beautiful Names of God

The Beautiful Names (al-asmaʾ al-husna) or the Beautiful Names of God (asmaʾ Allahi al-husna) recur throughout the Quran. They have been extracted and counted as ninety-nine in devotional practice and in numerous commentaries though their actual usage exceeds ninety-nine. We have capitalized their various forms in all but a few cases where doing so might compromise our general aim of producing a readable and fluent translation.

Abiding Forever—al-Baqi: 55:27

The Absolute—al-Samad: 112:2

Accepting of repentance – Qabil al-tawb: 40:3

The Accomplisher/Doer—al-Faʿʿal: 11:107; 85:16

The [All] Aware/Ever Aware—Khabir/al-Khabir: 2:234, 271; 3:153, 180; 4:94, 128, 135; 5:8; 6:18, 73, 103; 9:16; 10:19, 50, 111; 17:30, 96; 22:63, 24:30, 53; 25:58; 27:88; 31:16, 29, 34; 33:3, 34; 34:1; 35:14, 31; 42; 27, 48:11; 49:13; 57:10; 58:3, 11, 13; 59:18; 63:11; 64:8; 66:3; 67:14; 100:11

The All Encompassing—al-Muhit: 2:19; 3:120; 4:108, 126; 8:47; 48:21; 65:12; 85:20

The [All] Forgiving, Ever Merciful—Ghafur Rahim: 2:173, 182, 192, 199, 218, 226; 3:31, 89, 129; 4:23, 25, 96, 100, 106, 110, 129, 152; 5:3, 34, 39, 74, 98; 6:54, 145, 165; 7:153, 167; 8:69, 70; 9:27, 91, 99, 102; 10:107; 11:41; 12:53, 98; 14:36; 15:49; 16:18, 110, 115, 119; 24:5, 22, 33, 62; 25:6, 70; 27:11; 28:16; 31:2; 33:5, 24, 50, 59, 73; 39:53; 41:32; 42:5; 46:8; 48:14; 49:5, 14; 57:28; 58:12; 60:7, 12; 64:14; 66:1; 73:20

The All Hearing—Samiʿ/al-Samiʿ: 2:127, 137, 181, 224, 227, 244, 256, 3:34, 35, 38, 121; 4:58, 134, 148; 5:76; 6:13, 115, 200; 8:17, 42, 53, 61; 9:98, 103; 10: 65; 12:34; 14:39; 17:11; 21:4; 22:61, 75; 24:21, 60; 26:220; 29:5, 60; 31:28; 34:50; 40:20, 56; 41:36; 42:11; 44: 6; 49:1; 58:1

The All Kind/Ever Forbearing/Most Forbearing—al-Halim: 2:225, 235, 263; 3:155; 4:12; 5:101; 11:87; 17:44; 22:59; 33:51; 35:41; 64:17

The [All] Knowing/Knower/Aware—ʿAlim/al-ʿAlim: 2:29, 32, 95, 115, 137, 158, 181, 215, 224, 231, 246, 247, 256, 261, 268, 273, 282, 283; 3:34, 35, 63, 73, 92, 115, 119, 121, 147, 148, 154; 4:11, 12, 17, 24, 26, 32, 35, 39, 70, 92, 104, 111, 127, 147, 148, 170, 176; 5:7, 54, 76, 97, 116; 6:13, 59, 73, 83, 96, 101, 115, 128, 139; 7:200; 8:17, 42, 43, 53, 61, 71, 75; 9:15, 28, 44, 47, 60, 78, 94, 97, 98, 103, 105, 106, 110, 115; 10:36, 65, 79; 11:5; 12:6, 19, 34, 50, 76, 83, 100; 15:25, 86; 16:28, 70; 21:4; 22:52, 59; 23:51; 24:18, 21, 28, 32, 35, 41, 58, 59, 60, 64; 26:220; 27:6, 78; 29:5, 60, 62; 30:54; 31:23; 33:1, 40, 51, 54; 34:3, 26, 48; 35:8, 38, 44; 36:38, 79, 81; 39:7, 46; 40:2; 41:12, 36; 42:12, 24, 50; 43:9, 84; 44:6; 48:4, 26; 49:1, 8, 13, 16, 18, 51:, 30; 57:3, 6; 58:7; 59:22; 60:10; 62:7, 8; 64:4, 11, 18; 65:12; 66:2, 3; 67:13; 73:26; 76:30; 84:23

The All Merciful/Most Merciful—al-Rahman

a.17:110; 19:18, 26, 44, 45, 58, 61, 69, 75, 78, 85, 87, 88, 91, 92, 93, 96; 20:5, 90, 108, 109; 21:26, 36, 112; 25:26, 59, 60, 63; 26:5; 36:11; 15:23, 52; 41:2; 43:17, 19, 20, 33, 36, 45, 81; 50:33; 55:1; 59:22; 67:3, 19, 20, 29; 78:37, 38

b.The All Merciful, Ever Merciful—al-Rahman al-Rahim: 1:1, 3; 2:163; 27:30; 41:2; 59:22. Also, as doublets, they precede 2:1–114:1, introducing all suras except 9.

The [All] Powerful/Able—Qadir/al-Qadir: 2:20, 106, 109, 148, 259, 2:284; 3:26, 29,165, 189; 4:133, 149; 5:17, 19, 40, 120; 6:17, 37, 65; 8:41; 9:39; 11:4; 16:70, 77; 17:99; 22:6, 39; 23:18; 24:45; 25:54; 29:20; 30:50, 54; 33:27; 35:1, 44; 41:39; 42:9, 29, 50; 46:33, 48:21; 57:2; 59:6; 60:7; 64:1; 65:12; 66:8; 67:1; 75:40; 86:8. (See also The One Holding Sway/All Powerful—al-Muqtadir.)

The All Seeing/All Watchful/Observant—Basir/al-Basir: 2:96, 110, 233, 237, 265; 3:15, 20, 156, 163; 4:58, 134; 5:71; 8:39, 72; 11:112; 17:1, 17, 30, 96; 20:35, 125; 22:61, 75; 25:20; 31:28; 33:9; 34:11; 35:31, 45; 40:20, 44, 56; 41:40; 42:11, 27; 48:24; 49:18; 57:4; 58:1; 60:3; 64:2; 67:19; 84:15

The [All] Wise—Hakim/al-Hakim: 2:32, 129, 209, 220, 228, 240, 260; 3:6, 18, 62, 126; 4:11, 17, 24, 26, 56, 92, 104, 111, 130, 158, 165, 170; 5:38, 118; 6:18, 73, 83, 128, 139; 8:10, 49, 63, 67, 71; 9:15, 28, 40, 60, 71, 97, 106, 110; 12:6, 83, 100; 13:4; 14:4; 15:25; 16:60; 22:52; 24:10, 18, 58, 59; 27:6, 9; 29:26, 42; 30:27; 31:2, 9, 27; 33:1; 34:1, 27; 35:2; 36:2; 39:1; 40:8; 41:42; 42:3, 51; 43:9, 84; 45:2, 37; 46:2; 48:4, 7, 19; 49:8; 51:30; 57:1; 59:1, 24; 60:5, 10; 61:1; 62:1, 3; 64:18; 66:2; 76:30

The Almighty—ʿAziz/al-ʿAziz

a.2:129, 209, 220, 228, 240, 260; 3:4, 6, 12, 62, 126; 4:56, 158, 165; 5: 38, 95, 118; 6:96; 8:10, 49, 63, 67; 9:40, 71; 11:66; 14:1, 4, 47; 16:60; 22:40, 74; 27:78; 29:26, 42; 30:27; 31:9, 27; 33:25; 34:6, 27; 35:2; 36:38; 38:9, 66; 39:1, 5, 37; 40: 2, 8, 42; 42:3, 19; 44:49; 45:2, 37; 46:2; 48:7, 19; 57: 1, 25; 58:21; 59:1, 23, 24; 60:5: 61:1; 62:1,3; 64:18; 67: 2; 85:8

b.The Almighty, Ever-Merciful—al-ʿAziz al-Rahim: 26:9, 68, 104, 122, 159, 175, 191, 217; 30:5; 32:6; 36:5; 44:42

The Always Returning/Relenting—al-Tawwab

a.4:64; 24:10; 110:3

b.Always Returning, Ever Merciful—al-Tawwab al-Rahim: 2:37, 54, 128, 160; 4:16, 64; 9:104; 49:12

Appreciating/Appreciative—al-Shakir: 2:158; 4:147. Al-Shakur: 35:30, 34; 42:23; 64:17.

The Best of Arbiters—Khair al-Fatihin: 7:89. Khair al-Fasilin: 6:57.

The Best of Forgivers—Khair al-Ghafirin: 7:155

The Best of Helpers—Khair al-Nasirin: 3:150

The Best of Judges—Khair al-Hakimin: 7:87; 10:109; 12:80. The Most Excellent of Judges: 10:109, 12:80.

The Best of Protectors—Khair al-Muhafizin: 12:64

The Best of Providers/the Best Provider—Khair al-Raziqin: 5:114; 15:20; 22:58; 23:72; 34:39; 62:11

The Best of Schemers—Khair al-Makarin: 8:30

The Creator—al-Khaliq: 6:102; 13:16; 15:28; 36:81; 39:62; 40:62; 59:24

The Debaser—al-Khafid: 56:3 (also, al-Mudhill 3:26)

Encompassing in Abundance—Dhu al-Tawl: 40:3

The Ever Forbearing/Most Forbearing—al-Halim: 2:225, 235, 263; 3:155; 4:12; 5:101; 17:44; 22:59; 33:51; 35:41; 64:17

The Ever Forgiving—al-Ghaffar: 20:82; 38:66; 39:5; 40:42; 71:10

The Ever Giving/Bestower—al-Wahhab: 3:8; 38:9, 35

The Ever Gracious/Full of Grace/Full of Favor—Dhu al-Fadl: 2:105, 243, 251; 3:152; 8:29; 10:60; 27:73; 40:61. (See also The Most Gracious—Dhu al-Fadl al-ʿAzim.)

The Ever Living—al-Hayy

a.25:58; 40:65

b.The [Ever] Living, the Self-Subsisting—al-Hayy al-Qayyum: 2:255; 3:2; 20:111

The Ever Merciful—al-Rahim: 1:1; 24:20, 22. And many, many more, especially in doublets.

The Ever Near—al-Qarib: 2:186, 11:61; 34:50

The [Ever/Most] Subtle/Most Gentle—al-Latif: 6:103; 12:100; 22:63; 31:16; 33:34; 42:19; 67:14

The [Ever] Trustworthy—al-Muʾmin: 59:23

The Ever Watchful—al-Raqib: 4:1; 33:52. (See also The All Seeing/All Watchful/Observant—al-Basir.)

The Exalter—al-Rafiʿ: 6:83; 56:3; 58:11. Al-Muʾizz: 3:26.

The Expander—al-Basit: 17:30; 42:27

The Expansive/All Embracing—al-Wasiʿ: 2:115, 251, 247, 261, 268; 3:73; 4:130; 5:54; 24:32; 53:32

The First—al-Awwal: 57:3

Forbearing. See The All Kind/Forbearing—al-Halim.

Forever in Majesty and Munificence—Dhu al-Jalali wa-l-Ikram: 55:27, 78

Forgiving of sin – Ghafir al-dhanb: 40:3

Full of Favor. See The Ever Gracious/Full of Favor—Dhu al-Fadl.

Full of Forgiveness—Dhu al-Maghfira: 13:6

Full of Mercy—Dhu al-Rahma: 6:133; 18:58

The Gatherer—al-Jamiʿ: 3:9; 4:140

Giver/Bringer of Death—al-Mumit: 2:28, 258; 3:156; 7:158; 9:116; 10:56; 15:23; 22:66; 23:80; 26:81; 30:40; 40:68; 44:8; 45:26; 57:2

Giver/Restorer of Life—al-Muhyi: 2:28, 258; 3:156; 7:158; 9:116; 10:56;15:23; 22:66; 23:80; 26:81; 30:40, 50; 40:68; 41:39; 42:9; 44:8; 45:26; 57:2

The Glorious—al-Majid: 11:73

The Grandeur—al-Kibriyaʾ: 45:37

The Guardian—al-Wakil: 4:81, 132, 171; 11:12; 12:66; 28:28; 33:3, 48; 39:62; 73:9

The Guide—al-Hadi: 22:54

The Helper—al-Nasir: 4:45; 8:40; 22:98; 25:31

The Holy/the Sanctified—al-Quddus: 59:23; 62:1

The Heir(s)/Inheritor(s)—al-Warithun: 15:23; 28:58 (plural in both cases)

The Inner—al-Batin: 57:3

The Irresistible—al-Jabbar: 59:23

The Judge—al-Hakam

a.40:48

b.The Judge, the All Knowing—al-Fattah al-ʿAlim: 34:26

The Just—al-ʿAdl: 6:115

The Last—al-Akhir: 57:3

The Light—al-Nur: 24:35 (5), 61:8 (2)

Lord of Requital—Dhu al-Intiqam: 3:4; 5:95; 14:47; 39:37

Lord of the Stairs—Dhu al-Maʿarij: 70:3

[Most] Able—al-Qadir: 6:37, 65; 10:24; 17:99; 36:81; 46:33; 75:40; 86:8

The Most Bountiful—Al-Akram: 96:3

The Most Exalted—al-Mutaʿali: 13:9

The Most Excellent of Judges—Khair al-Hakimin: 10:109; 12:80

The Most Gracious—Dhu al-Fadl al-ʿAzim: 3:174; 57:21, 29; 62:4

The [Most] Great—al-Kabir: 4:34; 13:9; 22:62; 31:30; 34:23 40:12

The Most Great/Supreme—al-ʿAzim: 2:255; 42:4; 56:74, 96; 64: 33, 52

The Most High—al-ʿAli

a.2:255; 4:34; 22:62; 31:30; 34:23; 41:12; 42:4, 51; 43:4

b.The Most High—al-Aʿla: 16:60; 79:24; 87:1 92:20

The Most Just—al-Muqsit: 33:5

The Most Just of Judges—Ahkam al-Hakimin: 11:45; 95:8

The Most Kind—al-Raʿuf

a.2:207; 3:30; 9:117; 33:25; 57:25; 58:21

b.The Most Kind, Ever Merciful—al-Raʿuf al-Rahim: 2:143; 9:117; 16:7; 22:65; 24:20; 57:9; 59:10. Also al-Barr al-Rahim: 52:28.

The Most Loving—Wadud: 11:90; 85:14

The Most Merciful of all—Khair al-Rahimin: 23:109, 118

The Most Merciful of the merciful—Arham al-Rahimin: 7:151; 12:64, 92; 21:83

The One—al-Ahad: 112:1. Also al-Wahid: 12:39; 13:16; 14:48.

The One Holding Sway/All Powerful—al-Muqtadir: 18:45; 54:42, 55

The One, Omnipotent/Supreme/Invincible—al-Wahid al-Qahhar: 12:39; 13:16; 14:48; 38:65; 39:4; 40:16

The Originator/Maker—al-Bariʾ: 39:46; 59:24. Also al-Fatir: 6:14; 35:1.

The Outer—al-Zahir: 57:3

The Pardoner—al-ʿAfuw: 3:155; 4:9, 43, 99, 149; 5:95, 101; 9:43; 22:60; 58:2

Possessor of Power—Dhu al-Quwwa: 51:58

The Powerful/the Strong/the Supremely Strong—al-Qawi: 8:52; 11:66; 22:40, 74; 27:39; 28:26; 33:25; 40:22; 42:19; 57:25; 58:21

The Praiseworthy—al-Hamid: 13:1; 14:8; 31:12, 26; 41:42. (See also Self-Sufficient—al-Ghani.)

The Preserver—al-Hafiz: 86:4

The Prevailer—al-Ghalib: 12:21

The Protector—al-Mawla: 2:286; 3:150; 6:62; 8:40 (2); 9:51; 10:30; 22:78 (2); 47:11; 66:2, 4. Also al-Wali: 2:257; 3:68, 150; 4:45; 6:127; 7:155; 12:101; 34:41; 42:9, 48; 45:19.

The Reckoner—al-Hasib: 4:6, 86; 33:39

Relenting, Ever Relenting—al-Tawwab

a.4:16, 64; 24:10, 49:12, 110:3

b.Relenting, Ever Merciful—al-Tawwab al-Rahim: 2:37, 54, 128, 160; 4:16, 64; 9:104, 108

The Responsive—al-Mujib: 11:61

The Restricter—al-Qabid: 25:46

The Resurrector (the One Who Raises Up)—al-Baʿith: 22:7

The Self-Sufficient /Self-Sufficing—al-Ghani

a.2:263; 3:97; 6:133; 10:68; 14:8; 27:40; 29:6; 39:7; 47:38

b.The Self-Sufficient, Praiseworthy—al-Ghani al-Hamid: 2:267; 4:131; 22:64; 31:12, 26; 35:15; 57:24; 60:6; 64:6

The Severe/Stern in Requital—Shadid al-ʿIqab: 2:196, 211; 3:11; 5:2, 98; 6:165; 7:176; 8:13, 25, 48, 52; 13:6; 40:3, 22; 59:4, 7

The Shaper of Forms—al-Musawwir: 59:24

The Source of Forgiveness—Ahl al-Maghfira: 74:56

The Source of Mindfulness—Ahl al-Taqwa: 74:56

The Source of Peace—al-Salam: 59:23

The Sovereign/Ruler/King—al-Malik: 1:4; 3:26; 20:114; 23:116; 59:23; 62:1; 114:2

The Supreme—al-Mutakabbir: 59:23. Also al-ʿAzim: 2:255.

The Supreme in Strategy—Shadid al-Mihal: 13:13

The Supreme in Strength—al-Matin: 51:58

The Sustainer—al-Razzaq: 51:58. Also al-Muqit: 4:85.

The Swift in Reckoning—Sariʿ al-Hisab: 2:202; 3:19, 199; 5:4; 13:41; 14:51; 24:39; 40:17. See also Sariʿ al-ʿIqab: 6:165; 7:167.

The Truth/the True/the Reality/the True Reality—al-Haqq: 10:32; 18:44; 20:114; 22:6, 62; 23:116; 24:25; 31:30

The Watchful—al-Muhaymin: 59:23

The Witness—Shahid/al-Shahid: 3:98; 4:33, 79, 166; 5:117; 6:19; 10:29, 46; 13:43; 17:96; 22:17; 29:52; 33:55; 34:47; 41:53; 46:8; 48:28; 58:6; 85:3, 9

Notes

Sura 1

The Opening (Al-Fatiha)

1:1Although the basmala—“In the Name of God”—appears at the outset of every sura in the 114 suras of the Quran except one (Sura 9, Repentance), it is only here in the opening sura that it is treated as a verse. Its importance is underscored by its two qualifiers, al-rahman and al-rahim in Arabic. Both are derived from al-rahma (the mercy), which in turn derives from al-raham (the womb). Crucial is the accent on God as encompassing mercy, just as the mother enfolds and encompasses her child. Like the mother, God not only embodies mercy (al-rahman) but also provides it again and again (al-rahim). Rendered here as “the All Merciful” so as to mime certain semantic and poetic effects of the original, God is also, always, the Ever Merciful. For those who think of Allah in gendered terms, al-rahman and al-rahim are repeated as “His” defining traits. In the next verses, rabb (Lord) and malik (Ruler) are solely masculine in their origin and usage, but one can say, and should say, that Allah is neither male nor female. Instead, the deity is depicted equally as feminine and masculine in traits, with a stronger accent on the feminine due to the recurrent usage of Mercy, no less than four times, in al-Fatiha. The vast expanse of Divine Mercy exceeds our understanding but not our recognition: we recognize its performance daily in our lives and also in the lives of others.

1:2The definite article used in the Arabic is rendered as “All” in English to capture the expanse of human gratitude to the Divine.

1:2The Arabic for “universe” is ʿalamin (pl. of ʿalam), literally, “the worlds” or “all worlds.” It covers the spectrum of creations in the heavens and earth, land and sea, at the same time that it also includes other creatures who are not human, both jinn and angels (see multiple references in the Quran, especially Sura 55 on the jinn). The word “universe” is used here instead of “worlds” in order to convey the fact that God’s creation, while composed of many worlds and many levels of being, is ultimately a unity. Also see Glossary, page 529.

1:4Al-din can mean “religion” but here as yawm al-din it is clearly the final day or the day of reckoning, reward, or punishment. See Glossary, page 530.

1:5To “worship” God is also to be subservient to Him, and so the more graphic reference of worship is submission, servanthood, and slavery, connotations that are familiar in the Hebrew Bible and also in the Gospels.

1:7It is crucial to stress that neither divine anger (“wrath”) nor human deviance (“gone astray”) is the final message of the opening sura. The two verbs used here are “to guide” (hada) and “to favor” (anʿama), and their respective nouns, hidaya (guidance) and niʿma (favor), recur in the Quran as the insistent divine hope for all humankind and for all creatures in all worlds.

Sura 2

The Cow (Al-Baqara)

2:1These letters are part of what is known as muqattaʿat, or disconnected letters, different combinations of which are found at the beginning of several suras. See Glossary, page 531.

2:4The Prophet Muhammad.

2:8Arabic wa-ma hum bimuminin: literally, “But they are not among the believers.”

2:14In addition to the notion of a single Satan (Shaytan or Iblis), there are also multiple Satans or devils, like multiple jinn and angels, who can be, and are, seen to be part of Islamic cosmogony, acting in this world and the next.

2:22Arabic jaʿalna lakum al-ard firash: literally, “we made the earth a place spread out,” an image found here and at 51:48. Similar to 40:64, God is projected here as a grand domestic architect, with earth as His habitat or couch, the sky His canopy.

2:29“The seven heavens” is a metaphor for the entire cosmos, and like the number 7 in biblical literature it has a symbolic meaning, not a literal one.

2:30The “regent” is Adam, who will appear by name in the next verse. Adam appears as regent or deputy for God on earth in several passages: see 7:69, 74; 10:14, 73; 27:62; and 35:39.

2:31The word ism (name) implies use of reason and insight to distinguish between visible and invisible entities. The implication in the Arabic is that Adam is being given more profound knowledge than simply the “names” of things.

2:31If the angels are right in their fear about the regent.

2:34Iblis is another name for Satan, the enemy of humankind. Iblis’s refusal to bow down to Adam is cited in several other passages: 7:11, 17:61, 18:50, 20:116, and 38:74–75.

2:36God’s speech is addressed to Adam, Eve, and Iblis. There are two other Quranic passages where the creation story features Satan/Iblis seducing Adam and Eve: 7:10–25 and 20:115–27.

2:41Here is the first of several Quranic passages confirming the Quran as a completion of earlier scriptures. See ahl al-kitab in Glossary, page 529.

2:47The word translated as “peoples” is the Arabic ʿalamin: literally, “all the worlds or the universe.” See Glossary, page 529.

2:51This is the “golden calf,” depicted in Exodus 32:1–35; also cited in suras 7:148–53 and 20: 83–98.

2:53On furqan (the criterion), see Glossary, page 530.

2:54Arabic fa-uqtulu anfusakum: literally, “and kill yourselves,” but here with a metaphorical meaning.

2:60Arabic kull unas: literally, “all the people,” but commentators agree that this refers to the tribes.

2:61I.e., the children of Israel.

2:62Since the Sabians, followers of the Queen of Sheba, were considered monotheists, and may be linked to the Mandaeans of southern Iraq, this passage echoes the Quranic message of inclusiveness: all who believe and do good will find salvation.

2:65Arabic kunu qirada khasiin: literally, “be apes, despised.” This figure of speech is also used elsewhere in the Quran, e.g., 31:19 and 62:5.

2:67Arabic aʿudhu bi Allah an akun min al-jahilin: literally, “I seek refuge with God from being among the ignorant.”

2:70This account can be compared to the biblical narrative in Numbers 19: 2–3, where the people of Israel are commanded to sacrifice a red heifer which is without defect or blemish and has never been placed under a yoke, as part of a purification ritual.

2:71Arabic jiʾta bil-haqq: literally, “you have brought the truth.”

2:87Here and in v. 253 (as also in 4:171; 5:110; and 16:2, 102), the original uses the Arabic phrase ruh al-quds—literally, “the spirit of [God] the Holy.” See Glossary, page 532.

2:95Arabic bima qaddamat aydihim: literally, “on account of what their hands have sent forth.”

2:98Gabriel, often implied, is mentioned by name here and in one later sura (26:193), while Michael is mentioned only here. Both appear as quasi-angelic forces in Jewish literature, but since Gabriel was not only the holy or noble spirit but also the harbinger of death, some Jews saw him in a negative light.

2:101Arabic alladhina utu al-kitab kitab Allah waraa dhuhurihim: literally, “Those given the Book put the Book behind their backs.”

2:102Solomon was not only king of Israel after David but, as a renowned source of wisdom, he also became the paragon of magicians and it is against this misuse of “Solomonic wisdom” that the current verse is warning.

2:102Harut and Marut, two contrarian angels mentioned only here in the Quran, are said to be linked to the planet Venus; from there they allegedly derived special powers, at once magical and disruptive.

2:104Some Jews in Medina opposed to the Prophet mispronounced raʿina as ra`ayna (being a derogatory term in Hebrew, raʿuna meaning “thoughtlessness”) so that it became an abusive expression. The same derogatory verbal word game is cited elsewhere, at 4:46.

2:106The technical word for “abrogation” is naskh (where a given verse is canceled or replaced by another); see Glossary, page 532.

2:110A reference to the day of judgment echoed elsewhere; see especially 99:7–8.

2:112Arabic man aslama wajhahu li Allah: literally, “whoever submits his face to God.”

2:113Arabic laisat al-nasara ʿala shay: literally, “Christians have nothing to stand upon.”

2:125The place near the Kaʿba where Abraham was said to have stood as he prepared to sacrifice his son Ishmael. See below, 37:100–111.

2:128As elsewhere, the root verb, s-l-m, refers both to peace (salam) and submission (islam), and in the period when the Muslim movement had not yet coalesced into community aware of itself as such, the emphasis was on submitting to God and to God’s will both as individuals and as a group.

2:129Verses 124–29 are a kind of prayer consecrating the Kaʿba. Abraham’s prayer here (v. 129) has been answered with the appearance of Muhammad. The religion of Abraham (millat Ibrahim) includes his covenant (through circumcision) with God, so that millat Ibrahim means “community of the covenant with Abraham.” See also 2:135 and 16:123. Abraham becomes the prototype of the new community of believers, al-muslimun, those who submit (2:135–36). See Glossary, page 531.

2:132The word din, here rendered as “religion,” has multiple meanings. See Glossary, page 530.

2:133Arabic am kuntum shuhadaʾa idh hadara Yaʿqub al-mawt: literally, “did you witness when death approached Jacob?” This is directed to the Jews, who claimed Jacob as their forefather.

2:134Umma is here rendered as “community” since the distinction of belief in One God is not limited to Jews or Christians, but applies to all who followed the example of Abraham. For other meanings, see Glossary, page 533.

2:138The word for color (sibgha) distinguishes the creed of Abraham from others by its hue or color, for many signified as “green.”

2:142In Arabic, qibla signifies the direction of prayer, which was changed from Jerusalem to Mecca in the year 624 CE, and remains the direction of worship for Muslims today.

2:143Arabic umma wasat: literally, “a community of the middle or the middle way,” stressing that God is the God of East and West. To paraphrase 1:5, “the straight path” is also the middle path—at once moderate and broad, avoiding extremism or exclusion in all forms.

2:143Arabic linaʿlama: literally, “that We might know.”

2:148The Arabic pronoun li-kull is indefinite; it can refer to an individual or a collective, but the collective “community” seems best here.

2:156Arabic inna li-Allah wa-inna ilayhi rajiʿuna (“To God we belong, and to God we shall return”) is one of the most important emblems of Muslim belief and practice in the Quran. It is often found on tombstones and is customarily recited on the news of anyone’s death.

2:157Arabic ulaʾika ʿalayhim salawat min rabbihim wa-rahma: literally, “on whom descend prayers from their Lord and mercy.”

2:158Safa and Marwa are two hills between which Abraham’s wife Hagar ran in search of water for her son Ishmael. Her quest is commemorated by Hajj pilgrims, who walk or run between the two hills.

2:158The Hajj is the major pilgrimage, to be performed during the pilgrimage season; the ʿUmra, or minor pilgrimage, can be performed at any time of the year. The importance of the Hajj is accented by its placement in the obligations incumbent on each Muslim. ʿEid al-Adha is the feast of the near sacrifice of Ishmael by Abraham, celebrated every year, after the Hajj, as the major Islamic festival.

2:185This is the signature event for Muslim observance of a monthlong fast, from sunrise to sunset. It lasts the entire month of Ramadan, ending in the Islamic calendar with a three-day festival, ʿEid al-Fitr. The actual revelation of the Quran took place over several years from 610 to 632 CE, with Sura 5:3 popularly thought to be the last revelation (though some have disputed that link). What is not disputed is the importance of Lailat al-Qadr. The high moment of Ramadan, it is marked in Sura 97 as “the Night of Decree” (see also 44:3), widely celebrated on the twenty-seventh night of Ramadan, when the entire Quran was said to be revealed to the Prophet, though articulated only in successive stages (17:106, 25:32).

2:187Prior to Islam men used to lie secretly with their wives during the nights of fasting.

2:189Before Islam, some Arabs, returning from the pilgrimage, entered their homes by the back door, imagining this to be a righteous act.

2:191This is a critical instance—one among many—where the only correct sense of Quranic injunctions can be, and must be, gleaned from the whole context. There is not an unconditional directive “And kill them where you find them.” The condition is: “Fight . . . against those who fight you,” but within limits. One must read the entire passage, vv. 190–94. See also 2:216–17. Cited here twice, the injunction to fight also recurs in 4:76, 84, 89, 91 and 9:5, 12, 14, 29, 36, 123. Although not as dramatic as the so-called verse of the sword (9:5), these verses nonetheless commend fighting, but solely in self-defense and within limits.

2:194According to most commentators, there were four sacred months in the Islamic calendar in which fighting was prohibited: Rajab, Dhu al-Qaʾda, Dhu al-Hijja, and Muharram. However, if the polytheists attacked Muslims during a sacred month, the latter were permitted to defend themselves.

2:195Arabic la tulqu bi-aydikum ila al-tahluka: literally, “do not cast yourself into ruin through your own hands.” This verse is about charitable spending, and not, as some commentators have suggested, the prospect of suicide.

2:198Trade is permitted during the pilgrimage.

2:198The sacred site (al-mashʿar al-haram) is identified as Muzdalifa on the basis of Muhammad’s practice. ʿArafat is about twenty-two kilometers (thirteen miles) from Mecca while Muzdalifa is about eight kilometers (five miles) beyond ʿArafat.

2:203The appointed days are the days after the ʿEid al-Adha, celebrating the end of Ramadan. Pilgrims must spend at least two days in the valley of Mina, which is about five kilometers (three miles) east of Mecca.

2:222This verse begins long section on marriage and divorce (through v. 242), with v. 228, like 4:34, seeming to elevate men above women. Yet in each case the “elevation” implies responsibility for taking fair action, and in the context of early-seventh-century Arabia, these verses curtailed rather than expanded both male dominance and the unbridled resort to patriarchal norms.

2:223Arabic anna shiʾtum: literally, “as you wish.”

2:226Prior to the advent of Islam, husbands could swear abstinence from their wives indefinitely; Islam decreed that after four months, they would have to divorce them.

2:234I.e., if they choose to remarry after the required waiting period.

2:235A man may make known his interest in the woman during her ʿidda period but may not make a formal proposal.

2:237Arabic ʿuqdat al-nikah: literally, “the knot of marriage.”

2:240Again, the reference here seems to be to a widow’s decision to remarry after the required waiting period.

2:246A reference to Samuel, as in 1 Samuel 8:19–20.

2:248This is presumably the “ark of God” mentioned in 1 Samuel 3:3, the same ark that rescued Noah and assured the continuation of humankind. See 7:46.

2:255This is the most beloved, and often quoted, section of the Quran, after the initial sura, al-Fatiha. It embodies both invocation and petition to God, extolling His Beautiful Names at the beginning and the end. The Prophet Muhammad regarded this verse, which lays out the divine attributes of unity and eternal life, omnipotence and omniscience, transcendence and immanence, as the most exalted verse in the Quran (Imam Abul Hussain bin al Hajja et al., eds., Nasiruddin al Khattab, trans., Sahih Muslim [Lahore: Darussalam, 2007], hadith 810, 1:556).

2:258Despite the power of this narrative, its protagonist has never been identified, yet Abraham’s debate with a king is often assumed to be Nimrod, with parallels in apocryphal literature, similar to speculations about the man and the town cited in 2:259. It can be linked to Sura 18:9–26, the story of the “companions of the Cave,” which has parallels to the Christian legend of the Sleepers of Ephesus.

2:275For other passages that address the Quranic prohibition of usury (or lending money for interest), see 3:130, 4:161, and 30:39.

2:282This is the longest verse of the 6236 verses in the Quran. It offers a complex set of rules about the need to record loan agreements in writing. After announcing eight successive stages, it culminates in the directive “Be mindful of God,” with the assurance “it is God Who will teach you—God Knows all things.” The next verse (v. 283) provides limits to this command when traveling.

Sura 3

The Family of ʿImran (AlʿImran)

3:1On these disconnected letters, see muqattaʿat in Glossary, page 531.

3:7Arabic umm al-kitab: literally, “the Mother of the Book”—that is, what gives it life and nurtures it, as does a mother. Here we have yet another instance of the gender-inclusive idioms that pervade the Quranic message. See Glossary, page 532.

3:7This verse is the basis for abrogating verses; it is widely cited as a critique internal to the Quran of attributing one meaning to all its verses. See naskh in Glossary, page 532.

3:12Arabic mihad: literally, “a place of rest.” But the implication is that hell is the final destination of the disbelievers.

3:13I.e., at the Battle of Badr, in March 624 CE.

3:14Arabic lil-nas: literally, “to people or humankind,” but clearly intending “men.” See nas in Glossary, page 532.

3:19Arabic al-Islam, here an inclusive term (as elsewhere in the Quran), not the religion of one group. See Glossary, page 531.

3:20Arabic aslamtu wajhiya li-Allah: literally, “I have submitted my face to God,” but clearly implying the entire person or whole self.

3:20Arabic ummiyyin: literally, “unlettered,” but here referring to those who have not yet received scripture. See also v. 75 and 2:78 (“Among them are unlettered people who don’t know the Book”).

3:28Arabic yuhadhdhirukum Allah nafsahu: literally, “God warns you about Himself.”

3:33The phrases “the family of Abraham” and “the family of ʿImran” constitute the first, and only, such genealogical reference in the entire Quran. The family of Abraham is well-known, traceable to Isaac, Ishmael, and their descendants. The family of ʿImran refers to Miriam’s lineage through her father, ʿImran, and his wife (cf. v. 35).

3:36It seems to be implied that a girl, unlike a boy, could not serve in the Temple, but God chose to overlook this gender limitation.

3:38Arabic min ladunka: literally, “from Yourself.”

3:39A reference to Jesus, since John later confirms Jesus as a Word from Him (v. 45).

3:52The Arabic word muslim means one who submits to the will of God. See also 5:111, 112 and Glossary (page 531). It is significant that the disciples of Jesus assume this appellation for themselves.

3:61Many authorities aver that several verses of this sura, but especially vv. 59–61, were revealed to Muhammad in 632 CE after a delegation of Christians visited the Prophet. Following an intense discussion, Muhammad challenged them to a prayer contest, and while the challenge was not accepted, a treaty was issued giving these Christians protection to practice their religion in territory controlled by the ascendant Muslims.

3:67The word hanif, also used in 2:135, refers to a person who believed only in the one God even before Abraham. See Glossary, page 530.

3:70Here the implication is that God’s signs are also verses from the heavenly Book, itself the source for the Torah, the Psalms, the Gospels, as well as the Quran. See ayat in Glossary, page 530.

3:75The dinar is a small unit of currency in some parts of the Arab world.

3:79The addressees are Jews; see 5:44, where rabbis and the learned are invoked together.

3:93Dietary laws laid down first by Noah (Genesis 9:3–4) and then by Jacob/Israel (Genesis 32:32).

3:96The Arabic word Bakka is an old name for Mecca.

3:112The two ropes, one from God, the other from humankind, are metaphors suggesting that only total reliance on God and full acceptance of other believers will elevate those among the people of the Book who are “true believers” (v. 110).

3:112See 2:61 for identical words, referring there only to Jews; here, the disobedient who are “always transgressing” refers to all people of the Book.

3:113In contrast with the preceding verse, ayat here has to be rendered as “verses” or “words,” not “signs.” See Glossary, page 530.

3:121The historical incident to which this passage refers is the Battle of Uhud, which the Muslims thought they were winning, and then lost, in 625 CE. The Battle of Badr, which preceded it, marked the first victory of the nascent Muslim community in 624.

3:125A similar divine insertion of angelic assistance occurred at the Battle of Badr; see 8:9–10, where the number of celestial mediaries is “a thousand angels, row upon row.”

3:137Arabic sunan: literally, “practices” or “customs.”

3:140Another reference to the Battle of Uhud (625 CE), where the Muslims, having flouted the commands of the Prophet, were defeated by the Quraysh.

3:140Arabic shuhadaʾ: literally, “witnesses [to Him],” and thus rendered as “martyrs.”

3:147Arabic wa-israfana fi amrina: literally, “and forgive us excess in our affairs.”

3:152I.e., victory over your enemies.

3:154Arabic jahiliyya. “Ignorance” is the usual translation for this word, signifying the period preceding the advent of Islam; see also 5:50.

3:154Arabic wa-liyabtaliya Allah ma fi sudurikum wa-liyumahhisa ma fi qulubikum: literally, “so that God could test your breasts and purify what was in your hearts.”

3:174Like Dhu al-Fadl, “Ever Gracious” in v. 152, Dhu al-Fadl al-ʿAzim here is not one of the canonical ninety-nine Beautiful Names of God, but “Most Gracious” clearly has the same power as other such names, and hence is here capitalized, as are numerous other noncanonical names, both affirming and critiquing humankind. See The Beautiful Names, page 536.

Sura 4

Women (Al-Nisa)

4:3See v. 127, where it is clear that “orphan girls” are the subject of this directive.

4:3The phrase “those you own” refers to concubines who, in addition to legal wives, were considered part of the household for seventh-century Arabs.

4:5The property of the orphans.

4:6Arabic wabtalu: literally, “and test.”

4:15This verse is often read in tandem with 22:2–3, where a different punishment is prescribed.

4:24The intended meaning is to alter mutual agreements between husband and wife after the obligatory bride gifts, as indicated earlier in 4:4.

4:25See v. 3.

4:29Arabic wa-la taqtulu anfusakum: literally, “do not kill your selves,” an expression that can be read as an injunction against both murder and suicide.

4:34Arabic min amwalihim: literally, “from their wealth.”

4:34The most controversial directive about women in the Quran, it advises use of force but also, in context, with restraint; hence the qualifier “harmless force.” The vast majority of exegetes agree that the force used should be very light, leaving no mark, and that its intent is merely to mark displeasure. Numerous sayings of the Prophet condemn the practice of beating women; Muhammad never even raised his voice to any of his wives.

4:46The exchange here amplifies the reference above in 2:104—see the note there. In both instances, some Medinan Jews opposed to the Prophet would twist these words, using them against him.

4:49There are also references to a date stone in vv. 53, 77, and 124.

4:75Arabic min ladunka: literally, “from Yourself.”

4:88Arabic wa-man yudlil Allah fa-lan tajida lahu sabil: literally, “for those whom God allows to stray you can never find a way.” But the repetition, on the heels of the question that precedes, sounds strained in English.

4:117See a parallel reference in 53:19–20.

4:125Arabic hanif. This refers to one who follows the primordial or natural religion of monotheism, considered to be the innate propensity of humankind. It is used of Abraham ten times, emphasizing his archetypal role as the founder of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The opposite of hanif in the Quran is the term mushrik, which means polytheist or idolater (literally, one who partners other entities with God). See Glossary, page 530.

4:128In other words, the wife would agree to a decrease of her maintenance allowance.

4:129Arabic kal-muʿallaqa: literally, “like one suspended.”

4:153The reference here is to recalcitrant Jews, who did not obey Moses (cf. Deuteronomy 1:26–36). See 2:55 for a similar exchange and word usage. Elsewhere it is Moses himself who implores, “Show yourself to me, so I may look upon you.” To this comes the reply, “Never shall you see me,” after which a mountain is crumbled (7:143).

4:154“Gate” here is a metaphor for the land of Israel.

4:155Arabic ghulf: literally, “wrapped, unable to be opened or penetrated.” See also 2:88: “Our hearts are closed,” with a similar lesson albeit using the stronger verb “curse”: “No—God curses them for their disbelief; and little do they believe.”

4:157This is the sole Quranic dictum that a likeness of Jesus was crucified, not Jesus in the flesh. Elsewhere, the Trinity (4:171 and 5:73) and the divinity of Jesus (5:16, 72, 116; and 9:31) are denied.

4:158The same action for raising Jesus is paralleled for Mount Sinai earlier in this sura (v. 154).

4:159Arabic qabla mawtihi: literally, “before his death,” reinforcing the notion that all Jews who reject Jesus’ prophecy and all Christians who affirm his divinity will accept Jesus as a prophet before they die.

4:166The parallelism is to Moses and to the revelation he received: both came directly from God, without mediation.

4:171The Arabic word ruh, meaning “spirit,” is also used to refer to the mediary of Mary’s conception in 2:87 as ruh al-quds. Many translators (Yusuf Ali, Pickthall, Abdel Haleem, Alan Jones, Syed Qutb) render it as “Holy Spirit” but the reference to the spirit in the form of a man (i.e., Jabril or Gabriel) is specified in 19:17: “Then We sent Our spirit, appearing to her in the perfect form of a man.” Here—as also in 2:87, 253; 5:110; and 16:2,102—the text translates the Arabic phrase ruh al-quds: literally, “the spirit of [God] the Holy.”

4:173Arabic fa-yuʿadhdhibuhumʿadhab alim: literally, “He will punish them with a painful punishment.”

4:175Note the parallelism and contrast with vv. 168–69.

4:176The discussion here harks back to vv. 11–12, when inheritance and the rules of its disbursement were first introduced. It grounds all the moral teachings of this sura in a final, concretized case.

Sura 5

The Table Spread (Al-Maʾida)

5:2Arabic wa-la al-hadya wa-la al-qalaʾid: literally, “nor of the offerings nor of the garlanded ones.”

5:2The Arabic al-bait al-haram clearly refers to the Kaʿba in Mecca, and the preceding elements relate to the rites of the Hajj, the annual pilgrimage.

5:2Here as elsewhere, when a noncanonical Beautiful Name is invoked in the Quran, it will usually be capitalized to indicate its source, with appropriate stress, parallel to other Beautiful Names in the canonical list of ninety-nine. See the introduction for further explanation.

5:3See v. 90, where divining arrows, as well as sacrifices at stone altars, are forbidden.

5:3Arabic “al-islam”: literally, “submission [to My will].” This is taken by most commentators to be the final revelation, revealed to the Prophet less than three months before his death in 632 CE. It is framed in a verse accenting obedience and forgiveness, each in tandem with the other.

5:5Those “given the book” are Jews and Christians.

5:11The Quraysh.

5:12I.e., if you spend money legitimately earned in the way of God.

5:22“They” here refers to the Canaanites, prior inhabitants of what became the Land of Israel.

5:30Arabic fa-qatalahu fa-asbaha min al-khasirin: literally, “then he killed him and became one of the lost.” But the repetition does not sit well in English.

5:32Arabic fasad fi al-ard: literally, “spreading corruption on earth.” This is a widely applicable moral imperative: to prevent broadscale physical violence or moral failure within the nascent Muslim community, concrete prohibitions and punishments are to be meted out. Their actual applicability has been, and continues to be, a matter of ongoing interpretation, with variant approaches and decrees.

5:41In the opinion of most Quranic commentators, this refers to an incident in which a Jewish woman and man had committed adultery and were brought to the Prophet for his ruling. The Prophet asked about precedents from the Torah but was given false information. It was up to the Prophet to decide: if he opted for lashing, the accused were told to take it; but if stoning, they were warned to beware.

5:44This is addressed to the rabbis and Jewish scholars.

5:50Here again, as in numerous other passages, “ignorance” is the translation of jahiliyya, the period preceding the advent of Islam.

5:69Since the Sabians were monotheists, the passage echoes a recurrent Quranic message of inclusiveness: all who believe and do good deeds will find salvation.

5:80Arabic labiʾsa ma qaddamat lahum anfusuhum: literally, “wicked is what their souls send forward for them” (to be added to their account on the day of judgment).

5:95This rectangular building, which Muslims believe was built by Abraham, is at the center of the mosque in Mecca, around which pilgrims circumambulate.

5:103There are Arabic terms for each of these domestic animals: bahira, saʾiba, wasila, and ham. All were deemed worthy of sacrifice, and efficacious, as part of Meccan idol worship prior to the coming of Islam.

5:104Arabic ma wajadna ʿalayhi abaʿana: literally, “what we found our forefathers doing.”

Sura 6

Cattle (Al-Anʿam)

6:2The two terms are presumed to be one’s earthly span of life as fixed by God and the moment of final reckoning.

6:8The “judgment” clearly refers to the day of judgment.

6:12Arabic katabaʿala nafsihi al-rahma: literally, “decreed for Himself the showing of mercy.”

6:27Arabic wa-nakun min al-muʾminin: literally, “and we would be among the believers.”

6:35Arabic wa-in kana kabura ʿalayka iʿraduhum: literally, “and if their turning away is hard on you,” clearly a rhetorical question, implying that nothing could change the disbelievers.

6:38The Arabic word umam (sing. umma) is usually “nation(s)” but here it’s best rendered as “communities” see the next note, regarding v. 42. See also umma in Glossary, page 533.

6:42Arabic umam: either “nations,” as here, or “communities” (v. 38).

6:44Arabic fatahna ʿalayhim abwab kull shay’: literally, “we opened for them the gates of everything.”

6:45Arabic fa-qutiʿa: literally, “was cut off.”

6:54The expression in Arabic, kataba ʿala nafsihi al-rahma (literally, “decreed for Himself the showing of mercy”), is identical to v. 12 above.

6:61The envoys clearly are angels.

6:73Arabic bi al-haqq: literally, “in truth.”

6:92“The mother of cities” is another name for Mecca.

6:112Arabic zukhrufa al-qawl ghurur: literally, “with adorned speech in deception.”

6:113Arabic wa-liyaqtarifu ma hum muqtarifun: literally, “and they commit the things they are committing.”

6:114Arabic fa-la takunanna min al-mumtarin: literally, “then do not be among those who doubt.”

6:125“Submission [to God’s will],” here as elsewhere, is the literal meaning of the Arabic word islam. See Glossary, page 531.

6:135Arabic iʿmalu ʿala makanatikum: literally, “act according to your place or station.”

6:157Arabic suʾ al-ʿadhab bima kanu yasdifun: literally, “We gave them a dread punishment for their turning away,” but the repetition seems heavy in English.

6:158Again, the repetition in Arabic—baʿd ayat rabbika (literally, “some signs of your Lord”)—seems excessive in English.

Sura 7

The Heights (Al-Aʿraf)

7:1On these disconnected letters, see muqattaʿat in Glossary, page 531.

7:8The “balance” refers to the divine scales of justice, which will weigh good deeds and bad deeds.

7:13It is from Eden that Satan was banished.

7:16Echoing Sura 1:7, “not astray,” this verse confirms the agency of Satan as the one who leads humankind astray.

7:20Both Satan and his son Khannas prefer “whispering” as a form of communication; see 114:4, where the “whisperer” is deemed to be Khannas.

7:29Arabic ʿaqimu wujuhakum ʿinda kull masjid: literally, “set your faces forward at each place of prayer.”

7:34The same Arabic word, ajal, is used for the fixed term of life for a community as for the fixed term of life for a single person; see 6:2 and Glossary, page 529.

7:40A familiar image from the Gospels: see Matthew 19:24, Mark 10:5, and Luke 18:25. Here, it refers not just to a rich man, but to all sinners.

7:71The “names” of idols are referred to elsewhere, in 12:40 and 53:23; they seem clearly to be the three stone idols or goddesses, al-Lat, al-Uzza, and Manat (53:19–20).

7:78This same incident of prophecy, betrayal, and destruction—all linked to the she-camel of Thamud—becomes the backdrop for 91:11–14. It serves as the prototype for many punishment stories in the Quran.

7:79Arabic wa-lakin la tuhibbun al-nasihin: literally, “but you dislike those who give advice.”

7:84Parallel to 11:82, which is also about Lot, “When Our command came to pass, We turned their town upside down, and rained upon it stones of baked clay, layer upon layer.”

7:142Most commentators suggest that the first thirty days were dedicated to fasting, and that the Torah was revealed only during the final ten days.

7:144Arabic kalimati: literally, “My word”—i.e., God’s direct word (without mediation)—and so the nickname for Moses is kalimatu Allah, “The word of God.”

7:151Arabic arham al-rahimin: literally, “the Most Merciful of the merciful.”

7:155Arabic khair al-ghafirin: literally, “the Best of Forgivers.”

7:157Muhammad is the “unlettered” prophet since he does not read or write yet understands and communicates to others what has been revealed to him and is then written down by others.

7:157References to predictions about a coming prophet occur in Deuteronomy 18:15 and John 14:16.

7:165Arabic baʾis: literally, “wretched.”

7:166For this phrase, see also, e.g., 2:65, 31:19, and 62: 5.

7:167It is not clear who will be the agents inflicting punishment against the Jews, whether Assyrians or Babylonians, Greeks, Romans, Persians, or even Muslims.

7:169Arabic wa-darasu ma fihi: literally, “they studied what was in it.”

7:171See parallel passage and imagery in 4:154.

7:172This reference to the eternal covenant between the Divine and humankind is often evoked by the single question: alastu bi-rabbikum? (Am I not your Lord?) The day of resurrection is also known as yawm alastu.

7:180Arabic wa-li Allah al-asmaʾ al-husna: literally, “to God belong the Beautiful Names.” The Beautiful Names of God recur throughout the Quran, as in this condensed expression here, and then again in 17:110, 20:8, and 59:24.

7:187Arabic thaqulat: literally, “it weighs heavily.”

7:202Arabic ikhwanuhum: literally, “their brothers.”

Sura 8

The Spoils of War (Al-Anfal)

8:11Arabic amana minhu: literally, “a security from Him.”

8:17There is a tradition that the Prophet threw pebbles at the foe during the Battle of Badr.

8:34The “sacred mosque” is the Kaʿba in Mecca.

8:38Arabic qad madat sunnat al-awwalin: literally, “there preceded the practice or protocol of predecessors.”

8:41Arabic yawm al-furqan: literally, “[on] the day of the criterion [between right and wrong].” See Glossary, page 530.

8:42That is, once the Meccans saw how large the Quraysh army was, they would have opted not to fight.

8:43At first, the Quraysh army had appeared in a dream as few and weak, yet later they were many and fearsome. The divine strategy was to shift from the apparent small army to the actual huge enemy force.

8:48Arabic wa-inni jar lakum: literally, “and indeed, I am a neighbor for you.”

8:51Arabic dhalika bima qaddamat aydikum: literally, “this is because of what your hands have sent forth.”

8:68Arabic law la kitab min Allah: literally, “had it not been a book from God.”

8:68The issue at stake here is what to do with prisoners taken at the Battle of Badr, since the divine decree has been clear: forgive them rather than kill them.

8:72The emigrants have the right to inherit from the Medinans. The clear sense of this passage is that relatives (alone) are no longer kinsfolk but rather all who have become believers, at once emigrants (from Mecca to Medina) and those who strive “[with you] in the cause of God.”

8:72From Mecca to Medina.

8:72They seek your help against those who would persecute them due to their religion.

8:75This is likely synonymous with umm al-kitab, the ultimate source of all deeds, persons, and outcomes (3:7, 12:39, and 43:4; see Glossary, page 532). Most exegetes agree that this abrogates the implication regarding inheritance in v. 72, and it reaffirms that the sole rights of inheritance belong to blood relatives. Some commentators state that “allies” can inherit from someone only if the deceased does not have blood relatives.

Sura 9

Repentance (Al-Tawba)

9:4The “term” indicated here are the months of Rajab, Dhu al-Qaʾda, Dhu al-Hijja, and Muharram. They had been honored as a truce period by pre-Islamic Arabs, and this revelation confirms the continuation of that practice under Islam.

9:8This refers to the first group of polytheists mentioned in the previous verse.

9:17This and the next two verses appear to be directed at those who did not believe in Muhammad’s prophecy but were still attached to the Kaʿba as a place of worship.

9:25The Battle of Hunayn took place after the conquest of Mecca in 630 CE, in the neighboring town of Taʿif. Both vv. 25 and 26 depict the fortunes of this battle.

9:29The jizya tax is levied on non-Muslims under Muslim rule, in return for protection of their homes, property, and persons by Muslim authorities. Though this is the single mention of it in the Quran, the jizya tax became an axial feature of Muslim law.

9:30Ezra, esteemed by all Jews, is believed to be God’s son only by some Jews from Arabia, while the affirmation that Jesus is the son of God is believed by all Christians—even though opinions vary wildly about what “sonship” means.

9:30Sura 5:75 raises the same critique with the same wording: “how deluded they are!”

9:36To wit, the months of Rajab, Dhu al-Qaʾda, Dhu al-Hijja, and Muharram. See the note for 9:4.

9:36The injunction here is similar to 2:194: “and for all violations, a fair requital. If anyone assaults you, you may respond in kind, equally against them.”

9:37This is a correction of the correction to calendrical time practiced by pre-Islamic Arabs, in order to synchronize the solar and lunar calendars. It is here explicitly rejected in order to maintain the Muslim difference, to wit, that a lunar calendar is rotated not just in ordinary time but in liturgical time, changing the dates for the Ramadan fast and the Hajj pilgrimage each year.

9:38This and the next verse (v. 39), as well as several verses below, are related to the expedition that the Prophet organized to Tabuk, in order to oppose the Byzantines, in 630. The expected battle never occurred but the instigator of the Byzantine leader, Heraclius, was a Medinan notable opposed to the Prophet, Abu Amir. Some refused to fight and they are again rebuked in v. 81 below.

9:40This moment, known as the hijra or “flight,” marked Muhammad’s escape from Mecca to Medina in 622 CE, which became 1 AH. His companion was Abu Bakr, later his successor, the first caliph of Islam.

9:42Arabic yuhlikun anfusahum: literally, “they ruin themselves.”

9:44This and the next few verses seem to be calming Muhammad about the decision he made to accept halfhearted excuses from those who claimed to be Muslims but asked for exemption from the campaign at Tabuk. They were wrong not to assent to fight, though no fighting ever occurred, yet as the revelation explains, their faint participation would have created even greater problems for those who did agree to fight.

9:48Arabic laka al-umur: literally, “your affairs.”

9:52A similar injunction, with nearly identical wording, occurs in 7:71.

9:60Sadaqat, here translated as “alms,” is not the same as zakat, also “alms.” The latter is compulsory, the former voluntary, yet the aims for which both can and should be distributed are set by God as “an obligation” on all believers.

9:68Arabic hiya hasbuhum: literally, “it suffices for them.”

9:74Arabic wa-hammu bi ma lam yanalu: literally, “and they planned what they could not attain.” Most commentators take this to be a plot against the Prophet, inspired by those who wanted more than their share of booty.

9:81See note for 9:38.

9:90“Bedouin Arabs” are nomadic Arabs; they are discussed further in vv. 97–99 and are also mentioned later, in 48:11–16 and 49:14–17.

9:100The forerunners (sabiqun) stand above all others, as also noted in 56:10; they are given special preference in the hereafter.

9:107This verse seems to refer to a specific mosque, one built by opponents of the Prophet in Medina who claimed to be Muslims yet did not accept his authority. It was later destroyed.

9:118Another reference to those who did not participate in the battle at Tabuk.

9:128These final two verses (128–29) are thought to have been the last revealed to Muhammad; their hopeful tone lifts the mood of this entire sura to a realm of resolve that divine mercy will triumph in the end.

Sura 10

Jonah (Yunus)

10:1On these disconnected letters, see muqattaʿat in Glossary, page 531.

10:2Arabic awhayna ila rajul minhum: literally, “We revealed to a man among them.”

10:5The lunar calendar in Islam is based on this and similar verses (6:96, 17:12).

10:12Arabic lijanbihi: literally, “on his side.” Elsewhere the same expression appears in the plural, “on their sides” (3:191, 4:104).

10:16The Prophet Muhammad is here alluding to the fact that he was forty years old before receiving the initial revelation that subsequently became the Quran.

10:19Arabic law la kalima sabaqat min rabbika: literally, “had it not been for a Word that preceded from your Lord.”

10:19The Word from God is that people will continue to disagree: “had God willed, they would not have fought—but God does as He intends” (2:253).

10:26Arabic ulaʾika ashab al-janna hum fiha khalidun: literally, “they shall be companions of the garden, where they shall live forever.”

10:39Arabic kadhdhabu bima lam yuhitu biʿilmihi: literally, “they deny that, the knowledge of which they cannot compass.”

10:87Arabic qibla: literally, “prayer direction.” People could pray in their homes to avoid persecution.

10:103Arabic haqq ʿalayna: literally, “as is Our right or obligation,” but since God cannot be obliged to do anything, it is His right to choose, or His choice.

10:105Arabic aqim wajhaka: literally, “set your face.”

10:108Arabic fa-man ihtada fa innama yahtadi linafsihi: literally, “so whoever is guided, is guided for, or to, himself.”

10:108Arabic yadillu ʿalayha: literally, “he strays against it.”

Sura 11

Hud (Hud)

11:1On these disconnected letters, see muqattaʿat in Glossary, page 531.

11:1Arabic ‘uhkimat ayatuhu: literally, “its verses made clear.” This passage is parallel to 3:7 (“Some of its verses are clear in meaning”), where the original Arabic ayat muhkamat literally translates as “verses with clear meaning.”

11:3Arabic yawm kabir: literally, “a great day.”

11:17Arabic wa-man yakfur bihi min al-ahzab fa-al-nar mawʿiduhu: literally, “and whoever among the groups denies it, the fire will be his appointed place.”

11:21Arabic wa-dalla ʿanhum ma kanu yaftarun: literally, “and all that they invented strayed from them.”

11:35This verse is best understood as a parenthetic comment within the narrative about Noah. It is inserted to verify the truthfulness of the Prophet Muhammad, harking back to the reproof of vv. 13–14.

11:40Arabic wafara al-tannur: literally, “and the oven boiled over.”

11:44Mount Judi is located near Lake Van, within the greater region known as Ararat.

11:49Arabic inna al-ʿaqiba lil-muttaqin: literally, “the outcome belongs to those mindful of God.”

11:50I.e., their fellow countryman.

11:50Arabic in antum illa muftarun: literally, “you are merely inventors [of gods].”

11:54Arabic anni bariʾ mimma tushrikun: literally, “I am innocent of what you associate.”

11:78The implication seems clear: Lot wanted to commend his daughters as partners in preference to the guest messengers, males, whom his townsmen were intent on violating. But it is equally important to note that they were corrupt people “who before this had performed evil deeds.” It is greed, selfishness, and inhospitality that marks these people, not their homosexuality.

11:83Each stone had inscribed on it the person to be killed; parallel to 51:34.

11:88Or “I only want to set things right.”

11:101Arabic wa-ma zaduhum ghayra tatbib: literally, “and increased them in nothing but ruin.”

11:107Arabic faʿʿal lima yurid: literally, “an Accomplisher of whatever He wishes.”

11:108The implication is that a higher reward exists for some of the most favored, to wit, those foremost in faith, noted in 56:10–11: “the foremost [in faith] shall be foremost [in place]; these will be nearest to God.”

11:117Some translators render muslihun as “reformers,” but “righteous” seems to make better sense in this context.

Sura 12

Joseph (Yusuf)

12:1On these disconnected letters, see muqattaʿat in Glossary, page 531.

12:8Arabic wa-nahnu ʿusba: literally, “though we are a group.”

12:9Arabic wajh abikum: literally, “your father’s face.”

12:9Arabic wa-takunu min baʿdihi qawm salihin: literally, “and after this, you can be a righteous people.”

12:15Arabic wa-la yashʿurun: literally, “while they are not aware.”

12:18Arabic bal sawwalat lakum anfusukum amr: literally, “no, your souls have enticed you to a matter.”

12:18Arabic fa-sabr jamil: literally, “so patience is beautiful.”

12:18Arabic tasifun: literally, “you describe.”

12:20Arabic darahim: literally, “dirhams,” a form of coinage.

12:26Arabic shahid min ahliha: literally, “a witness from her family.”

12:36Arabic min al-muhsinin: literally, “one of those who do good.”

12:41Arabic qudiya al-amr alladhi fihi tastaftiyan: literally, “the matter has been decreed about which you both inquire.”

12:52Several translators attribute these words to the governor’s wife but they do not make sense as such; Joseph specifically asked the king to question the women so that his name can be cleared.

12:54Arabic astakhlishu linafsi: literally, “I may keep him for myself.”

12:59Benjamin.

12:61Arabic inna lafaʿilun: literally, “we will certainly act.”

12:102This and the verses that follow are addressed to Muhammad.

Sura 13

Thunder (Al-Raʿd)

13:1On these disconnected letters, see muqattaʿat in Glossary, page 531.

13:14Arabic illa fi dalal: literally, “nothing but in error or deviance.”

13:38Arabic likull ajal kitab: sometimes translated as “there is a decreed time for everything.” See ajal in Glossary, page 529.

13:39The phrase umm al-kitab means literally “the Mother of the Book,” as also in 3:7. See Glossary, page 532.

Sura 14

Abraham (Ibrahim)

14:1On these disconnected letters, see muqattaʿat in Glossary, page 531.

14:2Arabic wa-wayl lil-kafirin min ʿadhab shadid: literally, “and woe to the unbelievers from a severe punishment.”

14:9ʿAd and Thamud are the tribes to whom earlier prophets, Hud and Salih, had been sent, as recounted in 7:65–79.

14:9Arabic fa-raddu aydiyahum fi afwahihim: literally, “then they placed their hands in their mouths.”

14:12Arabic wa-ʿala Allah falyatawakkal al-mutawakkilun: literally, “and in God let all who trust, trust.”

14:15Arabic wa-istaftahu wa khaba kull jabbar ʿanid: literally, “and they sought victory, and every obstinate tyrant was disappointed.”

14:16Arabic maʾ sadid: literally, “purulent water,” or pus mixed with blood.

14:19Arabic bi ʿl-haqq: literally, “with truth.”

14:32Arabic wa-sakhkhara lakum al-fulk: literally, “and He subjected the ships to you.”

14:39This is the sole verse where Isaac and Ishmael are mentioned together. 37:101–2 mention a son to be sacrificed, and commentators disagree about which of the two sons was to be sacrificed. Some give preference to Ishmael since there, like here, he is the first mentioned, though indirectly. The biblical story (Genesis 22:1–19) mentions only Isaac as a potential sacrifice.

14:43Arabic la yartaddu ilayhim tarfuhum: literally, “their gaze not returning to them.”

Sura 15

The Rocky Plain (Al-Hijr)

15:1On these disconnected letters, see muqattaʿat in Glossary, page 531.

15:4Arabic illa wa laha kitab maʿlum: literally, “without its being decreed a fixed notice.”

15:6Arabic innaka lamajnun: literally, “you are possessed by jinn.”

15:11Arabic ma yaʾtihim min rasul illa kanu bihi yastahziʾun: literally, “no messenger came to them that they did not mock.”

15:13Arabic wa-qad khalat sunnat al-awwalin: literally, “and the practice of the ancients had preceded [them].”

15:17Arabic shaitan rajim: literally, “an accursed devil.” This is the last part of an invocation, “I take refuge from the accursed devil,” made before every recitation of the Quran.

15:18A similar punishment, in parallel terms, is indicated for the “rebellious devil” in 37:7–10.

15:29Similarly, it is the Archangel Gabriel who breathes God’s spirit into Mary to form the child Jesus (see 66:12).

15:47Arabic ikhwan: literally, “brothers.”

15:54Arabic fa-bima tubashshirun: literally, “about what do you give good news then?”

15:67The angels who came to Lot were disguised as handsome boys, and the townspeople came with the intention of coercing them into being sexual partners.

15:70Arabic alam nanhaka ʿan al-ʿalamin: literally, “did we not forbid you from the worlds?” This phrase has been variously interpreted as Lot’s people telling him not to interfere when they approached anyone with sexual motives or not to extend hospitality to any guests. Given the context, the former implication seems more plausible.

15:71According to some commentators, as a last resort, Lot offers his own daughters in order to save the young men, whom he does not as yet apprehend to be angels. But “my daughters” could be interpreted more generically as referring to the women of the town, and as urging the townspeople to seek females in marriage.

15:78The forest dwellers are thought to be the people of Midian, summoned by the prophet Shuʿayb (26:176–77).

15:80An area north of Medina, linked to the tribe of Thamud, discussed in vv. 80–84.

15:87The “seven much recited verses” are often thought to be the primary seven verses of the Quran, i.e., the seven verses of Sura 1, al-Fatiha, the Mother of the Book.

15:88The same tender image of lowering one’s wing is used in 17:24, with reference to protecting one’s parents.

15:99Arabic hatta yaʾtiyaka al-yaqin: literally, “until the certainty (of death) comes to you.”

Sura 16

The Bee (Al-Nahl)

16:2Arabic bi al-ruh min amrihi: literally, “with the spirit by His command.” See note for 16:102 and see also ruh in Glossary, page 532.

16:8Arabic wa zina: literally, “as ornament.”

16:10Arabic fihi tusimuna: literally, “you graze in it.”

16:25Arabic saʾa ma yazirun: literally, “what they will bear is evil.”

16:57Arabic wa-lahum ma yashtahun: literally, “and to themselves what they desire”—i.e., sons. Ascribing daughters to God seems to refer to the goddesses of 53:19, prompting the alleged “Satanic verses” controversy.

16:59A common practice among early-seventh-century Arabs, before the coming of Islam, was to bury unwanted female children in the sand, noted and critiqued in 81:8–9.

16:60Most High (Aʿla) is one of the Beautiful Names, as well as the name of a Quranic sura, number 87.

16:62That is, daughters rather than sons.

16:62Sons are “the best things.”

16:65Arabic baʿda mawtiha: literally, “after its death.”

16:74Arabic inna allaha yaʿlamu wa-antum la taʿlamuna: literally, “God knows and you do not know.”

16:77Arabic wa-ma amru al-saʿati: literally, “and what is the command of the hour.”

16:82Arabic al-balaghu al-mubinu: literally, “the manifest message.”

16:89Arabic shahidun ʿalayhim min anfusihim: literally, “a witness against them, from among themselves.”

16:92Tafsir al-Jalalayn, a classical Quranic commentary, speaks of a woman in Mecca who would weave her yarn all day and then undo it. Also, there is a famous precedent for this strategy in Homer’s Odyssey, where Odysseus’ wife, Penelope, wards off her suitors by telling them that she will make a decision concerning them when she has finished weaving a shroud for Odysseus’ father, Laertes. She weaves it by day and unravels it by night.

16:98This injunction has led to the practice of always renouncing Satan the accursed before reciting any sura or verse of the Quran.

16:101The notion that God replaces one verse of the Quran with another, known technically as “abrogation,” is a matter of great dispute. See naskh in Glossary, page 532. The burden of proof is on the interpreter, to understand each verse in context. See note for 2:106 and also 41:41–42, where it is declared that “it is a Book of great power that no falsehood might reach from any side.”

16:102The Archangel Gabriel, named as such here and also elsewhere (2:87, 253; 5:110; 16:2; 19:17; 40:15; 42:52; and 97:4), but not to be confused with the Holy Spirit linked to God the Father and God the Son in Christian belief. See ruh al-quds in Glossary, page 532.

16:103The Arabic aʿajami, translated here as “a foreign tongue,” literally means any language that is not Arabic, especially Persian. This may be a reference to scripture that the Prophet heard from Christians and Jews while he was still a merchant.

16:115The command about forbidden food, combined with leniency for circumstances, is reiterated elsewhere in the Quran (2:173, 5:3, and 6:145–46).

16:118See 6:146 for a parallel injunction.

16:126Arabic lahuwa khair lil-sabirin: literally, “it will be better for those who are patient.”

16:127Arabic wa-ma sabruka illa bi Allah: literally, “and your patience is only in God.”

Sura 17

The Night Journey (Al-Israʾ)

17:1In Arabic, “the farthest mosque” is Al-Masjid al-Aqsa. Revered by Muslims worldwide, it was constructed in the eighth century; nearby, a memorial to the Prophet’s Ascent known as Qubbat al-Sakhra, or Dome of the Rock, was also built. Together they have become al-Haram ash-Sharif, the Holy Domain or the Temple Mount, marking Jerusalem as the third most sacred city in Islam, after Mecca and Medina.

17:2The Book here is clearly the Torah, and what follows alludes to events depicted there.

17:4It is unclear what events might be alluded to here, but certainly the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE seems likely, along with the catastrophes that followed it; see v. 7.

17:12Compare with Sura 10:5, where the orderly succession of night and day is also invoked as a sign of God’s care for humankind, and a means of calculating time.

17:13The image of an invisible necklace measuring one’s deeds calls to mind the frequent reference to a day of reckoning, when all actions are measured and sorted out as “good” or “evil”; see, e.g., 99:7–8.

17:24See the same tender image in 15:88.

17:27Arabic al-shayatin: literally, “the Satans or the devils.” See Shaytan in Glossary, page 532.

17:30Arabic innahu kana bi-ʿibadihi khabir basir: literally, “He is All Aware and All Seeing of His servants.”

17:33On the day of reckoning.

17:40On ascribing daughters to God, see note for 16:57.

17:51Arabic aw khalq mimma yakburu fi sudurikum: literally, “or a creation of what is even greater in your breasts.”

17:53When speaking to people of religion.

17:59See the extensive commentary on the people of Thamud elsewhere, e.g., 7:73–79 and 91:11.

17:60The vision shown to the Prophet on the Night Journey; see v. 1.

17:60See 37:62–65, where the tree of Zaqqum, created of fire, bears fronds like the heads of devils.

17:67Arabic man tadʿuna illa iyyahu: literally, “whomever you invoke other than Him.”

17:73Other than a revelation.

17:76Arabic wa-in kadu layastafizzunaka min al-ard: literally, “they were about to frighten you (to drive you) from the land.”

17:77The word sunna, here translated as “way,” has come to represent the name for the majority Muslim community. Sunni Muslims are those who follow the sunna, or way of God, as also the sunna or way of the Prophet.

17:78In Arabic the phrase Qurana al-fajr (“the Quran at dawn”) is repeated here, just two lines after its previous usage.

17:79This injunction connotes the special benefit of late night prayer (tahajjud). Even though it is supererogatory, it is said to have extraordinary power.

17:80Arabic adkhilni mudkhala sidq wa-akhrijni mukhraja sidq: literally, “let me enter by a truthful entrance and leave by a truthful exit.”

17:80This language suggests a prayer by Muhammad before returning to Mecca on the Final Pilgrimage (630 CE), since it was then that the final Quranic sura was revealed to him: “When God’s help comes and His victory . . .” (110:1).

17:84Arabic ahda sabil: literally, “best guided to a path.”

17:85Arabic al-ruh min amr rabbi: literally, “the spirit is by the command of my Lord.”

17:86Arabic la tajid laka bihi ʿalayna wakil: literally, “you would not find concerning it against Us an advocate.”

17:92Cf. Sura 34:9: “If We willed, We could make the earth swallow them, or fragments of the sky fall on them.”

17:92Cf. Sura 2:55: “And you said, ‘Moses, we’ll never believe in you until we see God, appearing.’ Then the thunderbolt struck you, as you looked on.”

17:101These nine signs are never specified; they are also mentioned in 27:12.

17:104Arabic lafif: literally, “motley crowd.”

17:107Arabic lil-adhqan: literally, “on their chins.”

17:110Arabic al-asmaʾ al-husna: “the Beautiful Names” are laced throughout the Quran. See also 7:180, 20:8, and 59:24, as well as Glossary, page 530.

17:111The Beautiful Name Kabir—(the Most) Great or Magnificent—provides the Quranic basis for the familiar phrase Allahu Akbar, God is the Greater, or Most Great. See also 4:34, 13:9, 22:62, 31:30, 34:23, and 40:12.

Sura 18

The Cave (Al-Kahf)

18:1Arabic ʿiwaj: literally, “crookedness.”

18:2The Arabic qayyim is literally “straight,” as translated here, but it can also mean “self-contained,” with the same etymology as the Divine Name Qayyum: Self-Subsisting (2:255, 3:2, and 20:111).

18:2Arabic hasan: literally, “good.”

18:9This is the first of three mysterious episodes that occur only here in the Quran: the cave sleepers (vv. 9–26), Moses’ encounter with a sly stranger (vv. 61–83), and the two-horned figure building a wall against Gog and Magog (vv. 84–99). The sweep of these stories evokes interstitial spaces: between death and rising from the dead, between two bodies of water (v. 61), between two mountain barriers (vv. 93–94). The interpretative possibilities stagger the imagination, leading mystics to see a spiritual depth that evokes what one observer, Norman O. Brown, calls the apocalypse of Islam. The cave dwellers here have been compared to the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, but that narrative link only adds to the multitiered corridors of interpretative possibility for this verse and all that follows.

18:12See v. 19 for an exchange between two parties concerning the length of time they had been sleeping the cave.

18:13Arabic nabaʾahum bil-haqq: literally, “their story in truth.”

18:22Arabic rajm bil-ghaib: literally, “casting stones at the unseen.”

18:24This is often taken to be the scriptural impetus for the everyday Muslim expression “if God wills.”

18:25This verse can be seen as a commentary on v. 22, which involves estimating the number of cave inhabitants. In other words, all such conjecture, whether about the cave dwellers or their length of stay, is guessing at what cannot be known.

18:26This is one of many verses in the Quran that echo and register the Beautiful Names in multiple forms: as exclamatory phrases (“how clearly He Sees, how clearly He Hears”), as agentive noun (“no protector but Him”), and as object (“His judgment”).

18:29Arabic wa-saʾat murtafaq: literally, “and an evil resting place.”

18:30Arabic man ahsana ʿamal: literally, “whoever does good.”

18:33The river metaphor in this parable anticipates, even as it parallels, the confluence of two waters in v. 61.

18:39Arabic ma shaʾa Allah: literally, “what God wills.”

18:44Arabic al-haqq: literally, “the truth.”

18:45Arabic ʿala kull shaiʾ muqtadir: literally, “the One Holding Sway over everything.”

18:50This is the only verse to identify Iblis as a jinn. Jinn recur in the Quran as both believers (46:29 and 72:14) and residents of hell (11:119). An entire sura (number 72) is dedicated to them, in which they attest to the truth of the Quran. See Glossary, page 531.

18:54Some translate this as “more contentious than any other creature.”

18:57Arabic ma qaddamat yadahu: literally, “what his own hands have sent forth” (to be judged on the day of judgment).

18:61Arabic majmaʿ al-bahrain: literally, “the meeting of two waters,” an echo of the river in v. 33, and also the point of separation as well as convergence between two persons. The mysterious stranger, not named here, has been identified through extensive commentary as al-Khidr, “the Green One,” whose deep knowledge, or inner wisdom, contrasts with, even as it complements, the external wisdom conveyed to Moses through prophecy. The entire passage—vv. 60–82—has been the subject of extensive commentary, especially by Sufi masters who are also Quranic exegetes.

18:65Arabic wa-ʿallamnahu min ladunna ʿilm: literally, “and We taught him a knowledge from within Us.”

18:71Arabic hatta: literally, “until.”

18:71Arabic ʿakharaqtaha: literally, “did you make the hole in it?”

18:78Arabic taʾwil: literally, “interpretation.” It signifies “deeper meaning” here as it often does elsewhere, especially in Joseph’s dreams (see 12:6, 21, 36, 44, 45, 100 and 101).

18:81Arabic aqraba ruhm: literally “nearer in affection.”

18:83Dhu al-Qarnain literally means “the two-horned.” This figure serves as a symbol of power over disparate realms, East and West, and so many commentators have presumed it refers to Alexander the Great, also represented on his own coins with two horns. But the name’s greatest significance may be the culmination of dyads, from the Cave Sleepers (between time) to the two travelers, Moses and al-Khidr (between water), and now the convergence of two mountains (v. 93) with only a pass between them.

18:91This is the same expression used by al-Khidr to challenge Moses in v. 68, but here it becomes an affirmation, not a limitation: just as the knowledge of Moses did not encompass al-Khidr’s actions, so Dhu al-Qarnayn is encompassed in all that he does by God’s Knowledge.

18:94Gog and Magog are also present in 21:96–97, and there as here they portend imminent destruction, so much so that many commentators have linked them to Mongols (Chinese warrior tribes) and to Tartars (Central Asian Turkic tribes).

18:109Parallel to 31:27: “If all the trees on earth were pens, and the seas were ink, with seven more seas beyond, still the Word of God would not be exhausted.”

Sura 19

Mary (Maryam)

19:1On these disconnected letters, see muqattaʿat in Glossary, page 531.

19:5Arabic wa-inni khiftu al-mawaliya min waraʾi: literally, “But I fear for my kin after me.”

19:6It is widely agreed that this “legacy” is not of wealth but prophethood. See also 3:38–39, which refers to God’s granting Zachariah’s prayer, and the angels giving him the good news that he would have a righteous son, a prophet.

19:7The birth of John to his wife (Elizabeth, inferred but not named here) precedes the birth of Jesus in the Quran, as it does in the New Testament. See also 21:89–90.

19:8The words “he said” are omitted here since the speaker is clearly Zachariah, and these words echo Abraham’s words to the angel to the effect that Sarah is too old to conceive.

19:9Arabic min qabl: literally, “from before (the time you were born).”

19:10Arabic sawiyya: literally, “consecutively.” Another common interpretation of sawiya is “[even though you are] sound or well,” i.e. even though you are otherwise able to speak.

19:11Cf. Sura 3:41 for a parallel passage: “Your sign is that you will not speak to people for three straight days, except by gestures.” Here in Sura 19, the words “by gestures” are not explicitly stated in the original, only implied.

19:14The word al-jabbar, translated here as “imperious,” is also one of the ninety-nine Beautiful Names of God, usually translated as “The Compeller” (but we render as “The Irresistible” on page 536). See also v. 32, where the same attribute is imputed to Jesus; in both cases, it has a negative connotation.

19:18The word “withdraw” is implied but not stated in the text.

19:27Arabic laqad jiʾti shaiʾ fariy: literally, “surely you’ve brought a terrible thing.”

19:29Arabic ilayhi: literally “to him.”

19:34Arabic qawl al-haqq: literally, “the true statement,” as translated. This echoes 4:171: “Jesus, son of Mary, was but a messenger of God—His Word, conveyed to Mary, through His spirit.”

19:37Those who disbelieve or hide the truth will have their account reckoned or “witnessed” on the day of judgment.

19:43Arabic ma lam yaʾtika: literally, “which has not come to you.”

19:50Arabic wa-jaʿalna lahum lisan sidq ʿaliy: literally, “and We made for them a tongue of truth, exalted.”

19:51The distinction between “prophet” (nabi) and “messenger” (rasul) is based on function. While prophets were divinely inspired and taught what had already been revealed, messengers brought forth a new scripture from God. Therefore, every messenger was a prophet but not every prophet was a messenger. Hence, Moses was a messenger since he received the Torah, as was David since he received the Psalms, and Jesus also since he conveyed the Gospels. In contrast, Abraham, Solomon, and Idris were prophets but not messengers. Ishmael is the exception: while not bringing a book, he is lauded as both prophet and messenger (v. 54).

19:56Idris is cited only here and in 21:85, where he is linked both to Ishmael and to Ezekiel.

19:84Arabic innama naʿuddu lahum ʿadd: literally, “We are only counting for them a (fixed) number.” See ajal in Glossary, page 529.

Sura 20

Ta Ha (Ta Ha)

20:1On these disconnected letters, see al- muqattaʿat in Glossary, page 531. Unlike other such letters, these two, ta and ha, may indicate an abbreviated address: “O man,” according to some early commentaries cited in Muhammad Asad, The Message of the Quran (Watsonville, Calif.: The Book Foundation, 2003), 525n1.

20:12This valley, mentioned only here and in 79:16, is assumed to be near Mount Sinai.

20:25Arabic sadri: literally, “my chest” or “my breast.”

20:27Arabic wa-hlul ʿuqda min lisani: literally, “and untie the knot in my tongue.”

20:40The narrative of Moses in this verse is elaborated elsewhere (28:12–28), where characters, events, and places are explained.

20:70Arabic ulqiya: literally, “were thrown down.”

20:85“Samiri” seems to refer to the Samaritans, but this group did not exist in Moses’ time, so it may be a reference to strangers who joined the Jews fleeing Egypt.

20:87Likely the spoils taken from the Egyptians; see Exodus 12:35–36.

20:99Arabic wa-qad atainaka min ladunna dhikr: literally, “and We gave you a remembrance from within us.” This passage is parallel to 18:65 (“and whom we had taught from Our Knowledge”), where the original Arabic waʿallamnahu min ladunna ʿilm literally translates as “and We taught him a knowledge from within Us.”

20:102Arabic zurq: literally, “blue,” but in this case with fear.

20:104The play on perception of time is randomized: all life seems like ten days to the sinners, a single day to the wise.

20:107Arabic la tara fiha ʿiwaj wa-la amt: literally, “you will see in it neither crookedness nor curve.”

20:110An echo of 2:255, Ayat al-Kursi, the Verse of the Throne.

20:111Again, the Beautiful Names are the same two as found in 2:255, Ayat al-Kursi: “God—there is no god but He, the Living, the Self-Subsisting.”

20:129Arabic wa-lawla kalima sabaqat: literally, “had it not been for a preceding word.”

Sura 21

The Prophets (Al-Anbiyaʾ)

21:4Arabic qala: literally, “He said,” yet both here and in v. 112, it seems preferable to translate as though it were a second-person-singular imperative: qul. The audience here, as elsewhere, is the Prophet Muhammad, though in a few instances of the more than three hundred in the Quran, qul can be used to address all believers (2:136, 3:84, 29:20, and 112:1).

21:19Arabic man ʿindahu: literally, “those with Him,” which could refer to the angels or to those nearest him among the devout (56:11).

21:26The reference here is to angels, whom the Meccans regarded as the daughters of God, elevated to a status comparable to that which Christians ascribe to Jesus.

21:28The theme of omniscience and omnipotence, extending even to intercessory capability, echoes several Quranic verses, especially 2:255, Ayat al-Kursi (the Verse of the Throne).

21:33Arabic yasbahun: literally, “they swim.”

21:47Arabic wa-kafa bina hasibin: literally, “We are sufficient as Reckoners,” but carrying the sense of proficiency.

21:64Another reading would be “They turned to reflect upon themselves.”

21:65Arabic nukisu ʿala ruʾusihim: literally, “they were turned upside down on their heads.” It is not clear whether they confirmed their disbelief or were convinced by Abraham’s argument.

21:68Arabic in kuntum faʿilin: literally, “if you are doers (of what you deem to be correct).” One group of idolaters seems to be inciting another group.

21:91Arabic fiha: literally, “in her,” meaning Mary. For ease of expression, the order of the original is reversed; in Arabic the clause reads literally, “As for the one who preserved her chastity, We breathed into her of Our spirit.”

21:95Arabic Arabic la yarjiʿun: literally, “they will not return.”

21:96Gog and Magog are distant figures linked elsewhere to Dhu al-Qarnain, or Alexander, in 18:94. These legendary, “twin” giants are perhaps from Mongolia, though some commentators trace them to Turkic or Chinese ancestry.

21:105This or similar phraseology is found four times in Psalm 37 (vv. 9, 11, 29, 34), as well as in Matthew 5:5.

21:112Arabic qala: literally, “He said,” but better “Say.” See note to 21:4.

Sura 22

The Pilgrimage (Al-Hajj)

22:1This word is famously used in John Donne’s “A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning” to refer to the colossal movements of the planetary spheres, movements that are far larger than mere earthquakes; it seems especially apt in this context. Some Islamic commentators see this global convulsion, before the sun rises from the West (not the East), as one of the major signs of the end of the world.

22:6The word al-haqq is usually translated as “the truth.” But what appears to be indicated is that God is the ultimate reality, the ultimate ground of the reality of all things.

22:13Arabic darruhu aqrabu min nafʿihi: literally, “one who is closer to harm than benefit.”

22:15There are several interpretations of this passage. Some commentators view “him” as the Prophet, referring to the fact that certain tribes allied with him were dubious as to whether he would receive God’s help. Others think the verse refers to Muslims who were beginning to grow impatient for God’s help.

22:17Magians is the Arabic term for Zoroastrians.

22:25The Arabic al-badi, translated here as “visitors,” usually refers to pastoral nomads (e.g., see 33:20).

22:29Here, as in v. 33, the “ancient house” refers to the Kaʿba.

22:30Arabic illa ma yutla ʿalaykum: literally, “except what has been recited to you.”

22:32The phrase “rituals of God” refers to not only the rites of the pilgrimage but also the places and actions linked to each of its successive stages.

22:39This verse is the earliest pronouncement of what became the principle of self-defense in Islamic law, not invoked until after Muhammad had left Mecca for Medina in 622 CE (1 AH), the hijra or exodus. Sura 2:190–94, which also permits fighting in self-defense, was revealed about a year later.

22:45Arabic qasr mashid: literally, “lofty palaces.”

22:47This bears comparison with Psalm 90:4: “A thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night” (New International Version).

22:58To reinforce this notion, the next seven verses (59–65) have collocative Beautiful Names, each amplifying the message of how God is the Best Provider.

Sura 23

The Believers (Al-Muʾminun)

23:14Arabic khalq akhar: literally, “another creature.”

23:17Arabic sabʿa taraʾiq: literally, “seven paths,” but these paths refer to the orbits of the seven heavenly spheres or heavens (as elsewhere in the Quran: see 67:3 and 71:15).

23:20Mount Sinai is the title and topic of Sura 52, but its full name is given only here and in Sura 95 where it is also linked to “the blessed olive tree,” central to ayat an-nur, the Verse of Light (24:35).

23:21There is a similar tribute to livestock in 16:5: “He created cattle for you, giving you warmth and other uses; you consume them for food.”

23:53Arabic kull hizb bima ladayhim farihun: literally, “each faction rejoicing in what they themselves have.” This judgment applies to Muslims as well as to Jews and Christians, according to a well-known saying of the Prophet: “Jews have been divided into seventy-one sects, Christians into seventy-two, while my community will be divided into seventy-three.”

23:60This phrase echoes 8:2: “True believers are those whose hearts tremble in awe at the mention of God.”

23:93Arabic imma turiyanni: literally, “if you show me.”

23:109Arabic khair al-rahimin: literally, “the Best of those who show mercy”; also in v. 118.

Sura 24

Light (Al-Nur)

24:3Nikah is contractual marriage within Islam, but here is an unusual instance where it clearly refers to those bonded in marriage outside Islam, with the adulterers being linked to polytheists—hence, both are outside Islam.

24:9This is a private, nonjuridical procedure, designed to preserve marital harmony.

24:10This conditional phrase is repeated four times in two sequences in this sura, with the echo for v. 10 coming in v. 14 and for v. 20 in v. 21.

24:11This begins an extended Quranic revelation (vv. 11–20) that defends the Prophet’s young wife, ʿAʾisha, against lies that were brought against her by some of the early Muslims, here defined as “liars in the eyes of God.” The incident, known as “the affair of the lie,” occurred in 627 CE when ʿAʾisha was left behind as a Muslim expeditionary force broke camp early, departing without her. Because a companion later found her and returned her to the Prophet, some rumors spread, occasioning this revelation to confirm her innocence as also the malevolence of those who brought the false charges.

24:15Arabic idh talaqqawnahu bialsinatikum: literally, “when you received it with your tongues.”

24:28Arabic azka: literally, “purer.”

24:31Eunuchs or old men.

24:31A reference to the anklets that women often wore.

24:33Among pre-Islamic practices was the use of female slaves as prostitutes.

24:35This verse has enjoyed a rich history of interpretation over the centuries. The “Light” has been variously interpreted as signifying divine guidance, knowledge, or power. Significantly, the verse stresses twice that God speaks in parables.

24:35The word “soil” is introduced here for poetic effect. It does not alter the meaning.

24:37See 14:42–43 for an expansion of this image: “till a day when their eyes will stare [in horror], racing forward, their heads craned back, their gaze fixed rigid, and their hearts void.”

24:60Arabic la yarjuna nikah: literally, “who have no desire for marriage.”

24:61Arabic ma malaktum mafatihahu: literally, “for which you own the keys.”

Sura 25

The Criterion (Al-Furqan)

25:1Furqan (criterion) is another name for revelation in general and the Quran in particular. See Glossary, page 530.

25:8Janna (garden) is the same word as “paradise,” hence this is a sarcastic comment.

25:15Arabic masir: literally, “destiny.”

25:20That is, can you be patient when facing adversity or ridicule or rejection from unbelievers?

25:22Another reading would be: “The angels will declare, ‘None shall pass beyond this forbidden barrier.’ ”

25:28A more literal translation would be “Woe unto me,” but that seems too archaic.

25:30Arabic ittakhadhu hadha al-Quran mahjur: literally, “have taken this Quran as a forsaken thing.”

25:32Both here and in 17:106, the process of revelation is depicted as piecemeal yet continuous. In 73:4, the same deliberative and measured process of recitation is enjoined on the Prophet.

25:38These are pre-Islamic Arabian tribes who denied previous prophets, mentioned elsewhere in the Quran.

25:39There is a clear contrast between God’s lessons, here offered, and those offered above by the disbelievers (vv. 9 and 33).

25:40Arabic matar al-saw’i: literally, “evil rain,” referring to Sodom.

25:53The word rendered as “barrier” is a Persian word, barzakh, in the original. See also 23:100 and Glossary, page 530.

25:56Arabic wa-nadhir: literally, “and as a warner,” but that expression is unidiomatic in English.

Sura 26

The Poets (Al-Shuʿara)

26:1On these disconnected letters, see muqattaʿat in Glossary, page 531.

26:9This doublet of the Divine Names appears no less than eight more times in this sura—vv. 68, 104, 122, 140, 159, 175, 191, and 217—in similar sequence, an echo of the same protocol in Sura 55.

26:14Moses had inadvertently killed an Egyptian. See below.

26:20Moses is referring to an incident of false accusation, then further connivance to impugn him among the Egyptians. It is elaborated elsewhere, in 28:15–21.

26:30Arabic bishaiʾ mubin: literally, “something clear.”

26:51Arabic awwal al-muʾminin: literally, “the first believers.”

26:58The reference here seems to be the prosperity the Egyptians had enjoyed under Pharaoh, with the promise in the next verse (v. 59) that Israelites would be their eventual successors in kind once they completed their escape to a new home.

26:74Arabic wajadna abaʾana kadhalika yafʿalun: literally, “we found our forefathers doing this.”

26:88Arabic banun: literally, “sons.”

26:128The word aya literally means “sign.” Here it refers to a place of worship, so it’s translated as “altar.” See Glossary, page 530.

26:138Arabic wa-ma nahnu bimuʿadhdhabin: literally, “we are not the ones to be punished.”

26:152The reference here is to a bedrock element of Islamic ethics, maslaha, or the common, collective good.

26:158The punishment predicted by Salih.

26:173Arabic fa-saʾa matar: literally, “evil was the rain.”

26:193The Archangel Gabriel.

26:215For a similar image, see 17:24: “lower over them both the wing of humility, with mercy.”

26:224This is the first, and sole, reference to poets in the sura named “The Poets.” For deeper exegesis on the ambiguity of poetry in relation to Quranic discourse, see “About This Translation,” pages xxxiii–xxxvii.

26:225A metaphor to contrast the precision of Quranic rhetoric with the meanderings of poets.

Sura 27

The Ants (Al-Naml)

27:1On these disconnected letters, see muqattaʿat in Glossary, page 531.

27:5Arabic suʾ al-ʿadhab: literally, “an evil torment.”

27:8The fire is here understood to be the Light of God.

27:10The Arabic word for snake, jann, is a play on the word jinn. See 28:31 for the identical expression.

27:12Arabic fi jaybika: literally, “in your pocket,” referring to the opening in the cloak by his breast.

27:16The phrase mantiq at-tayr has become a popular trope in Muslim spirituality, due to a Sufi poem of that title penned by the twelfth-century master Farid ud-din Attar, and known in English as “The Conference of the Birds.”

27:18The subtlety of this reference to ants must be underscored. Like bees and spiders, ants also are honored with a sura named after them because in their minute labor they mirror the marvel of divine creation. Solomon’s appreciation for ants, and then birds, is deemed to be a measure of his own wisdom.

27:20The hoopoe is the central figure, equivalent to a messenger from the unseen (Jabril/Gabriel), in Attar’s “The Conference of the Birds.”

27:22Arabic ahattu bima lam tuhit bihi: literally, “I have encompassed what you have not encompassed.”

27:22Sabaʾ is Sheba in English, and what follows is the encounter of Solomon with the Queen of Sheba. Solomon is clearly confronting her on account of the solar worship of her followers, the Sabians.

27:30This is the sole passage in the Quran where the basmala is included in a verse not at the beginning of a sura.

27:31Arabic muslimin: literally, “ones who have submitted”—i.e., “muslims,” but here in a more general sense. See note to 27:91 and muslim in Glossary, page 531.

27:39An ʿifrit belongs to a class of jinn who are winged creatures, noted for their ruthlessness, power, and cunning, as well as their large size.

27:39Before Solomon would rise at midday from his duties adjudicating.

27:40Arabic qabla an yartadd ilaika tarfuka: literally, “before your own gaze returns to you.”

27:45See parallel reference in 11:61: “And to the people of Thamud We sent their brother Salih.” The Thamud were said to be descendants of Noah. While not mentioned in the Bible, they appear repeatedly in the Quran: see also 7:73–79 and 26:141–58.

27:55For the story of Lot and his recalcitrant people, see also 7:80–84, 11:77–83, and 15:61–79.

27:58Arabic saʾa matar: literally, “evil was the rain.”

27:61Arabic hajiz, parallel to the Persian barzakh (“buffer” or “limit”) as in 55:20. See barzakh in Glossary, page 530.

27:82Arabic dabba: literally, “crawling or walking creature,” often speculated to be a wild animal portending the end of the world and the day of judgment.

27:89This phrase echoes the refrain of 55:60: “What is the reward for goodness beyond goodness?”

27:91Arabic min al-muslimin: literally, “among the submitters.” This group includes all those linked to the example of Abraham; see 4:125: “Who is better in religion than one who submits his entire self to God, does what is good, and follows the creed of Abraham, the pure in faith?” Here, as in vv. 31 and 38, Islam is implied but not stated since it did not exist as a formal religion at the time of Moses, Solomon, or Sheba—who are, along with Salih and Lot, the principal subjects of this sura. See islam in Glossary, page 531.

Sura 28

The Story (Al-Qasas)

28:1On these disconnected letters, see muqattaʿat in Glossary, page 531.

28:3Arabic bi al-haqq: literally, “with the truth.” This phrase is used both to refer to God and the Book below in three verses (vv. 48, 53, and 75). See Glossary, page 530.

28:4Arabic innahu kana min al-mufsidin: literally, “he was among those who spread corruption.”

28:6Arabic nuriya: literally, “We might show.”

28:6Haman was the chief minister of Pharaoh.

28:11Arabic qussihi: literally, “follow him.”

28:13The story of Moses the castaway child, recovered by an Egyptian, then returned to his mother and nurtured by her, is also recounted in 20:37–40, with parallels to Exodus 2:1–10.

28:15This story is also noted in 20:40, with parallels to Exodus 2:11–15.

28:19Arabic min al-muslihin: literally, “among those who promote the collective good.”

28:20Arabic inni laka min al-nasihin: literally, “I am among those who give you good advice.”

28:22The Arabs of Midian (also known as Madyan) were closely related to the Hebrews.

28:27Arabic fa-min ʿindika: literally, “that is from (within) you.”

28:29Arabic inni anastu nar laʿalli atikum minha bikhabar: literally, “I saw a (distant) fire; perhaps I might bring you from it some news”—i.e., about which direction they might take on their journey.

28:32Those who have fear raise their hand for protection.

28:35This account of Moses’ call, and God’s direct speech to him, also occurs in 20:9–23, 26:10–68, and 27:7–14, with differing details and emphases in each narrative.

28:44That is, Mount Sinai.

28:46The repetition of the call to Moses on Mount Sinai underscores the intent of mercy which follows, and the recurrent emphasis on truth, harking back to v. 3.

28:47The sentence seems to be deliberately incomplete: before they finish one line of argument, the disbelievers shift to another in the following verse (v. 48).

28:49This is a challenge to the Quraysh similar to what is found elsewhere, e.g., 2:23 and 17:88.

28:53The Word, the Book, the truth—all confirmed the right response for those listeners already inclined to submit (to God’s will). Here again muslimun is better not translated as “Muslims.” See note to 27:9 and islam in Glossary, page 531.

28:57That is, a safe sanctuary in Mecca.

28:58This is an invocation of the Beautiful Name Warith (Heir) in the plural. See also 15:23.

28:59Umm here refers to Mecca, which is considered to be the “mother”—i.e., the center or capital—of towns around it.

28:70Arabic fi al-ula wa al-akhira: literally, “in the first [world] and the last.”

28:76Korah (Qarun) is elsewhere linked to both Pharaoh and Haman; see 29:39 and 40:23–25.

28:77Arabic la tansa nasibaka min al-dunya: literally, “do not forget your portion in this world,” but also to share with others through charity and good works.

28:80Arabic illa al-sabirin: literally “except those who are patient.”

28:81Arabic fiʾa: literally, “party” or “group.”

28:85Arabic maʿad: literally, “a place of return,” which may refer to Mecca, since this verse, like most of the sura, was revealed on the hijra, or exodus, from Mecca to Medina. But it could also allude to the ultimate place of return, the next world.

Sura 29

The Spider (Al-ʿAnkabut)

29:1On these disconnected letters, see muqattaʿat in Glossary, page 531.

29:5Ajal is the term used to refer to the time when each person is destined to die; no one can add to, or subtract from, the days allotted for their life. See Glossary, page 529.

29:6Arabic laghaniyyʿ an al-ʿalamin; literally “without need of the worlds,” where the “worlds” implies His creation or His created beings.

29:10Arabic al-ʿalamin: literally, “worlds,” as in v. 6, but here rendered as “creatures” to capture the idiom in English. See Glossary, page 529.

29:15Arabic li al-ʿalamin: literally “for the worlds” but here connoting “for nations.” See Glossary, page 529.

29:25Arabic yakfuru baʿdukum bibaʿd wa-yalʿan baʿdukum baʿd: literally, “some of you will deny others and some of you will curse others.”

29:35Arabic minha: literally, “of it.”

29:41The instance of the spider echoes the bee and the ant, other small creatures whose industry is heralded and recalled as the title of the sura in which they appear.

29:69Arabic fina: literally, “in Us.”

Sura 30

The Byzantines (Al-Rum)

30:1On these disconnected letters, see muqattaʿat in Glossary, page 531.

30:4The earlier defeat of the Byzantines by the Persians had been hailed by the Meccans as a victory for pagans over the Christians, but it was not in God’s plan that the Persians should prevail, save for a short time (a few years).

30:11The creative and re-creative agency of God is accented throughout the Quran but repeatedly within different registers in this sura: see vv. 19, 40, 50, and 54.

30:13Arabic bishurakaʾihim: literally “in their partners,” but translated as “in these gods” to clarify the sense that the partners are associated with God.

30:18These are the verses that established the hours and names for the daily ritual prayers incumbent upon all Muslims.

30:22Coupled with 5:48, where differences in laws and revelations is a divine decree, we have here the strongest Quranic affirmation for linguistic and ethnic difference as a sign for those who can, and should, discern them.

30:28Arabic al-ayat: literally, “the signs.” Since they refer to God, they are marked as “Our signs.” See Glossary, page 530.

30:30Arabic al-dinu al-qayyimu: literally, “the steadfast faith.” Here and in v. 43, it is equivalent to “the religion of truth” (9:33) and “the religion of God” (24:2). See din in Glossary, page 530.

30:30Arabic fitrat Allah: literally, “the primordial nature of God,” also echoed in the title of Sura 35, al-Fatir or “The Originator.”

30:51Arabic min baʿdihi yakfurun: literally, “they would continue to disbelieve after this.”

30:53muslimun is best translated as “those who submit [to the will of God].” See Glossary, page 531.

Sura 31

Luqman (Luqman)

31:1On these disconnected letters, see muqattaʿat in Glossary, page 531.

31:6This may refer to al-Nadr ibn al-Harith, who diverted the attention of the Quraysh from the Quran using old Persian tales. The Arabic literally talks about someone who “buys” idle tales; some commentators say that the verse refers to a man who bought a maidservant to sing songs. Since the verb yashtari connotes business transactions, it is translated here as “who invests.”

31:7The Arabic word for “deafness,” waqr, as pointed out by several commentators, means “heaviness.” It’s also used in 41:44.

31:16Arabic mithqal habba: literally, “the weight of a mustard seed.”

31:19This line refers not to the pace at which one should walk but rather the demeanor of arrogance or modesty expressed in one’s mode of walking.

31:19Arabic al-hamir: literally, “of asses.”

31:20The “illuminating book,” here as elsewhere, alludes to the Quran.

31:21Arabic ma wajadna ʿalayhi abaʾana: literally, “what we found our fathers on.”

31:27Arabic kalimat: literally “the words,” but here emphasized as “the Word.”

Sura 32

Prostration (Al-Sajda)

32:1On these disconnected letters, see muqattaʿat in Glossary, page 531.

32:3Arabic ma ʿatahum min nadhir min qablika: literally, “whom no one came to warn before you.”

32:9Arabic al-afʾida: literally, “hearts.”

32:16Arabic junubuhum: literally, “their sides.”

Sura 33

The Allied Forces (Al-Ahzab)

33:4Arabic tudhahirun minhunna ummahatikum: literally, “you made them appear like your mothers.” This challenges a pre-Islamic practice of divorce that equated the wife with the mother’s back—i.e., here wives are treated as “mothers.” See 58:2, where the same practice is cited and eschewed.

33:4The reference here is to a freed slave who became part of Muhammad’s family.

33:5Arabic mawalikum: literally “allies,” “protectors,” or “patrons.”

33:6Blood relatives alone should inherit; but one can still do one’s friend a kindness by leaving them something in one’s will.

33:9This attack refers to the Battle of the Trench, which took place in 627 CE; it was the last major battle before the conquest of Mecca in 630.

33:13Yathrib was the pre-Islamic name for Medina, where Muhammad settled after the hijra (exodus from Mecca) in 622 CE. The name was later changed to al-Madina al-Munawwara, i.e., City of Light.

33:20The “allied forces” is the coalition arrayed against the Muslims at the Battle of the Trench in 627 CE (also known as the Battle of the Allied Forces, after which this sura is named). This coalition of Arab and Jewish tribes engaged in a twenty-seven-day siege of the town of Yathrib (later known as Medina), where the Muslims were enclosed.

33:20It is implied that they would feel safe in the desert.

33:23Their vow to fight until they win or die; the implication is that they died.

33:25It is said that God repulsed the disbelievers (the Banu Qurayza) with a sandstorm.

33:37The reference here is to Zayd, the adopted son of the Prophet. The Prophet married him to his own cousin Zaynab, but after Zayd divorced her, she became the Prophet’s wife. This verse explains that the marriage is legitimate since adopted sons do not entail a blood relationship.

33:40The “seal of the prophets” underscores Muhammad’s status as the final messenger of God.

33:49Arabic ʿidda: literally “reckoning”; in this case, the waiting period is the six months that is obligatory for a man who wants a divorce to ensure that the wife is not pregnant (see also 2:226–28).

33:55The intent is to allow them to speak directly with close male relatives absent a protective screen, required otherwise (v. 53).

33:72The notion of moral responsibility or trust as distinctive to humankind echoes the message of 59:21: “Had We sent down this Quran upon a mountain, you would have seen it humbled, cleave itself into a chasm, in fear of God.” Yet, as the next verse goes on to say, not all humankind proved worthy of that trust, only believing men and women, those to whom “God is Forgiving, Ever Merciful.”

Sura 34

Sheba (Sabaʾ)

34:16Likely the Maʾrib dam in Yemen.

34:19They wished to flaunt their camels and possessions while traveling through the desert.

34:20In 7:16–17, Iblis vowed to lie in wait for Adam’s descendants, promising God: “You will find that most of them are not grateful to You.”

34:26Arabic al-Fattah: literally, “the Opener” or “the Decider.” This is another Beautiful Name with multiple meanings, but here it is best rendered as “Judge.”

34:33Arabic taʾmurunana: literally, “you were commanding us.”

34:51From the grave.

34:52The “distant place” clearly refers to their life in this world.

34:54A judgment repeated elsewhere: see 11:62, 110; and 14:9.

Sura 35

The Originator (Fatir)

35:10Arabic al-kalim al-tayyib: literally, “good words.”

35:18Arabic wa-la tazir wazira wizr ukhra: literally, “no bearer of burdens can bear another’s burden.”

35:18Arabic bi al-ghaib: literally, “in the unseen.”

35:24Arabic illa khala fiha nadhir: literally, “except there has been in it a warner.”

35:37Arabic yatadhakkar fihi man tadhakkar: literally, “for those who would be warned to be warned.”

35:39In 2:30 Adam is designated as God’s regent.

35:39This phrase is repeated in the Arabic, but its repetition would be too cumbersome in English.

Sura 36

Ya Sin (Ya Sin)

36:1Ya Sin, according to many commentators, may be an abbreviated exclamation, with sin alluding to insan and meaning “O Human,” or, in the rendition of Muhammad Asad: “O Thou Human Being” (Asad, The Message of the Quran: [Watsonville, Calif.: The Book Foundation, 2003], 758n1).

36:11Regarding “unseen,” see al-ghaib in Glossary, page 530.

36:14These messengers are likely Moses and Jesus, each representing a scripture, first the Torah, then the Gospels.

36:18Arabic wa-layamassannakum minna ʿadhab alim: literally, “and a painful punishment from us will surely touch you.”

36:26Paradise, frequently evoked as a garden, contrasts with the Garden of Eden, fraught with peril as well as food. The garden of paradise anticipates the presence of God, where peace reigns.

36:42Arabic ma yarkabun: literally, “which they ride.”

36:46Arabic wa-ma taʾtihim min aya min ayat rabbihim illa kanu ʿanha muʿridin: literally, “and no sign ever comes to them from the signs of their Lord except from it they turn away.”

36:52There is a mandatory pause here in the Arabic, indicating that the subsequent lines comprise a reply to the question just posed; but since this pause is not replicable in English, “A voice will answer” has been added.

36:63The suffering of self-realization, experienced by sinners who deny God in this life, is a foretaste of the hell to come in the next world.

36:69The Quran repeatedly denies its own status as poetry, though sajʿ or rhymed prose is commended. See “About This Translation,” pages xxxiii–xxxvii.

36:75Arabic jund muhdarun: literally, “an army present [to defend them].”

36:77Again, the use of insan here seems to justify Muhammad Asad’s decision to label Ya Sin as an anticipation of the direct address in all that follows “O You Human.” We have not followed his initiative due to the familiarity of the Arabic title for all Muslims.

Sura 37

Arrayed in Ranks (Al-Saffat)

37:1Most commentators deem these first three verses as referring to angels; see v. 8.

37:5Arabic rabb al-mashariq: literally, “Lord of the easts,” but clearly evoking places where the sun rises.

37:19See v. 2 and Sura 79.13 for the same image.

37:21There is a mandatory pause here in the Arabic, indicating that the subsequent lines comprise a reply to the question just posed; but since this pause is not replicable in English, “A voice will say” has been added.

37:23Arabic sirat al-jahim: literally, “path of hell,” which rhymes with its opposite al-sirat al-mustaqim, “the straight path” (see 1:6).

37:26The Arabic mustaslimun could be translated as “they seek to become Muslims,” but that rendition would be anachronistic, as often noted above (e.g., note for 2:128), since the revelation is addressed to idolaters in a period before Islam had coalesced as a denominated movement.

37:28Arabic innakum kuntum taʾtunana ʿan al-yamini: literally, “it was you who would come to us from the right”—i.e., from a position claiming authority and influence.

37:49Arabic bayd maknun: literally, “hidden eggs.” Some translations render this as “hidden eggs [of ostriches],” often associated with beautiful women in Arabic poetry. See 56:23 for a parallel image in a similar eschatological setting.

37:62A tree distinctive to hell, whose fronds cause great pain and disgust. See also 44.43 and 56.52.

37:75Arabic fa-laniʿma al-mujibun: literally, “how excellent are the responders.”

37:79Arabic fi al-ʿalamin: literally, “in all the worlds” or “in all the universe.”

37:83Arabic min shiʿatihi: literally, “of his party.”

37:97Arabic bunyan: literally, “a structure.”

37:102Sources disagree about whether it was Isaac or Ishmael who was to be sacrificed, but the main point here is the son’s willingness to be sacrificed. See also the notes to 14:39 and 37:101–2.

37:107The sacrifice was the ram, said to be brought from God, the Unseen.

37:141According to tradition, the ship’s crew believed that the tempest that capsized the ship was due to divine wrath on account of misbehavior by one of its passengers. Jonah, who had disobeyed God when he fled Nineveh, was singled out; see also 21:87–88.

Sura 38

Sad (Sad)

38:1On this and other disconnected letters, see muqattaʿ at in Glossary, page 531.

38:3Arabic wa-lata hin manas: literally, “but there was no time to escape.”

38:6Arabic inna hadha lashaiʾ yurad: literally, “this was certainly something to be desired.”

38:7Arabic fi al-milla al-akhira: literally, “in the last religion.” Possibly, a reference to Christianity or a later form of pre-Islamic Arab paganism.

38:10Arabic asbab: literally, “ropes’ ” or “bonds,” as in 2:166, but also “paths” as in 40:36–37.

38:12Sometimes translated as “tent posts,” this is likely a reference to the remains of Pharaoh’s monumental buildings, or to his practice of impaling his victims; see 7:137 and 89:10.

38:13Probably a reference to the people of Midian who rejected the prophet Shuʿayb (26:176–89 as well as 15:78–79 and 50:14).

38:21The “two litigants” are most likely angels sent to David after his contrivance to have Uriah, one of his soldiers, killed in battle so that he could marry Uriah’s wife, Bathsheba. The full story, as related in 2 Samuel 11, does not appear in the Quran, but its sequel is clearly the topic here.

38:23Arabic wa-ʿazzani fi al-khitab: literally, “and he dominated me in speech.”

38:24According to some commentators David realizes the similarity between this scenario and his own action in desiring another man’s wife to add to the many wives he already had. Other commentators dispute this occurrence and state that David’s “lapse” was his failing to account for both sides in the dispute before arbitrating.

38:25Arabic maʾab: literally, “place of return.”

38:32Arabic hatta tawarat bil-hijab: literally, “until they were hidden behind the veil” or “behind the barrier.”

38:33The sparse Quranic text suggests that both David and Solomon were tested in their obedience to God over their love of His creation.

38:38See 21:82–83 for a similar depiction of devils obeying Solomon, while in 34:12–13 it is they who obey him.

38:44According to commentators, this is a clear reference to God’s willingness to forgive those who make oaths in haste (5:88); in this case, Job’s pledge to beat his wife after she blasphemed is “fulfilled,” without causing harm to her.

38:48Arabic Dhu al-Kifl, also used in 21:85, and thought to be either Ezekiel or Elijah.

38:81Arabic ila yawm al-waqt al-maʿlum: literally, “until the day of the known time.”

Sura 39

The Crowds (Al-Zumar)

39:2Arabic mukhlis lahu al-din: literally, “sincere to Him in religion.”

39:6Arabic thamaniya: literally, “eight.”

39:6On the three stages of darkness, see 22:5.

39:23Arabic mathaniya: literally, “doubled.” See 15:87.

39:36Arabic bi alladhina min dunihi: literally, “with others besides Him.”

39:39Arabic iʿmalu ʿala makanatikum: literally, “act according to your standpoint.”

39:42The sense of this verse, that each night we die, and each morning are either restored or kept by God, is paralleled in 6:60: “It is He Who calls back your souls by night, knowing all you have done by day; then, He raises you up, to fulfill the appointed term. To Him you shall return—then He will inform you of all you have done.”

39:45Arabic Allah wahdahu: literally, “God alone.”

39:74Arabic al-ard: literally, “the land” or “the earth.” But “realm” seems preferable here since it needs to be stressed that the location is paradise, not the earth or any earthly terrain.

Sura 40

The Forgiving (Al-Ghafir)

40:1On these disconnected letters, see muqattaʿat in Glossary, page 531.

40:3Arabic, dhi al-tawl: literally, “Owner of Abundance.” This unique occurrence of a Beautiful Name culminates a list of six from the long list of Divine Names, here accenting God’s disposition to forgive again and again.

40:11Arabic amattana: literally, “you caused us to die,” but the term, according to most commentators, seems to refer to the state of non-being before and after life on earth.

40:24Haman is said to have been Pharaoh’s chief minister, while Korah (Qarun) was Moses’ cousin.

40:36Arabic asbab: literally, “ropes.”

40:55The “sin” here refers to the Prophet’s impatience for God’s help—through some miracle—when his followers were being persecuted.

40:69Arabic yusrafun: literally, “they are turned away.”

40:75Some translators render this as “exulted in untruth.”

Sura 41

Explained in Full (Fussilat)

41:1On these disconnected letters, see muqattaʿat in Glossary, page 531.

41:5Arabic fi akinna: literally, “in coverings.”

41:9“Two days” is clearly an allegorical expression, as is “four days” in the next verse.

41:13God’s reprimand to the people of ʿAd and Thamud is detailed in 7:65–79.

41:14Arabic min bayni aydihim wa min khalfihim: literally, “from between their hands and from behind them.” The implication is that messengers tried to persuade them from various perspectives.

41:15Arabic bighayri al-haqqi: literally, “without truth” or “without right.”

41:25Arabic ma bayna aydihim wa ma khalfahum: literally, “from in front and from behind them.” Another rendering could be “this world and the hereafter.”

41:25Arabic al-qawl: literally, “the saying.”

41:26Arabic taghlibun: literally, “you will triumph.”

41:33Arabic muslimun, here rendered as “those who bow to God’s will,” is sometimes translated as “Muslims.” However, the Muslims were not yet a self-conscious community, and not yet formed and named as Muslims. See Glossary, page 531.

41:34Arabic alladhi bainaka wa-bainahu ʿadawa: literally, “he between whom and you there was enmity.”

41:35Arabic dhu hazz ʿazim: literally, “possessing a great portion.” But clearly, what is indicated here is not material wealth but moral or spiritual substance. A parallel phrase occurs in 103:3: those who succeed are “those who believe, and do good deeds, urging one another toward truth, and urging one another toward patience.”

41:42Arabic min bain yadaihi wa-la min khalfihi: literally, “neither in front nor behind them.” This is the third and final usage of a similar phrase in this sura.

41:44The opponents are those with a veil between them and the Book (see v. 5). The reference to a non-Arab (ʿajam) messenger echoes 26:198–99.

41:45Arabic law la kalima sabaqat min rabbika: literally, “Had a word not gone forth from your Lord.” That is to say, it was God who ordained dissension among humankind, as noted in 2:253 and expressed again, in similar words, in 10:19.

Sura 42

Consultation (Al-Shura)

42:2On these disconnected letters, see muqattaʿat in Glossary, page 531.

42:6Arabic awliyaʾ: “protectors” (sing. wali, “protector”). Others may be “protectors” but “Protector,” one of God’s Beautiful Names, alludes to the day of gathering when no one else can protect or intercede for the believer (see vv. 8, 31, 44, and 46). It is only God Who convenes, prevails, and protects on that day. He alone is “Ruler of the day of reckoning” (1:4), at once Protector and Restorer (v. 9).

42:7A reference to Mecca.

42:15“The Book” here clearly encompasses all scripture prior to the Quran, as is evident in 2:136: “Say, ‘We believe in God, in what has been revealed to us, and what was revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the tribes, and in the Books given to Moses, Jesus, and the prophets, from their Lord; we make no distinction between any among them, and to God we submit our will.’ ”

42:16Arabic min baʿd ma ustujiba lahu: literally, “after what had been responded to Him.”

42:23The promise of good in this life multiplying good in the next life recurs in 55:60: “What is the reward for goodness, beyond goodness?”

42:27Rizq or “provision” (see also v. 12 above) echoes another of God’s Beautiful Names, al-Razzaq, the Sustainer (51:58).

42:27That is, man, by nature greedy and ungrateful (see v. 48), would have wanted even more than what God had provided.

42:43These three verses (vv. 41–43) provide a case study in the importance of context for all declarations condoning violence in the Quran. Taken by themselves, vv. 41–42 seem to justify self-defense, but the clearly preferred response is given in v. 43: “whoever forbears and forgives, displays in this an ideal resolve.” There is also the insistence on proportionality in response to wrong: the retribution cannot be greater than the initial offense.

Sura 43

Gold Adornments (Al-Zukhruf)

43:1On these disconnected letters, see muqattaʿat in Glossary, page 531.

43:4Arabic fi umm al-kitab: literally, “in the Mother of the Book,” a reference to the original tablet that is in God’s keeping. The adjectives that follow refer both to the Book and to its keeper. See Glossary, page 532.

43:15The pagan Arabs attributed daughters to God, as noted in 16:57.

43:17This verse alludes to the fact that the pagan Arabs were often so dejected over the birth of a daughter—which they regarded as a liability—that they would bury her alive in the sand. A similar internal debate occurs in 16:56–59, where the practice of burying infant daughters is condemned. It concludes with this ominous query: “Should he keep her, to his ignominy, or bury her alive in the sand?” (16:59) The evil of this practice is underscored in 81:8–9.

43:18This is how the pagan Arabs regarded girls.

43:28Arabic kalima baqiya: literally, “an enduring word.”

43:31That is, Mecca and Taʾif.

43:35The word order of the Arabic original of vv. 33–35 needs to be altered to make clear the divine motive for not making all humankind into one nation. This theme is raised elsewhere (16:93 and 42:8), yet without the disparities of wealth foregrounded here.

43:48Arabic min ukhtiha: literally, “than its sister.”

43:61Arabic wa-innahu laʿilm li al-saʿa: literally, “and it gives knowledge of the hour.” The sentence could, alternatively, be translated as “The Quran gives knowledge of the hour.” But a well-attested hadith declares: “One of the signs of the hour will be the appearance of Jesus the son of Mary before the day of resurrection.”

43:77Malik is the angel who serves as the keeper of hell.

43:88Arabic wa-qilihi: literally, “and his saying.” What follows is an echo of the same lament from 25:30: “The messenger said, ‘My Lord, my people have forsaken this Quran.’ ”

Sura 44

Smoke (Al-Dukhan)

44:1On these disconnected letters, see muqattaʿat in Glossary, page 531.

44:7Arabic in kuntum muqinin: literally, “if only you were certain.”

44:13Arabic rasul mubin: literally, “a clarifying messenger.”

44:20Arabic an tarjumuni: literally, “if you seek to stone me,” but here meant allegorically.

44:24Arabic rahw: literally, “at rest or calmed.”

44:27Arabic naʿma: literally, “a blessing.”

44:32Arabic ʿala al-ʿalamin: literally, “over all the worlds.” See Glossary, page 529.

44:33Arabic ma fihi balaʾ mubin: literally, “in which there was a clear test.” An example of such testing through revelatory signs is God’s command to Abraham that he sacrifice his son (37:102–6), not mentioned by name but thought to be Ishmael.

44:37A title for kings in South Arabia—that is, Yemen—since Tubbaʿ is a town noted also in 50:14 for rejecting the prophets.

44:43A tree distinctive to hell, whose fronds cause great pain and disgust. See also 37:62 and 56:52.

44:59That is, the unbelievers.

Sura 45

Kneeling (Al-Jathiya)

45:1On these disconnected letters, see muqattaʿat in Glossary, page 531.

45:14References to “days of God” occur only here and in 14:5, addressed to Moses. It is likely a reference to the day of final reckoning, also known as the day of resurrection (v. 17 and elsewhere). The plural reference is yet another sign that God’s ways are not ours, nor His days like our days.

45:18Here shariʿa is rendered as “proper path [of religion],” to set Muhammad’s mission apart from those that preceded him. Subsequently shariʿa became a technical term for the expansive set of ethical and juridical norms in Islam.

45:20Arabic basaʾir: literally, “visible proofs,” echoing the Divine Name of God as al-Basir, the All Observant, the All Seeing.

45:28Arabic: ila kitabiha: literally, “to its book.” It is also a reference to the ultimate Book, umm al-kitab, “the Mother of the Book.” See Glossary, page 532.

Sura 46

Sand Dunes (Al-Ahqaf)

46:1On these disconnected letters, see muqattaʿat in Glossary, page 531.

46:3Arabic bi al-haqq: literally, “with truth” or “in truth.” That is, God created the heavens and earth with just reasons and an appropriate purpose, since the word haqq can mean not only “truth” but also “right” or “just.”

46:3Arabic ʿamma ʿundhiru muʿridun: literally, “turning away from what they have been warned about.”

46:15Arabic min al-muslimin: literally, “among the submitters.” See muslim in Glossary, page 531.

46:16Arabic waʿd al-sidq alladhi kanu yuʿadun: literally, “a true promise they had been promised.”

46:35Arabic ulu al-ʿazm min al-rusul: literally, “the resolute among the [prior] messengers,” usually taken to refer to Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus (all prior to Muhammad), due to the severe tests they underwent after being called to prophecy.

Sura 47

Muhammad

47:3Arabic yadrib Allah li al-nas amthalahum: literally, “God coins their likeness for people,” anticipating that God alone can judge their true likeness, as He does below in v. 38.

47:10Arabic afalam yasiru fi al-ard: literally, “have they not traveled through the earth.” Here, it’s a metaphor of time as well as space, encompassing all preceding generations of humankind.

47:17Arabic atahum taqwahum: literally, “He gives them their mindfulness.”

47:19Arabic mutaqallabakum wa mathwakum: literally, “your restlessness and your places of rest.”

47:21Arabic qawl maʿruf: literally, “an honorable saying,” but the qualifier maʿruf means more than honor. It is part of the axial moral norm in Islam: al-amr bil-maʿruf wa al-nahy ʿan al-munkar—“Enjoining what is good and forbidding what is bad.” Often used in the Quran (3:104, 110; 9:71, 112; 31:17), it highlights a collective duty to encourage righteous behavior and discourage immorality at all times, in peace and in war.

47:21Arabic fa-idha ʿazama al-amr: literally, “once the matter is determined.”

47:23Arabic wa-aʿma absarahum: literally, “and He blinds their sight.”

47:31Arabic hatta naʿlama: literally, “so that We might know.”

47:31Arabic akhbarakum: literally, “your news.”

Sura 48

Victory (Al-Fath)

48:9Some commentators interpret “honoring” and “revering” as applying to the Prophet.

48:10This verse equates loyalty to the Prophet with loyalty to God. It echoes a historical moment in 628 CE, when the Prophet was undertaking a return pilgrimage to Mecca. Encamped at Hudaybiyya, an area just outside Mecca, Muhammad requested a pledge of allegiance from his followers, and what later became known as the Treaty of Hudaybiyya was then secured with Muhammad’s opponents, permitting Muslims to reenter Mecca peacefully as pilgrims—although only after a year’s delay.

48:18The actual pledge at Hudaybiyya was reported to have taken place under a tree, while the victory, with “many spoils of war yet to take” (v. 19), refers to the conquest of Khaybar, which took place in 629 CE, after the treaty but before the peaceful pilgrimage to Mecca in 630.

48:26Arabic kalimat al-taqwa: literally, “the word of mindfulness of God.” This refers, as in v. 18, to the promise that they had made to God under the tree at Hudaybiyya.

48:29Arabic simahum fi wujuhihim: literally, “their mark is on their faces.”

48:29The reference in the Gospels is to the seed and mustard seed parables in Mark 4:26–32, while the Torah likely a reference to the command for bands of God’s word to mark the forehead, as set forth in Deuteronomy 6:8 and 11:18.

Sura 49

The Private Apartments (Al-Hujurat)

49:1Arabic la tuqaddimu bain yadai Allah wa rasulihi: literally, “do not advance [yourselves] before God and His messenger.”

49:14The priority of submission over faith is echoed in what is known as the hadith of Gabriel: conveyed to the Prophet Muhammad by the Archangel Gabriel, it explains islam (“submission”) as the first step, followed by iman (“faith”), then ihsan (“virtue”) the highest stage of human engagement with the Divine.

49:17Arabic sadiqin: literally, “truthful.”

49:18Only the second of these accolades (“He Sees”) echoes a Beautiful Name (Arabic basir: literally, Seer), but both it and “God Knows” are capitalized to underscore the consistency of God’s presence in English.

Sura 50

Qaf (Qaf)

50:1On this disconnected letter, see muqattaʿat in Glossary, page 531.

50:4Arabic ma tanqus al-ard minhum: literally, “what the earth diminishes of them.”

50:4A reference to umm al-kitab. See Glossary, page 532.

50:14Nearly all these groups are identified elsewhere in the Quran as disbelievers and, in the case of Pharaoh, persecutors of believers. The people of Midian are ashab al-aika (literally, “people of the forest”) since it is they who were sent, and rejected, the prophet Shuʿayb (26:176–89).

50:17Arabic yatalaqqa al-mutalaqqiyani: literally, “Two receivers . . . receive.” These are Nakir and Munkar, noted in 16:28–32.

Sura 51

Scattering Winds (Al-Dhariyat)

51:4Like the first three verses of Sura 37, these four verses could refer to either winds or angels, but here winds seems more likely.

51:19Arabic wa-fi amwalihim haqq li al-saʾil wa-al-mahrum: literally, “and both beggars and the needy have a right to their wealth.”

51:36Arabic al-muslimin: literally, “those who submit.” See muslim in Glossary, page 531.

Sura 52

Mount Sinai (Al-Tur)

52:2The Torah, delivered to Moses on Mount Sinai.

52:4The Kaʿba, “maintained only by those who believe in God and the last day” (9:18).

52:5The sky, as also in 21:32: “We raised the sky, a secure canopy.”

52:21Arabic rahin: literally, “a pledge.”

Sura 53

The Star (Al-Najm)

53:5The Archangel Gabriel.

53:16Arabic idh yaghsha al-sidra ma yaghsha: literally, “when the lote-tree was cloaked with whatever cloaked it.”

53:20All three were pre-Islamic goddesses, whose stone idols the pagan Arabs worshipped.

53:21This refers to the attribution of male offspring (considered desirable) to pagan Arabs, contrasting them with goddesses as God’s daughters (daughters being deemed undesirable).

53:25Arabic fa-li Allah al-akhira wa-al-ula: literally, “to God belong the next life and the first.”

53:31The sense of goodness here is twofold, as it is elsewhere (e.g., 55:60): God is always “with those who are mindful of Him and those who do good” (16:128; see also 5:93), and then there is the reward of paradise: “that [paradise] is the reward of those who do good (5:85).

53:36The Torah.

53:37Upheld his belief in the One God.

53:47Life after death.

53:49A star worshipped by the polytheistic Arabs.

53:54Arabic fa-ghashshaha ma ghashsha: literally, “So there covered them that which covered.”

Sura 54

The Moon (Al-Qamar)

54:1Some commentators have connected this verse to an alleged miracle of the Prophet Muhammad, while others have suggested that the split moon refers to a future event, auguring the end of the world and the day of resurrection. The message from v. 6ff. seems to favor the latter interpretation.

54:2Another rendering would be “This is powerful sorcery.”

54:29Arabic Arabic fa-taʿata: literally, “then he took hold.”

54:29A more extended account of this incident is furnished in 7:73–79, where the prophet Salih urges the people of Thamud to serve God alone and explains to them that God’s she-camel, which was sent as a sign to them, should be left unharmed and allowed to pasture. But the leader of the most rebellious and proud faction in Thamud denounced the believers, and the disbelieving faction slaughtered the camel, thereby bringing divine retribution (Sura 91).

Sura 55

The All Merciful (Al-Rahman)

55:16Although in the Arabic this refrain is repeated verbatim at v. 18 etc., it has here been varied across a range of word combinations and moods in a manner that is intended to retain its essential meaning. When the Arabic is recited, the refrain can be intoned in a variety of ways; if exactly the same refrain is repeated in English, it would not only come across as tedious and mechanical, but would fail to be faithful to the variation of tone that animates the Arabic.

55:17Where the sun rises in winter and summer.

55:17Where the sun sets in winter and summer.

55:29Arabic kull yawm huwa fi shaʾn: literally, “He is daily in a matter.”

55:37Arabic ka al-dihan: literally, “like dregs of olive oil” or “red leather.”

55:54Cf. 18:30–31: “those who believe and do good deeds . . . will have eternal gardens, with rivers flowing beneath. There they will be adorned in bracelets of gold, and they will wear robes of green, of fine silk and rich brocade; they will recline there on raised couches—a blessèd reward, an excellent home.”

55:60The sense of goodness here is twofold, as it is elsewhere (e.g., 53:31): God is always “with those who are mindful of Him and those who do good” (16:128; see also 5.93), and then there is the reward of paradise: “that [paradise] is the reward for those who do good” (5:85).

55:72Houri is the name for a large-eyed maiden of paradise.

Sura 56

The Inexorable Event (Al-Waqiʿa)

56:8Arabic fa ashab al-maimana ma ashab al-maimana: literally, “the companions of the right hand—who are the companions of the right hand?”

56:11The ranking of divine judgment and reward is anticipated in the phrase “those on the right” (74:39) and then elaborated into three categories in another verse: “We gave the Book as a legacy to Our servants whom We favored. Some of them wrong their own souls, some are moderate, and others by God’s leave are foremost in good deeds—the greatest grace” (35:32).

56:28Arabic fi sidr: literally, “in lote-trees,” said to be among the markers of paradise (53:14).

56:37These women are the houris mentioned in v. 22.

56:52On the tree of Zaqqum, a tree distinctive to hell whose fronds cause great pain and disgust, see also 37:62 and 44:43.

56:60Arabic qaddarna bainakum al-mawt: literally, “We decreed death among you.”

56:60Arabic wa-ma nahnu bimasbuqin: literally, “and We are not to be overtaken.”

56:62God’s power to create and re-create is echoed elsewhere, as in 29:20: “Say, ‘Travel through the earth and see how He originated creation; then God will bring about a new creation, for God has Power over all things.’ ”

56:75This may also refer to the staged revelation of the Quran that anticipates the following verses.

Sura 57

Iron (Al-Hadid)

57:7To the war effort; see v. 10.

57:10This refers to the capitulation of Meccan opponents to the ascendant Muslims in 630 CE.

57:25The “balance” (mizan) indicates among other things the scales by which good and bad deeds are weighed or measured. It can refer to the body of religious law, which stipulates the criteria of such assessment, as well as the human faculties as harmonized in the notion of conscience.

57:27The message here is that monasticism was not ordained by God, yet the chief fault of those (Christian monks and nuns) who followed it was their failure to observe fully its requirements.

57:28The Light—recognition of the Prophet and obedience to God’s commands—seems to be the same introduced earlier in v. 9, then developed in vv. 12–13 as a distinguishing mark between believers and hypocrites in the next life.

Sura 58

The Woman Who Pleads (Al-Mujadila)

58:2Arabic yuzahirun: literally “made them appear [like their mothers’ backs]”; this underscores the evil of zihar, the pre-Islamic practice of divorce—equating the wife to be divorced with the mother’s back in order to nullify marriage—but it begs the question of why the marriage was initially deemed feasible. This practice is also cited and condemned in 33:4.

58:8The passage is referring to certain Jews who would address the Prophet with the greeting al-sam ʿalaikum, which means “death to you,” instead of the conventional greeting “peace be to you.”

58:11The message here, as elsewhere, is the necessity of faith—but faith enhanced by knowledge is still better. This is often used to justify a class of religious specialists in Islam known as the ʿulama, “those possessing knowledge.”

58:22Arabic wa-ayyadahum biruh minhu: literally, “and He strengthened them with a spirit from Him.” This same accolade is found elsewhere only with reference to Jesus: 2:87 and 253; 5:110.

Sura 59

The Gathering (Al-Hashr)

59:2The “gathering” is the gathering of a Jewish tribe that at first supported the new Muslim community in Medina, but then became their opponents, ca. 625 CE. It also provides the title for this sura.

59:11The reference here, and throughout the sura, is to a group of Jews, the Banu Nadir, who were expelled from Mecca in 625 CE.

59:17Arabic fa-kana ʿaqibatahuma annahuma fi al-nar: literally, “the end of both will be in the fire.”

59:24Al-asmaʾ al-husna is the key phrase in Arabic. Found here and in 17:110, it signals the recurrent importance of remembering God by His Beautiful Names. See Glossary, page 530.

Sura 61

In Ranks (Al-Saff)

61:8Arabic biafwahihim: literally, “with their mouths.”

61:14Arabic fa-asbahu zahirin: literally, “they became dominant.”

Sura 62

The Friday Prayer (Al-Jumuʿa)

62:2Cf. 2:78: “unlettered people who don’t know the Book”—i.e., pagan Arabs.

62:6Arabic annakum awliyaʾ li Allah: literally, “that you are friends [or allies] of God.”

62:6The same critique is set forth in 2:94–95.

62:7Arabic bima qaddamat aydihim: literally, “on account of what their hands have sent forth.”

Sura 63

The Hypocrites (Al-Munafiqun)

63:8Some translate this as “the more honorable.”

Sura 64

Mutual Fraud (Al-Taghabun)

64:6Arabic dhalika biannahu: literally, “that is because.” The word “for” translates the expression more succinctly.

64:8The Light is the Quran, as in 7:157: “those . . . guided by the light sent down with him [Muhammad].”

64:17That is, if you spend money legitimately earned in the way of God; parallel to 5:12—see the note for that verse, page 547.

Sura 65

Divorce (Al-Talaq)

65:1An interval in which a woman who is divorced cannot marry another man, equivalent to three full cycles of menstruation.

65:7Arabic baʿda ʿusr yusr: literally, “after a hardship comes ease.” Cf. echo in 94:5–6: “with every hardship comes ease—yes, with every hardship comes ease.”

65:12The seven earths seem to complement each of the seven heavens. In both instances, the message is to reinforce the dictum that creation—of heaven(s) and of earth(s)—is a divinely ordained occurrence.

Sura 66

Prohibition (Al-Tahrim)

66:1Tension among the Prophet’s wives seems to have prompted this revelation, late in the Medinan period, ca. 629 CE. Abstention from marital privilege was the Prophet’s response, here corrected by divine counsel.

66:4Arabic ʿalaihi: literally, “against him,” clearly here, the Prophet.

66:5Arabic saʾihat: literally, “traveling,” but here “fasting” seems preferable.

Sura 67

Dominion (Al-Mulk)

67:9Arabic fi dalal kabir: literally, “in a great straying.”

67:16Arabic amintum: literally, “do you have faith?”

Sura 68

The Pen (Al-Qalam)

68:1On this disconnected letter, see muqattaʿat in Glossary, page 531.

68:13A reference to al-Walid ibn al-Mughira, a member of the Quraysh and a staunch critic of the Prophet.

68:17The story that follows (vv. 17–32) seems to be cast in the form of a parable.

68:48Arabic sahib al-hut: literally, “the companion of the whale.”

68:51Arabic layuzliqunaka: literally, “they would surely make you slip.”

Sura 69

Reality (Al-Haqqa)

69:4The fate of these unfortunate people has been described elsewhere (see 7:65–73)—a fate decreed by their denial of messengers sent to them.

Sura 70

The Paths of Ascent (Al-Maʿarij)

70:4The rhetorical hyperbole accenting “fifty thousand years” stresses the difference between human and divine reckoning of time, as in 32:5, where the end occurs “on a day which spans a thousand years in your counting.”

70:29Arabic lifurujihim hafizun: literally, “guarding their private parts.”

70:40Arabic birabb al-mashariq wa-al-magharib: literally, “Lord of the Easts and the Wests” but clearly here as elsewhere (e.g., 37:5) evoking places where the sun rises and sets.

70:41Arabic wa-ma nahnu bimasbuqin: literally, “and We will not be surpassed.”

70:42See also 43:83: “So leave them to gossip and frolic—until they encounter their promised day.”

Sura 71

Noah (Nuh)

71:17The earth equates with dust; cf. 40:67: “It is He Who created you from dust, then from sperm, then from a clot of blood.”

71:23These are Mesopotamian gods who were also worshipped in pre-Islamic Arabia, but mentioned in the Quran only here.

71:24Arabic la tazid al-zalimin illa dalal: literally, “do not increase the wrongdoers except in error.”

Sura 72

The Jinn (Al-Jinn)

72:1The jinn are intermediate beings—neither humans nor angels. Jinn can transmit divine wisdom but are also expected to worship God and not be channels of misleading signs or outright magic. See Glossary, page 531.

72:9A similar punishment is promised for any “rebellious devil” (37:7) with whom evil jinn are here linked, as in 37:10: “Any [devil] who eavesdrops, snatching an overheard fragment, shall be pursued by a luminous flame.”

72:17The message is subtle but strict: God’s blessings are not just a boon but also a measure of human loyalty, requiring continuous awareness of the Giver as well as the gift.

72:19That is, Muhammad. The implication is that the Arabs were worshipping him instead of God.

72:27These are similar to the angels who monitor all humans; cf. 13:11: “Each person has a train of angels before them and behind them, guarding them by God’s command.”

Sura 73

The One Enwrapped (Al-Muzzammil)

73:2Before five daily prayers became obligatory for Muslims, a night prayer was common practice. It remains a supererogatory prayer of high value, especially during Ramadan.

73:5Arabic qawl thaqil: literally, “a weighty Word.”

73:9A description of God as Lord at sunrise and sunset, similar to those at 37:5, 55:17, and 70:40.

73:20Since the injunction to jihad was sanctioned only after the hijra, this verse must date to the Prophet’s stay in Medina. All the preceding verses belong to the early Meccan period.

73:20That is, if you spend money legitimately earned in the way of God; parallel to 5:12—see corresponding note, page 547.

Sura 74

The One Enfolded (Al-Muddaththir)

74:1Most commentators presume this to be an image of the Prophet covering himself as he prepared for the onset of revelation, but it can also refer to the fact that his prophetic mission is about to end his revelatory solitude as he is now instructed to “arise and warn.”

74:11Like an earlier passage (68:10–14), this directive (vv. 11–26) could refer to a specific opponent of the Prophet, al-Walid ibn al-Mughira, or it could apply generally to any disbeliever with wealth and children.

74:30“Nineteen” may be the number of angels or the spectrum of human faculties.

74:47Arabic hatta atana al-yaqin: literally, “until the certainty [of death] came to us.” Cf. parallel passage at 15:99.

74:52That is, they want the scripture to be self-evident, as noted in 2:118: “And those with no knowledge say, ‘Why does God not speak to us?’ or ‘Why does no sign come to us?’ ”

74:56Arabic huwa ahl al-taqwa wa-ahl al-maghfira: literally, “He is worthy of Mindfulness, and worthy to be Forgiving.” The meaning of ahl here suggests the location rather than the state of the One, the Only God. Related to “people” or “family,” the most common meanings of ahl, are notions of “home” or “origin,” so “source” seems to capture both God as the focus (for taqwa) and as the force (for maghfira). These are Beautiful Names only found here in the Quran.

Sura 75

Resurrection (Al-Qiyama)

75:13Arabic bima qaddama wa-akhkhara: literally, “what they advanced and what they delayed.”

75:18Through the Archangel Gabriel.

75:19This directive is parallel to that given in 20:114: “And Prophet, don’t be overhasty reciting the Quran before [each] revelation to you is completed. Rather, say, ‘My Lord, increase my knowledge.’ ”

75:27Arabic man raqin: literally, “who is a curer?”

75:35Arabic laka: literally, “to you” but here personifying the end or death.

Sura 76

Humankind (Al-Insan)

76:18A spring in paradise, mentioned only here.

76:23Arabic nazzalna alaikum al-Quran tanzil: literally, “We sent down the Quran with a sending down,” which seems to imply all at once, as in 97:1: “We revealed this Word on the night of decree,” although others view it as having been sent down gradually or in stages.

Sura 77

Those Sent Out (Al-Mursalat)

77:4The reference is clearly to angels as the mediators.

77:30Arabic shuʿab: literally, “branches.”

Sura 78

The Announcement (Al-Nabaʾ)

78:19Arabic wa-futihat al-samaʾ fa-kanat abwab: literally, “the sky was opened, and became doors.”

78:20Arabic fa-kanat sarab: literally, “and became a mirage.”

78:30Arabic fa-lan nazidakum illa ʿadhab: literally, “We will not increase you except in torment.”

78:38A title of the Archangel Gabriel.

78:40The ironic echo of dust at death comes elsewhere, e.g., in 56:47 where disbelievers protest: “When we die, when we are dust and bones, will we really be resurrected?” Instead of only being raised up, they also experience more torment (v. 30 above).

Sura 79

Those Who Force Out (Al-Naziʿat)

79:7The first blowing of the trumpet brings about the last day when all perish, and the second blow resurrects them.

79:16A valley near Mount Sinai.

79:20Turning the staff into a serpent.

79:25Arabic al-akhira wa-al-ula: literally, “in the last life and the first.”

Sura 80

He Frowned (ʿAbasa)

80:1The opening verse reflects the occasion for revealing this verse: the Prophet had ignored someone who was literally blind, while trying to convince others, pagan Meccan leaders, of the truth of his prophecy. The blind man, ʿAbd Allah ibn Umm Maktum, became a devoted follower of Islam; he also served as one of the first muezzins, those who call other Muslims to prayer at the obligatory daily times.

80:4Arabic dhikra: literally, “a reminder.”

80:5Arabic man istaghna: literally, “who considers himself free of need.”

80:10The theological lesson here is clear: God, not the Prophet, moves people to accept His revelation. Other verses confirm the same lesson (e.g., 28:56 and 18:28), but less directly.

Sura 81

The Folding Up (Al-Takwir)

81:3Arabic idha al-jibal suyyirat: literally, “when the mountains are moved”; however, they actually vanish. See 20:105–7: “They ask you about the mountains. Say, ‘My Lord shall blast them into fragments. He will leave them leveled as a plain. You shall see there neither peak nor vale.’ ”

81:7The reference echoes a theme that recurs throughout the Quran: the cleaving of two groups on the right and the left, sorted into the good and the bad, some rewarded, others condemned, on the day of judgment.

81:19The Archangel Gabriel, with Muhammad as his companion (v. 22).

81:23A further reference to the vision of heaven, where Muhammad sees Gabriel; see 53:5–7: “one mighty in power has taught him, one imbued with great strength, who stood at the horizon’s peak.”

81:27Arabic ʿalamin: literally, “all the worlds.” See Glossary, page 529.

Sura 83

Those Who Defraud (Al-Mutaffifin)

83:7Sijjin is a place in eternity equivalent to prison (sijn).

83:18Arabic ʿilliyyina: literally, “lofty places,” mirroring Sijjin (vv. 7, 8).

83:27Another fountain in paradise.

Sura 84

The Splitting Asunder (Al-Inshiqaq)

84:7Arabic kitabahu literally: “His book.” It seems preferable to pluralize the two groups, since once again, this “record” refers to the ultimate record, the Mother of the Book, umm al-kitab. See Glossary, page 532.

Sura 85

The Constellations (Al-Buruj)

85:4Those “who made the pit” could refer to the story of a Yemeni king, Dhu Nawas al-Yamani, who ordered a huge pit to be dug and filled with fire, into which were thrown those who had converted to Christianity before the advent of Islam (Tabari). It could also refer to disbelievers who make their own “hell,” a related image of which appears in the Psalms (94:13, where “a pit is dug for the wicked”).

85:18The fate of Pharaoh is often described in the Quran (e.g., 7:103–17), while the people of Thamud are usually linked with the people of ʿAd (e.g., 7:65–73), their common fate decreed by their denial of the messengers sent to them.

85:20Arabic min waraʾihim: literally, “from behind them.”

85:22“A preserved tablet” seems to be another name for “the repository of all scripture” (Arabic, umm al-kitab, literally “the Mother of the Book”), cited in 3:7, 13:39, and 43:4. See Glossary, page 532.

Sura 86

The Night Traveler (Al-Tariq)

86:11Arabic wa-al-samaʾ dhat al-rajʿ: literally, “by the sky as it returns,” implying the change of weather, the cycle of sun and rain.

Sura 87

The Most High (Al-Aʿla)

87:19Abraham is not usually thought to have received a written revelation or scripture, but since there is the Testament of Abraham in Jewish-Christian apocrypha, scripture about Abraham may assumed to be scripture by him, all preserved in umm al-kitab, the Mother of the Book, the lodestone of all revelation (3:7).

Sura 89

The Breaking Dawn (Al-Fajr)

89:2The number “ten” could refer to the first ten nights at the beginning of Muharram, the first month in the Muslim year, or it could refer to the first ten nights of Dhu al-Hijjah, the month of pilgrimage. See 2:196: “those without means should fast for three days during the major pilgrimage, and seven days upon your return, ten days in all.”

89:3If one accepts “ten nights” as a reference to the month of pilgrimage, it is marked both by “odd”—three plus seven—and “even”—ten. There are numerous other explanations of this elliptical reference.

89:9The people of ʿAd and Thamud belonged to a pre-Islamic group that rejected the prophet Hud, cited in 7:65–72 (and repeated in 11:50–60 and 26:123–40).

89:10Arabic dhi al-awtad: literally, “owner of the tent pegs.”

89:24Arabic hayati: literally, “my life [to come],” not the present life—i.e., good deeds accrued in this life will be of benefit in the life to come.

Sura 91

The Sun (Al-Shams)

91:11A more extended account of this incident is provided in 7:73–79, where the prophet Salih urges the people of Thamud to serve God alone and explains to them that God’s she-camel, which was sent as a sign to them, should be left unharmed and allowed to pasture. But the leader of the most rebellious and proud faction in Thamud denounces the believers and the disbelieving faction slaughters the camel, thereby bringing divine retribution.

Sura 92

Night (Al-Layl)

92:7Arabic fa-sanuyassiruhu li al-yusra: literally, “We will ease for them the path to ease.”

92:18Arabic yatazakki: literally, “to promote purity.”

Sura 93

Morning Light (Al-Duha)

93:1The word duha refers to the period of time from after sunrise until before noon. In 91:1 and 79:29 it indicates the full brightness of the sun.

93:3According to Ibn ʿAbbas, as reported by Ibn Kathir, this verse was revealed after a lapse in the revelations given to the Prophet, which caused him great anxiety and which prompted the polytheists to taunt that “his Lord has abandoned him and hates him.” The verse is intended to answer the taunt by reassuring the Prophet of his mission.

Sura 94

The Broadening (Al-Sharh)

94:2Arabic wizraka: literally, “your burden.”

94:4Arabic dhikraka: literally, “your remembrance.”

94:8Arabic: wa-ila rabbika fa-rghab: literally, “and to your Lord be attentive” or “turn your attention.”

Sura 95

The Fig (Al-Tin)

95:3Mecca.

95:7Arabic din: literally, “religion” as in 109:6 (“you have your religion and I have mine”) but also connoting judgment as in 1:4 (“Ruler of the day of reckoning”) and reward as in 24:25 (“their due recompense”). Here “reckoning” seems most apt. See Glossary, page 530.

Sura 96

Clot of Blood (Al-ʿAlaq)

96:9From this verse to the end (vv. 9–19), the person recalled and rebuked is likely Abu Jahl, an early, fierce enemy of the Prophet. He and his companions will be ensnared by “the angels of hell” (v. 18).

Sura 97

The Night of Decree (Al-Qadr)

97:1Arabic inna anzalnahu: literally, “We revealed it.”

Sura 98

Clear Proof (Al-Bayyina)

98:5The syntax is slightly inverted here.

98:7Arabic khair al-bariyat: literally, “the best of creation.”

Sura 99

The Earthquake (Al-Zalzala)

99:4Arabic akhbaraha: literally, “her news.”

Sura 100

Racing Steeds (Al-ʿAdiyat)

100:1Arabic wa-al-ʿadiyat: literally, “by the racing steeds, panting.” Since some commentators have taken the initial five lines to be an invocation not of Arabian horses but of wayward souls, charging after their own interests, it seems preferable to make that comparison explicit in the translation. “By those racing like steeds, panting” welds together the two parts of this sura (vv. 1–5 and 6–11), underscoring their stark ethical imperative: not to be ungrateful but mindful “that on that day, their Lord shall be fully Aware of them” (v. 11).

Sura 101

The Thundering Calamity (Al-Qariʿa)

101:1Arabic al-qariʿa: literally, “the striking calamity,” alluding to the day of judgment (v. 4).

Sura 102

Competing for Worldly Gain (Al-Takathur)

102:5Arabic ʿilm al-yaqin: literally, “knowledge of certainty.”

102:7Arabic ʿain al-yaqin: literally, “eye of certainty.”

Sura 104

The Backbiter (Al-Humaza)

104:9Arabic ʿamad mumadda: literally, “extended pillars.”

Sura 105

The Elephant (Al-Fil)

105:1An Ethiopian army attempted to invade Mecca either in the 540s, two or three decades prior to Muhammad’s birth, or in 570 CE, the year of his birth. The army had an elephant at its head. Birds are said to have pelted the soldiers with stones, providing the drama at the heart of this verse.

Sura 106

Quraysh (Quraysh)

106:1This sura should be connected to the previous one, signaling that the Quraysh, the tribe of Muhammad, had survived the mid-sixth-century Yemeni assault due to God’s grace, not their own military prowess.

Sura 108

Abundance (Al-Kawthar)

108:1There are several hadith that relate kawthar (“abundance”), cited only here in the Quran, to a river in paradise. Its initial meaning, in reference to Muhammad and believers, is that in quality as well as measure, goodness will multiply for those God has favored.

108:3They will have no progeny. Some of the Quraysh—specifically, As ibn Waʾil—had said that the Prophet was “cut off,” that he would have no progeny since his three sons had died at an early age.

Sura 111

The Palm Fiber (Al-Masad)

111:1Abu Lahab was an uncle of the Prophet who, together with his wife, fiercely opposed the Prophet, and so this sura is directed against them as a reminder to others that wealth and material gains will not prevail. The image of the cord around his wife’s neck suggests that her “twisted” nature is evident to those who see her, while also reaffirming the Quranic dictum that “We have fastened every man’s fate around his own neck” (17:13) also applies to women.

Sura 112

Unity/Sincerity (Al-Ikhlas)

112:2Arabic samad: literally, “rock,” but connoting someone or something stable and immovable, at once irreducible and unreproducible—i.e., the Absolute. It is among the Beautiful Names of God, found only here in the Quran.

Sura 113

The Dawn (Al-Falaq)

113:1Falaqa means “to split,” hence the image is that of the dawn which splits or breaks apart from night.

113:2The evil here clearly refers to the evil practiced by God’s creatures, those imbued with (moral) agency.

113:4This refers to some hostile tribes in Medina whose members put a spell on the Prophet; this sura and the next were revealed in order to extricate him from their influence.

Sura 114

Humankind (Al-Nas)

114:5As noted in 7:20, “whispering” is the preferred mode of communication for both Satan and his son, aka al-Khannas, “the whisperer.”

Introduction

In the cave of Hira on the outskirts of the Arabian city of Mecca, the Prophet Muhammad is said to have received his first revelation. The cave is so small that only one person can enter it; it overlooks a rocky landscape, craggy, rich with bright bronze-colored sand. From this height the Prophet looked down—and meditated on what was right and wrong in the beliefs and practices of his people. He came down from the mountain, ablaze with language that was neither verse nor prose, language that we have ever since been struggling to understand, struggling to render into our own idiom.

Muhammad would meditate in the cave of Hira during the holy month of Ramadan, the time in each year when blood feuds were suspended. It was a time when Meccans who had wealth and leisure retreated to the outskirts of their town, to the hills that enclosed them, and to the caves that offered shelter and repose.

Muhammad had been following this practice for over a decade. Then, one night in Ramadan in the year 610, when he was about forty years old, he felt a strange stirring inside him. He welcomed the nighttime in this special month; it drew him deep into himself and allowed him to resist those impulses that pulled him back to the world, to concerns with family or business or travel. He was alert to repelling those impulses. They clouded his vision, they denied him peace of mind, and above all, they blocked his search for the truth. Yet this was a different stirring. It was deep, arresting. It overpowered him, and then it produced words, words that were not his.1 He listened:

“Read!” And he was shown a piece of silk with words embroidered on it.

He did not know how to read. “What shall I read?” he asked.

“Read!” came the command, and again the brocade was thrust before him.

He stammered, “But what shall I read?”

Muhammad could not read. All those who accompanied him on caravan trips, whether to Egypt or Syria, to Yemen or Abyssinia, could read commercial symbols but there was not yet a fully developed written Arabic.2 His companions handled the few documents of exchange that required reading or signing. When Muhammad had to sign, he would ask others to read aloud what was written, then he would sign by pressing the palm of his hand to the paper. Why then did this voice ask him to read?3

Even as he was thinking these thoughts, the voice commanded him, for the third time:

“Read!”

“But what, what shall I read?” Then the words appeared:

Read—in the Name of your Lord

Who created—

created humankind from a clot

of blood.

Read—for your Lord

is Most Bountiful,

Who taught by the pen—

taught humankind

what it did not know.

SURA AL-ʿALAQ, 96:1–5

According to some traditions, these words appeared on a coverlet of brocade and, urged for the third time, Muhammad somehow read them. But the Arabic command iqraʾ can mean not only “read!” but “recite!” hence in other traditions he is said to have recited the words after Gabriel. But in either scenario, he is said to have related that these words were written on his heart, through some miracle of comprehension. He wondered, had he become a man possessed, an ecstatic poet, the kind his clansmen distrusted, even despised? He had barely absorbed the experience when his whole body began to tremble. He waited for more counsel. But nothing came. He hurried down the mountain, running toward Mecca. Halfway down the voice returned. Now it was a booming voice with a face, a man’s face. The face appeared to come from beyond the horizon. The celestial form announced: “O Muhammad, you are the messenger of God, and I am Gabriel.” He tried to look away but wherever he turned, there was the Archangel Gabriel on the horizon, meeting his gaze.

Muhammad’s encounter on the mountain, in the tiny cave of Hira, was to change the course of world history. Revelations continued to come for the next twenty-two years, and they were eventually compiled as the text of Quran (literally, “recitation”), which, along with Muhammad’s practice, became the basis of the religion of Islam. These revelatory experiences raised him from a humble shepherd and a trader to the rank not only of prophet, but of statesman, military strategist, ruler, and, above all, a model of conduct for millions of human beings across the globe. His life can be marked by five dates: 570 CE,4 the approximate year of his birth; 595, when he married; 610, when he was called to prophecy in Mecca; 622, the year of the hijra or migration, when he left Mecca for Yathrib (later renamed Medina); and 632, when, after subduing his enemies, he died in Medina. Between the time of his birth and the time of his death, he had transformed and unified the warring tribes of Arabia into a single community of faith, and within fifty years of his death, the vast Islamic empire had overtaken the Persian and Byzantine empires, reaching the very gates of Europe. Today, his followers number almost two billion people.

Early Years

Muhammad was born into the Quraysh, the most powerful tribe of Mecca, and he belonged to the clan of Hashim. He was an orphan, losing his father, Abdullah, in the year of his birth and his mother, Amina, when he was just six. He was adopted first by his grandfather Abd al-Muttalib and then by his uncle Abu Talib; his first cousin ʿAli was a boyhood companion. At this time, Mecca was a thriving center of both religious worship and commerce. Muhammad was employed in its caravan trade. By all accounts, he was a striking young man, handsome, of medium build, with black eyes, a reddish complexion, and hair flowing to his shoulders. He rapidly earned the reputation of being al-Amin (the trustworthy). Hearing of his noble character, a wealthy businesswoman named Khadija sent him on one of her trading caravans to Syria. Khadija was a widow in her forties and she became so enamored of Muhammad’s qualities that she proposed marriage to him, which he accepted. They had two sons, who both died young, and four daughters. For twenty-five years he remained devoted to her as his only wife.

When Muhammad received the first revelation, Khadija was the first person to believe in him and support him. She had sent scouts to the mountain, who found him and brought him home. As soon as they left, he collapsed into her lap, telling her of his experience. “O son of my uncle,” she exclaimed, “rejoice . . . and be of good heart. By Him in whose hand is Khadija’s soul, I have hope that you will be the prophet of this people.”5 Muhammad received a similar assurance from Khadija’s Christian cousin Waraqa ibn Qusayy. The first man to accept the Prophet’s message was ʿAli. Among the early converts to Islam were the respected merchant Abu Bakr, who would later become the first caliph of the Islamic empire, and his uncle Hamza, known for his military prowess. ʿUmar ibn al-Khattab, another prominent noble of Mecca (and later to become the second caliph), was initially shocked on learning that his sister Fatima had converted to Islam; but when he went to her house to upbraid her, he heard the beauty of what she was reciting from the Quran and he quickly embraced the new faith.

Opposition to the New Religion

Three years after the first revelation, the Prophet was instructed by the Archangel to disseminate the message of Islam publicly, and this is when resistance grew. Like Christianity, Islam was a revolutionary religion. Just as the values of Christianity were sharply opposed to those of the brutal and materialistic Roman empire, so the early verses of the Quran emphatically derided the corruption into which Meccan tribal society had degenerated. The new religion was focused on issues of social and economic justice, insisting on fairness in business transactions, denouncing usury, espousing rights for women and the poor, and prohibiting such savage practices as the burial of newly born unwanted young girls. Since Mecca was an economic and religious center, its Qurayshi leaders saw Muhammad as undermining their entire way of life—not only their idolatrous religion but their commerce and their social practices.

In consequence, the early Muslims were subjected to torture, killing, and confiscation of their property. Muhammad’s enemies included some of his own close relatives and tribesmen. Among them was his uncle Abu Lahab, whom God cursed through a revelation, along with his wife. Worst of all was the leader of the Makhzum clan of the Quraysh, Abu Jahl, who would make a mockery of Muhammad and assault his followers. Shortly after the conversion of ‘Umar, the Quraysh publicly ostracized Muhammad and his followers. Notwithstanding the protection afforded to the Prophet by his uncle Abu Talib, the poorer and weaker Muslims were continually subjected to mistreatment. A number of them, with the Prophet’s permission, sought refuge in Abyssinia, where they were welcomed by its king, Najashi (the Negus), despite efforts of the Meccans to dissuade him. This is known as the first hijra or migration.

In 619 Muhammad endured his annus horribilus. In that year he lost Khadija, his wife, his confidante, and his mainstay in all that he did. Muhammad’s monogamous marriage with Khadija for almost twenty-five years was something highly unusual at that time. From the age of fifty until fifty-two he remained unmarried. Thereafter, between the ages of fifty-three and sixty, he married ten women, primarily for political reasons. For example, he married ʿAʾisha and Hafsa, daughters respectively of the influential leaders Abu Bakr and ʿUmar. He also married a Jewish woman, Rehana, to form ties with the tribe of Bani Qurayza, as well as a Christian woman, Maryam, which helped forge a link with Muqawqis, the ruler of Egypt. His marriage to an aging and impoverished woman called Sawda was designed to exemplify kindness to women.

In the same year that Khadija died, Muhammad also lost Abu Talib, his uncle, his father by trust, his protector against hostile clansmen and other Meccan detractors. Abu Talib had been one of the most respected elders of the Quraysh and he had been committed to safeguarding the Prophet even though he himself never converted to Islam. Without his protection, Muhammad and his followers became far more vulnerable to abuse and persecution. Realizing that he could garner no more support in Mecca, the Prophet walked about fifty miles to a neighboring town called Taʾif, hoping to convert people there. But they drove him out, stirring up their slaves to insult him and throw stones at him. Muhammad regarded this as the bitterest day of his life.

After these setbacks, there occurred an extraordinary event in that eventful year of 619. The Prophet was awakened from his sleep at the Kaʿba by the Archangel, who took him on “the night journey” (isra) on a white horse from Mecca to the mosque of Al-Aqsa in Jerusalem (originally, the temple built by Solomon). There the Prophet found Abraham, Moses, and Jesus with all the prophets, whom he led in prayer. He was then led through an ascension (miʿraj) of the seven heavens, one by one, in which he again met the various prophets, and was finally taken into the Divine Presence, where he received instruction that Muslims were obliged to pray five times daily. On returning, the Prophet met with skepticism when he related his adventure; but Abu Bakr believed instantly, and was thenceforth honored with the title al-Siddiq, which means “one who confirms or supports the truth.”

The Flight to Medina

Even after the momentous experience of 619, Muhammad continued to face harassment, persecution, and threats of assassination to himself and his followers. He sought help in other oasis towns, with tribes beyond his own. Some 250 miles to the north of Mecca was the town of Yathrib. It was inhabited by tribes that were finding it impossible to live together in peace. They sought in Muhammad—known for his truthfulness and fairness—a just leader who would arbitrate their disputes. Muhammad agreed, on condition that they accept Islam. During the annual pilgrimage in Mecca in 620, a delegation of six men from Yathrib came to meet with Muhammad. Having converted, they agreed to return to Yathrib and deliver the message of Islam to their townspeople. The following year, a delegation of twelve leading men, including five from the previous year, came and pledged allegiance to the Prophet and to Islam at ʿAqaba (known as the First ʿAqaba). In 622 a further delegation of seventy-three men and two women pledged allegiance to the Prophet, again at ʿAqaba, and vowed to protect him if he came to reside in their city (the Second ʿAqaba). These pledges promised hope of an established community with its own sovereign territory—something Muhammad needed if his religion were to survive.

The Prophet now encouraged his followers to migrate to Yathrib; it was not long before most of them had gone, leaving behind in Mecca only Abu Bakr, ʿAli, and the Prophet himself. After a plot by the Quraysh to assassinate Muhammad was foiled, the Prophet also departed, along with Abu Bakr. They stayed initially in a cave in Mount Thaur to the south of Mecca. The Quraysh, who came looking for them with murderous intent, found an acacia tree in front of the cave, with a spiderweb spread between the tree and the mouth of the cave; also, a rock dove had made her nest there. Concluding that no one could be hidden inside, they left.

The Prophet and Abu Bakr, with their Bedouin guide, reached the oasis of Qubaʾ, not far from Yathrib, in late September 622. They stayed there for three days during which the Prophet laid the foundations of the first mosque. They departed soon for the city since there was great anticipation in Medina of the Prophet’s arrival. A guard of honor from the Yathribi tribes of Aws and Khazraj rode on both sides of the Prophet as he proceeded through the city lined with people gathered to greet him. He ordered that a mosque be built at the courtyard where his camel chose to rest. The Prophet gave the title of ansar (helpers) to the Muslims of Medina while the Muslims of the Quraysh and other tribes who had immigrated there were called muhajirun (emigrants).

In order to bring peace and unity to the community in his new city, the Prophet made a covenant (later known as the Constitution of Medina) between the eight clans of the ansar and the muhajirun, as well as between the Jews and the Muslims. The nine Muslim tribes and the Jews of the oasis now constituted a single umma or community. Muslims and Jews were to be accorded equal status, with freedom of belief, and they were obliged to fight enemies or to make peace with them as one people. Yathrib was now known as the City of the Prophet or Madinat al-nabi, and today simply as Medina. It was from Medina that Muhammad was to begin his journey as a prophet both for fellow Arabs and all humankind. The flight (hijra) to Medina in 622 marked the beginning of a new moment and also a new calendar; 622 became the first year for the community who accepted Muhammad, those who prayed with him, those who fought for his cause, those who, like him, waited for guidance from beyond through Gabriel.

Early Wars

The Muslim immigrants to Medina had left their belongings behind in Mecca, which was seized by their opponents. Much of their property had already been confiscated and they were still under threat. Shortly after his arrival in Medina there came to Muhammad the following revelation in the Quran:

Permission to fight is given

to those who are attacked,

for they have been wronged.6

And God is All Powerful

in His support of them—

those driven out of their homes unjustly

—merely for saying, “Our Lord is the One God.”

If God did not restrain some people

by means of others, then monasteries,

churches, synagogues, and mosques

—where the name of God

is remembered often—would be torn down.

God will help those who help His cause,

for God is Supremely Strong, Almighty.

SURA AL-HAJJ, 22:39–40

But this was always to be a defensive war, a reluctant recourse to violence when other stratagems had failed. The war Muhammad waged against the Meccans was not a struggle for prestige or wealth; it was a war for the survival of God’s Word. The helpers from Medina joined the migrants from Mecca. They provided the migrants with food and shelter from their own resources, but they were all stretched to the limit. They began to raid the caravans of their Meccan foes. They raided only small caravans at first, and never attacked during those times when fighting, especially blood feuds, was prohibited. As someone who had guided many successful caravans, Muhammad knew the routes and the seasons. He also knew the wells where Meccan traders would pass with their camels and their goods.

After the Muslims attacked a Meccan caravan at the oasis of Nakhla in December 623, the provocation to Muhammad’s former tribespeople was clear. Muhammad and his followers braced for the next outbreak in what was to become an enduring conflict with their Meccan kinsmen. During the next nine years Muhammad planned thirty-eight battles that were fought by his fellow believers. He himself led twenty-seven military campaigns. The merchant messenger had become not only a recognized prophet but also a successful military strategist.

Muhammad did not have to wait long before leading his first full-scale military campaign. It came at the wells of Badr the following year, in 624. The Muslims chose to attack a caravan coming south from Palestine to Mecca. The Meccans learned of their plan, opposing them with a force of a thousand men and two hundred horses, far outnumbering the Muslim band of three hundred men. Notwithstanding their smaller numbers, the Muslims won a decisive victory. The Quran indicated, as yet another divine sign, that they had been helped by a heavenly host:

God helped you at the Battle of Badr

when you were but a weak force;

be mindful, then, of God,

that you might be thankful.

Remember when you said

to the believers, “Is it not enough

that your Lord reinforced you with

three thousand descending angels?

Yes—if you remain patient

and mindful of God, even if

the enemy falls upon you suddenly,

your Lord will reinforce you with

five thousand assigned angels.”

God made it only a message

of hope for you, to reassure

your hearts—there is no help

except from God,

the Almighty, the Wise—

SURA AL ʿIMRAN, 3:123–26

The Battle of Badr struck fear into the hearts of the Meccans, but it also made some even more firmly resolved to defeat the upstart Muslims. Among the Meccan opponents was Hind ibn ʿUtba, the wife of the mighty Meccan warrior Abu Sufyan. Having lost both her uncle and her father at Badr, she incited her husband, even though he was both Muhammad’s cousin and his foster brother, to plan for the next encounter. By 625 he had assembled a large army of three thousand men, both foot soldiers and cavalry, which marched toward Medina. The Muslims, a force of only seven hundred men, countered by moving out of the city proper to engage their rivals on the slopes of a nearby mountain, Uhud.

Despite the superior numbers of the Meccans, it went well for the Muslims until some of Muhammad’s followers broke ranks too early. Muhammad had placed fifty archers on a hill to protect the rear of his army but forty of them, perhaps anticipating another victory such as Badr and eager for spoils, rushed down the hill. The Meccans counterattacked, and Khalid ibn al-Walid, one of the brilliant Meccan nobles, led his squadron to the unprotected rear of the Muslim formation. Catching them unawares, he began a great slaughter. The Prophet’s uncle Hamza was felled by a skilled Meccan javelin thrower paid by Hind, and Muhammad himself, though protected by twenty of his closest followers, was knocked off his horse. One of his teeth was broken, his face gashed, a lip bruised. Daring to hope that Muhammad might die from his wounds, Abu Sufyan began to taunt the defeated Muslim troops. Muhammad sent his trusted lieutenant, ʿUmar, to give him the riposte: “God is most high, most glorious,” shouted ʿUmar. “We are by no means equal: our dead are in paradise, yours are in hell; and by God, you have not killed the Prophet. He hears us even as we speak!”

Not only was Muhammad listening, but he also had resolved to learn the deeper lesson behind this bitter defeat. The defeat of Uhud became as important for Islam as the victory of Badr. It reinforced Muhammad’s resolve to secure the loyalty of all his followers—both the Muslims and the non-Muslims bound to him by treaty. There followed some difficult, often bloody purges of tribes near Medina, then a major battle in 627—the Battle of the Trench. A mighty army composed of ten thousand men, four thousand from the Quraysh themselves and the rest from various tribes, was led again by Abu Sufyan, the architect of Uhud. Abu Sufyan had hoped to invade Medina, to defeat and destroy the Muslim upstarts once and for all. The Muslims dug a trench around the city, to which the Meccans laid siege. Three thousand Muslims were encamped outside the city with the trench between them and their foes. Even after several days the Quraysh were unable to cross the trench and hostilities were restricted to a mutual discharge of arrows. The weather was cold and wet and the invading armies were rapidly running out of supplies. Their horses and camels were dying. Then a fierce sandstorm raged over the plain and blew away the tents of the Quraysh. Abu Sufyan told his men to go home, and the allied tribes also deserted their camps. Through this act of God, the Muslims had gained an important victory, which meant their survival.

The Treaty of Hudaybiyya

Inspired by a dream in the year 628, Muhammad instructed his followers to set out for a pilgrimage to the Kaʿba in Mecca, a rectangular shrine regarded as the holiest place on earth by Muslims. They believe the Kaʿba to have been built by Abraham. It was to this place that Abraham sent his concubine Hagar and her son, Ishmael. It was here that, with divine guidance, he had made provision for a branch of his family. The central role of this shrine is voiced by Abraham in the Quran:

Our Lord, I have settled some

of my offspring in an arid valley,

near your sacred house, so that

they might be steadfast in prayer, our Lord.

So, turn people’s hearts toward them,

and sustain them with fruit, so that

they might be grateful.

SURA IBRAHIM, 14:37

After the time of Abraham, however, the shrine had become the site of idols that represented local gods and tribal deities. Some believed that these idols possessed a power rivaling the God of Abraham. Others frowned on this polytheism, including local Jews and Christians, as well as some Arabs who traced their views to an ancient Arab prophet, Salih, who had also followed the monotheism of Moses and Jesus. But by the time of Muhammad, idolatry prevailed, and the Quraysh had become guardians of the sanctuary and overseers of the annual pilgrimage that people made from various parts of Arabia and beyond. It was an integral part of Muhammad’s mission to rid the Kaʿba of these idols and to reaffirm belief in the one God, Allah.

Muhammad set out with about fourteen hundred followers, each wearing two white cloths, the traditional garb of pilgrims, accompanied by animals garlanded for sacrifice. News of his plans evoked a dilemma among the Quraysh; as guardians of the shrine, they would be violating their own tribal customs if they were to prevent pilgrims from approaching the holy site; yet allowing them entry would represent a moral triumph for Muhammad. They sent the fierce warrior Khalid ibn al-Walid with two hundred horsemen to bar the pilgrims’ approach. The Muslims managed to avoid him and made camp at Hudaybiyya en route to Mecca. Eventually, the Quraysh sent Suhayl ibn ʿAmr, an unremittent opponent of the new religion, to negotiate a pact with the Prophet.

The result was the Treaty of Hudaybiyya, which stated that the Muslims would be allowed to perform the pilgrimage only in the following year and, in an important provision, declared a ten-year period of peace, as well as the freedom of people to align themselves with either side. Although some of the Muslims were frustrated at having to postpone their pilgrimage, a revelation from the Quran spoke of the treaty as “a clear victory” (Sura 48:1). It was indeed a victory since it enabled many people to come to the Prophet to declare their faith; over the next two years the Muslim community more than doubled. During this time, the Prophet sent letters inviting a number of rulers to embrace Islam: Heraclius in Byzantium, Khosrow of Persia, Muqawqis in Egypt, and the Negus of Abyssinia. Only the last of these accepted his invitation. Many of the Prophet’s former opponents, including Khalid ibn Walid, also embraced Islam and were forgiven for all they had previously wrought against Muhammad.

The Peaceful Entry into Mecca

Their treaty with the Quraysh allowed the Muslims to focus on other dangers. In 629, Muhammad led his forces against the strongholds of Khaybar, a town to the north occupied by a group of Jews who had betrayed their agreement with him. After several days, all the fortresses of the town had been overcome or had surrendered. Muhammad agreed to let the Jews remain on the terms that they themselves had proposed—namely, that they would pay him a yearly rent of half their harvest. In 630 the Treaty of Hudaybiyya was violated by the Meccans, with momentous consequences. The Quraysh helped one of their allied clans in a night raid against a clan allied with the Muslims. Fearing the repercussions of this, the Meccans sent Abu Sufyan to pacify the Prophet, but to no avail. The Prophet prepared a campaign to take Mecca and sent messengers to allied tribes for help. They responded enthusiastically and the Muslim army, composed of Bedouins, immigrants, and helpers, numbered nearly ten thousand men. They encamped on the outskirts of Mecca and the sight of their many thousand campfires that night confirmed the fears of the Quraysh. They once again sent Abu Sufyan, with two other men, to the Prophet, and by the morning all three had declared their faith in the one God and His Prophet. Abu Sufyan returned to tell his fellow Meccans that Muhammad was about to enter the city with an irresistible force. But he also conveyed Muhammad’s message that anyone in his house was safe, and that anyone who stayed at home or in the mosque would not be harmed.

It was January in the year 630. The sight of the returning Muslim Meccans and their allies melted the hearts of many who had been their bitter enemies. Tribe after tribe entered the city, each with its banners and pennants, followed by the Prophet’s squadron of immigrants and helpers, fully armed so that only their eyes were visible. They entered the city peacefully from four directions, with no bloodshed beyond a small skirmish started by the Quraysh. The Prophet had forbidden any fighting. After his ritual purification with water, Muhammad prayed and then rode to the southeast corner of the Kaʿba to touch the black stone7 with his staff. Then he performed the traditional seven circumambulations of the shrine. He now turned to the wide circle of 360 idols that surrounded the Kaʿba, pointing at each one with his staff as he rode, and each in turn fell on its face. His cousin ʿAli brought him the key to the Kaʿba, which he entered with two companions. The inside walls were covered with pictures of pagan deities. The Prophet had these effaced; but two icons he preserved, one said to be of Abraham and the other of the Virgin Mary with the child Jesus.

Having ordered that the idols should be broken and burned, Muhammad received the homage of his enemies, who now came to enter Islam, including Hind, the wife of Abu Sufyan. Most of the Meccans pledged their allegiance. He forgave them all.

Final Encounters and the Unification of Arabia

After the conquest of Mecca, the Muslims fought further battles, notably in 630 at the Hunayn valley against tribes to the east and southeast of Mecca who were intent on halting the spread of Islam. The battle at Hunayn proved to be a decisive victory for the Muslims. Later in the same year, a rumor reached Medina that the Byzantine emperor Heraclius, alarmed at the growing power of the Muslims, planned to attack them, and was amassing his legions along the Syrian frontier. The Prophet decided to meet them at Tabuk, some 350 miles from Medina, with an army of thirty thousand men, the largest he had ever commanded. After spending some twenty days at Tabuk, the Muslims realized that the rumors had been unfounded. They made alliances with local tribes and began the march back to Medina.

Muhammad was now the most powerful leader in Arabia, most of which he had succeeded in uniting under one faith. People were to be bound now not by blood or tribal kinship but by a shared belief in the one God and His final messenger. In the so-called Year of Deputations (632), most tribes had come to him to profess their acceptance of Islam. These included the Bani Thaqif from Taʿif who, some twelve years earlier, had so disdainfully driven Muhammad from their town. The Prophet also stipulated that Jews and Christians should not be compelled to forgo their religion but would pay a poll tax (jizya) to protect them and maintain their houses of worship.8 When the Christians of Najran came to make a pact with the Prophet, he allowed them to pray in the mosque according to their own ritual and guaranteed the safety of their churches and their property.

The expedition to Tabuk and the coming of the numerous delegations convinced some of Muhammad’s followers that they would no longer be called upon to fight. They prepared to sell their arms and armor. But the Prophet forbade this, saying that his followers would continue to fight for the truth until the coming of the Antichrist, who would wreak great corruption on the earth. The Prophet foretold the Second Coming of Jesus, who would lead this struggle. Beyond making these predictions about the last days, Muhammad also clarified the essentials of the new religion. His companion ʿUmar reported that, one day, while the Prophet was sitting with his followers, a man dressed in pure white came to ask him the meaning of “submission” (islam). The Prophet explained that it comprised five obligations: to testify that there is no god other than the one God and that Muhammad is His messenger; to perform the required prayers; to give what is due in charity; to fast during the month of Ramadan; and, if possible, to make the pilgrimage to Mecca during the Hajj season. These were to become known as the five pillars of Islam. The Prophet later explained that the man, who corroborated his answers, was Gabriel, who had come to teach them their religion.

The Farewell Pilgrimage

In 632 CE the Prophet undertook his final pilgrimage to Mecca. He was joined by multitudes who gathered from all directions, numbering over thirty thousand men and women. From this time on, no polytheists were allowed into the holy precincts. During the pilgrimage, the Prophet instructed his followers about the rites and customs of the Hajj, and then took up a position on the hill of ʿArafat to address them in his farewell sermon. He told them that their blood and property were sacrosanct; that they would surely meet their Lord and be questioned about their works. He reminded them that usury was abolished and that all blood that had been shed in the pagan period was to be left unavenged. He encouraged them by saying that Satan had despaired of leading them astray in large matters, hence they should beware of his influence in smaller things. He reminded them that husbands and wives had rights over each other. Finally, he told them that he had left two things with them that would prevent their going astray: the Quran and his own example.9

Soon after his return to Medina, the Prophet had just finished praying for the dead at the local cemetery when he fell ill with an intense headache. He indicated to his companions that he was nearing his end, his meeting with his Lord. He also declared Abu Bakr to be his inseparable friend, and as his illness increased, he instructed that Abu Bakr should lead the prayer in the mosque. The Prophet prayed his final prayer, seated to the right behind his chosen companion. He returned to the apartment of ʿAʾisha, his youngest wife, and died with his head on her breast. ʿUmar did not believe that the Prophet had died and stood in the mosque to tell people that he was still alive. While he was speaking, Abu Bakr arrived and intervened, telling the people that if they worshipped Muhammad, they should know that Muhammad was dead, but if they worshipped God, He was ever living and does not die. He quoted this verse from the Quran:

Muhammad is no more than

a messenger, and messengers

passed away before him. If he died

or were killed, would you turn

upon your heels? Whoever so turns

can do no harm to God;

but God will reward those

who are grateful.

SURA AL ʿIMRAN, 3:144

In accordance with his own instructions, the Prophet was buried where he died. It was decided within the community that Abu Bakr should succeed him as its leader and he would become the first caliph of the Islamic empire. People flocked from all over Medina to the Prophet’s gravesite to say prayers for him, feeling that a great door—to communications from the beyond—had been closed. Indeed, the revelations had finished, but the miracle of the inimitable Quran remained with them.

General Characteristics of the Quran

The Quran (meaning “recitation”) was revealed to the Prophet by the Archangel Gabriel over a period of twenty-three years (610–632). Its Arabic text has survived unchanged for over fourteen centuries, and it is the primary source of authority in Islam, complemented by the hadith (traditions or sayings of the Prophet). The Quran consists of 114 suras or chapters, which are in turn composed of ayat or “verses” (singular: aya). The suras are traditionally divided into Meccan and Medinan, named after their place of revelation. The earlier suras revealed at Mecca are shorter, proclaiming God’s Oneness, establishing the Prophet’s credentials, addressing issues of social justice, and reminding people of impending judgment, with graphic evocations of heaven and hell. The later suras, revealed after Muhammad’s migration to Medina, are longer, more prosaic, and concern laws and regulations of various aspects of domestic and social life such as marriage, inheritance, and business transactions; the need to establish a united community; connections with the Jews and Christians (the “people of the Book”); and stories of earlier prophets.

In time, the words Muhammad heard, remembered, and recited became a book. It was confirmed as a canonical written text by his third successor, the Caliph ʿUthman, who arranged all the variants into one standardized version. The order of the suras here is not chronological and generally the longer ones are placed earlier, with the shortest ones at the end. The Quran often refers to itself as the book (kitab), but a book that is not identical with its physical version (known as mushaf). The Quran has existed as a written text since the seventh century; excerpts from it are inscribed in stone on the Dome of the Rock, a memorial in Jerusalem, by an early Muslim ruler, the Caliph ʿAbd al-Malik.10 It has been written down by countless generations of Muslims, making calligraphy a major art form in Islamic civilization. The written Quran is prized as a sacred object around the world. In many Muslim households, a copy of the Quran is set out in a prominent place on a special stand (kursi).

The Quran speaks of itself as the final stage of four revealed books, the other three being the Torah, the Gospels, and the Psalms.11 Among the Arabs, those practicing Judaism or Christianity (but not paganism) would have been familiar with its presumption of a single God beyond human knowing. However, in other respects, the new revelation echoed a cosmology that was readily accepted by all—a heaven populated with angels and archangels, a hell strewn with devils, and, in between these, ambiguous creatures called jinn, who are neither angelic nor demonic yet omnipresent and vigilant.

Notwithstanding the rich diversity of its cosmology, the central theme of the Quran is the unity of God, who has no partners, a point stressed again and again, as in this verse:

Among His signs are

night and day, sun and moon.

Do not bow before sun and moon,

but bow before God,

Who created them—

if it is Him alone you worship.

SURA FUSSILAT, 41:37

The sun, moon and stars, men, women, and children, elephants, spiders and ants, trees, plants, and grass—all have been created by a single unitary force, God. God’s Oneness is the foundation of the other Quranic themes: the attributes of God, as in the ninety-nine Beautiful Names of God, the most prominent among them being the Creator, the Merciful, the Forgiving, and the All Knowing. Acknowledging the unity of God entails complete “submission” to Him.

The one God is the Creator, Ruler, and Protector of all things in the universe. The rhythm of creation reflects His signs (ayat), the same word used to denote “verses.” Far from being random, creation is designed to reflect the natural—and human—order as He willed it:

Your Lord is God, Who created

the heavens and the earth in six days,

then took up the throne.

He veils day with night,

which trails it swiftly.

He created the sun, moon, and stars—

all subject to His command.

Is the creation not His,

and the command? Blessèd be God,

Lord of the universe.

SURA AL-AʿRAF, 7:54

Other major themes include the obligation of human beings to worship God, not only through prayer but by practicing justice, honesty, and charity, as summarized in this passage:

Righteousness

does not reside

in turning your faces

toward East or West;

rather, it resides in those—

who believe in God

and the last day,

in the angels, the Book,

and the prophets;

who give their wealth

—despite their love of it—

for kin, for orphans, the needy,

the traveler, for those who ask,

and for freeing slaves;

who are steadfast in prayer,

who give in charity,

keeping their covenants;

who suffer in patience

hardship, pain, and

times of conflict—

they are the ones

who are truthful, and

they are the ones

mindful of God.

SURA AL-BAQARA, 2:177

The only attribute through which human beings can attain any degree of superiority over others is taqwa, or mindfulness of God—which means striving for all the qualities enumerated in this verse. The Quran speaks of itself as the final revelation, completing and confirming both the Jewish and Christian scriptures; it accords a very special place to Abraham, Jesus, and the Virgin Mary, while affirming that Muhammad is the last messenger of God, the “seal” of the prophets.

Perhaps the signal characteristic of the Quran is its perfection in its original form, its conventionally cited “inimitability,” and the inevitable diminishment it suffers when translated into another language. Nonetheless, the majority of the world’s Muslims do not read (or comprehend spoken) Arabic and need the Quran to be conveyed to them in their own language. No translation can ever substitute for the Quran itself, but as we will explain in the next section, we believe that at least some of the power of this majestic book can be conveyed in English.

1The following narrative is based on three literary sources unless otherwise indicated:

(1) The Quran itself as it appears in print in what is known as the ʿUthmanic recension, authorized by the third caliph, in the mid-seventh century. Wherever the Quran is quoted, it will be noted briefly with English renditions from the current translation.

(2) Hadith, which are accounts relating both words and actions of the Prophet Muhammad, gathered in numerous collections of varying authenticity from the eighth century on.

(3) The sira or biography of the Prophet, compiled from both hadith and Quranic passages, also dating from the eighth century. This biographical account draws largely on two sources: Ibn Ishaq, Sirat Rasul Allah (Life of the Prophet of God) written in the mid-eighth century and translated into English by Alfred Guillaume as The Life of Muhammad (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1955), and Martin Lings, Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources (Rochester, Vt.: Inner Traditions International, 1983).

2For more on the status of literacy in sixth-century Arabia, see Ahmad al-Jallad, “The Linguistic Landscape of Pre-Islamic Arabia: Context for the Qur’an,” in The Oxford Handbook of Qur’anic Studies, edited by M. Shah and M. A. S. Haleem (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 111–27. The author stresses the importance of further analyzing the limited samples of pre-Islamic epigraphy and also conducting “a lexical study of Qur’anic vocabulary in the light of North Arabian inscriptions” (125). Both projects, it is hoped, will provide new insight into the earliest linguistic options for Quranic prophecy.

3There is a persistent ambiguity about what “read” meant as a command to someone who was “illiterate.” One could translate the command iqraʾ to mean “recite,” but such a rendition weakens the exchange in English. As Muhammad Asad explains, the concept of “reciting” implies no more than the oral delivery—with or without understanding—of something already laid down in writing or committed to memory, whereas “reading” primarily signifies a conscious taking-in, with or without an audible utterance but with a view to understanding them, of words and ideas received from an outside source: see his The Message of the Quran (Watsonville, Calif.: The Book Foundation, 2003), 1099n1.

4Throughout the introduction and the notes, we use CE (common era) to refer to the solar Julian calendar, distinct from the lunar Islamic calendar, known as AH (anno hegirae). The latter commemorates the hijra or migration of Muhammad and his followers to the city of Yathrib, later renamed Medina, in 622 CE.

5Ibn Ishaq, The Life of Muhammad, 107.

6This verse is the earliest pronouncement of what became the principle of self-defense in Islamic law, not invoked until after Muhammad had left Mecca for Medina in 622 CE (1 AH), the hijra or migration. Sura 2:190–94, which also permits fighting in self-defense, was revealed about a year later. The reference to “mosques” underscores that the verse was influenced by developments in Medina.

7This is a stone set in the southeast corner of the Kaʿba, believed to date back to Adam.

8The poll tax or jizya was levied on non-Muslims in return for protection from any invading or attacking force because they were not required to fight in the Muslim army.

9Lings, Muhammad, 651.

10See The Quran: A Biography (2006), chap. 4 for citation, as well as an explanation of the multiple Quranic verses from the Dome of the Rock.

11All four scriptures are related in the Quran to their prophetic conduits: the Torah to Moses (Sura 32:33), the Psalms to David (Sura 17:55), the Gospels to Jesus (Sura 5:11), and, of course, the Quran to Muhammad.