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# The Reading Workshop

Reading the Qur'an through the Qur'an

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## READING WORKSHOP

Here, the Qur'an is read through itself. Every sura was read sentence by sentence, then verse by verse, and every word set beside its other uses in the text. This reading gave rise to three series of pages: ways of reading, rules the text follows, and a page for each sura.

The work is AI-assisted: two AIs debate each choice adversarially; a human reader, AbuIlyass, checks, decides and has the final word.

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# The suras

*Each page presents a sura: what it says, how it is built, the verses that carry it and the passages of the Qur'an to read with it. The names given here are reading names, drawn from the content of each sura: the traditional names are not part of the text.*

SURA 1 · الفاتحة · AL-FATIHA

# Guide Us on the Straight Path

> The Opening is the request that the whole Book answers: a reader acknowledges the Guardian of all beings, commits to obey Him alone, and asks to be guided on the straight path.

## READING

It opens on the name: "In the name of God, the All-Benevolent, the Benevolent." (1:1), then on acknowledgment: "Praise be to God, Guardian of all beings," (1:2). The Guardian is benevolence first, and only then Sovereign: "the All-Benevolent, the Benevolent, Sovereign of the Day of Retribution." (1:3-4).

At the center, the commitment: "It is You alone that we obey, and it is from You alone that we seek help." (1:5). Obedience comes before the request for help, and both are addressed to Him alone.

Then the request: "Guide us on the straight path," (1:6), "the path of those You have blessed, not of those who incur anger, nor of the astray." (1:7). The answer comes in the first line of the next sura: "guidance for those who guard themselves" (2:2).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 1:6**

ٱهْدِنَا ٱلصِّرَٰطَ ٱلْمُسْتَقِيمَ

"*Guide us on the straight path*"
The request that gives the sura its reading name.

**EXAMPLE 1:5**

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ

"*It is You alone that we obey*"
The commitment at the center of the sura.

**EXAMPLE 1:2**

رَبِّ ٱلْعَٰلَمِينَ

"*Guardian of all beings*"
The first attribute acknowledged.

**READ WITH**

- 2:2: guidance for those who guard themselves, the answer to 1:6.
- 2:286: the prayer that echoes the Opening.
- 6:153: this is My path, straight.
- 82:15-19: the Day of Retribution.
- RD-23: a repeated formula, one rendering (the Basmala).

**IN BRIEF**

Seven verses suffice to set the relation: acknowledging the Guardian, obeying Him alone, asking Him for help and guidance. All the rest of the Recitation is the answer.

SURA 2 · البقرة · AL-BAQARA

# Guidance for Those Who Guard Themselves

> Al-Baqara presents the Scripture as guidance for those who guard themselves, then tests each community by its response. It gives orientation an anchor point, translates guardedness into rules of life, and closes on a prayer: to bear only what one can bear.

## READING

"This is the Scripture: no doubt possible, guidance for those who guard themselves," (2:2). God announces to the Agents: "I am going to establish a successor on the earth." (2:30), and answers their concern: "I know what you do not know." (2:30); "And He taught Adam all the attributes," (2:31). To the Sons of Israel, the reproach of ordering others what one neglects, "while forgetting yourselves, when you recite the Scripture?" (2:44).

Ibrahim is tested by words and made a guide; but "My engagement does not reach the unjust." (2:124). With Isma'il he raises the foundations of the House and prays: "Our Guardian, make us both true to You alone," (2:128). "we make no distinction between any of them, and to Him we are true." (2:136). "And thus have We made you an exemplary community," (2:143); the anchor point distinguishes "who follows the messenger from who turns back on his heels." (2:143).

What matters "does not consist in turning your faces toward the east or the west," (2:177): it lies in faith, giving, the Contact, a kept engagement and patience. Abstention is prescribed, "perhaps you will guard yourselves," (2:183); "God wants for you ease, He does not want for you hardship," (2:185); "And when My obedient ones ask you about Me, I am near:" (2:186). Fighting has its limit: "And fight, in the way of God, those who fight you, but do not commit aggression:" (2:190).

"God, there is no deity but Him, the Living, the Self-Subsisting." (2:255). "No compulsion in the Law:" (2:256). Spending makes things grow like "a grain

which grows seven ears," (2:261); "but God has made trade lawful, and forbidden usury." (2:275); a debt is written down: "And let a scribe write it between you with justice," (2:282). The sura closes: "God imposes upon no Self except its capacity." (2:286), and "Our Guardian, and do not make us bear what we do not have the strength to bear." (2:286).

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 2:2**

هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ

"*guidance for those who guard themselves*"

The answer to the request of the Opening, which gives the sura its reading name.

**EXAMPLE 2:256**

لَآ إِكْرَاهَ فِى ٱلدِّينِ

"*No compulsion in the Law*"

Rectitude stands out by itself; it is not imposed.

**EXAMPLE 2:286**

لَا يُكَلِّفُ ٱللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا

"*God imposes upon no Self except its capacity.*"

The measure of every obligation.

### READ WITH

- 1:6: the request for the straight path, which 2:2 answers.
- 3:7: the Scripture and its firm foundation.
- 22:78: Ibrahim, who named you true to God alone.
- 65:2: taking two equitable witnesses.
- Every order to fight has its cause and its limit: fighting framed by its limit (2:190).

**IN BRIEF**

The Scripture guides those who guard themselves; each community is tested by its response, not by its belonging. The rule fits in a few words: no compulsion in the Law, fighting without aggression, a debt written with justice, and no Self burdened beyond its capacity.

SURA 3 · ال عمران · AL-IMRAN

# The Rope of God

> The family of Imran raises the question of reading, then that of faithfulness. The Scripture has a firm foundation and a part subject to resemblance; the Law is being true to God alone; and in the trial of Badr and Uhud, all must hold together to the rope of God without dividing.

## READING

"in it are signs of firm terms," (3:7), the bedrock of the Scripture, "and others, subject to resemblance." (3:7). Those whose cores deviate follow the resemblance; "And those who are firmly rooted in knowledge say:" (3:7) that they believe in it. Their prayer: "Our Guardian, do not let our cores deviate after You have guided us," (3:8). "The Law, with God, is being true to Him alone." (3:19).

"O God, Sovereign of dominion!" (3:26): good is in His hand. The chosen lineage runs from Imran to Maryam and Issa, and "The likeness of Issa, with God, is like that of Adam:" (3:59). To the people of the Scripture, a proposal: "come to an equitable word between us and you: that we obey none but God," (3:64).

"And hold, all of you, firmly, to the rope of God, and do not divide yourselves." (3:103); "And remember God's blessing upon you, when you were enemies, and He reconciled your cores," (3:103). "You are the best community raised up for mankind:" (3:110), by what it orders and forbids.

Then the trial of Uhud: "Thus do the days go: We make them alternate among mankind," (3:140); "Muhammad is only a messenger; messengers have indeed passed before him." (3:144). "It is by a benevolence from God that you have been gentle toward them;" (3:159), "and consult them on the matter;" (3:159). "And never think that those who have been killed in the way of God are dead." (3:169). The sura closes on those who reflect: "Our Guardian, You did not

create this in vain." (3:191), and on the call: "be patient, surpass [others] in patience," (3:200).

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 3:103**

وَٱعْتَصِمُواْ بِحَبْلِ ٱللَّهِ جَمِيعًا

"*And hold, all of you, firmly, to the rope of God*"
The image that gives the sura its reading name.

**EXAMPLE 3:7**

ءَايَٰتٌ مُّحْكَمَٰتٌ

"*signs of firm terms*"
The firm terms are the basis for reading the rest.

**EXAMPLE 3:159**

وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِى ٱلْأَمْرِ

"*and consult them on the matter*"
Even the messenger consults.

### READ WITH

- 4:82: a Recitation without divergence.
- 39:23: a Scripture of iterative repetitions.
- 19:16-36: Maryam and Issa.
- 42:38: their affair is consultation among them.
- « أَلَمْ تَرَ »: "Have you not seen": "Have you not seen" opens the blocks.

**IN BRIEF**

The Scripture is read by its firm foundation, not by what lends itself to resemblance. Faithfulness is proven in trial: holding together to the rope of God, consulting, being patient, and knowing that the messenger is only a messenger.

SURA 4 · النساء · AN-NISA

# Reduced to Weakness

> The sura of Women protects those who have no hold on their fate: orphans, women, heirs, men and children reduced to weakness. It founds everything on a single Self from which all come, and calls for bearing witness for God, even against oneself.

## READING

"O mankind! guard yourselves toward your Guardian, who created you from a single Self, and created from it its spouse," (4:1), "and [respect] the ties of kinship." (4:1). The rights of orphans and women, then the shares of inheritance, are fixed as God's limits. "do not devour your goods among yourselves through falsehood, unless it is a trade concluded with your mutual consent." (4:29).

"God orders you to restore trusts to their rightful owners, and, when you judge between people, to judge with justice." (4:58). Authority has its rule: "And if you disagree about something, refer it to God and to the messenger," (4:59). Fighting has its cause: "and for the men, women, and children reduced to weakness," (4:75). And the Recitation can be checked: "Do they not then reflect on this Recitation? Had it come from other than God, they would have found in it much divergence." (4:82).

"Whoever intercedes with a good intercession will have a share of it;" (4:85). "be firm supporters in equity, witnesses for God, even against yourselves, or your parents, or your relatives." (4:135).

The sura answers the crucifixion: "when they did not kill him and did not crucify him, but a likeness was given to them." (4:157), and the Trinity: "God is only one deity." (4:171). It closes, as it opened, on inheritance: "God explains this to you, so that you do not go astray." (4:176).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 4:75**

وَٱلْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ مِنَ ٱلرِّجَالِ وَٱلنِّسَآءِ وَٱلْوِلْدَٰنِ

"*the men, women, and children reduced to weakness*"

Those the sura protects, who give it its reading name.

**EXAMPLE 4:1**

مِّن نَّفْسٍ وَٰحِدَةٍ

"*from a single Self*"

The common origin founds everyone's rights.

**EXAMPLE 4:82**

أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ ٱلْقُرْءَانَ

"*Do they not then reflect on this Recitation?*"

The Recitation is checked by the absence of divergence.

## READ WITH

- 49:13: from a male and a female, peoples to know one another.
- 2:282: writing down a debt with justice.
- 5:8: hatred does not lead to injustice.
- 47:24: do they not reflect on the Recitation?
- Every order to fight has its cause and its limit: fighting framed by its cause (4:75).

**IN BRIEF**

All come from a single Self; the weakest therefore have rights no one may devour. A trust is restored, disagreement is referred to God, and testimony stands even against oneself.

SURA 5 · المائدة · AL-MA'IDA

# Keep Your Contracts

> The sura of the Table is built on contract and judgment: keeping one's engagements, judging by what God has sent down, not letting hatred lead to injustice. The murder of a brother founds in it the inviolability of every Self.

## READING

"O you who have believed! keep your contracts." (5:1). Mutual help has its limit: "and do not help one another in transgression and hostility." (5:2). The day comes when the Law is complete: "Today, I have perfected for you your Law, I have completed My blessing upon you," (5:3). Justice does not yield to hatred: "and let not the hatred of a people drive you to not be just. Be just: it is closer to guardedness." (5:8).

The two sons of Adam make an offering; one is accepted, the other threatens to kill, and the first answers: "God accepts only from those who guard themselves." (5:27). Hence the law: "whoever kills a Self, without it being for [another] Self, or for corruption on the earth, it is as if he had killed all mankind together," (5:32).

"We indeed sent down the Tawrah, wherein is guidance and light;" (5:44); "And those who do not judge according to what God has sent down — those are the disowners." (5:44). Then: "To each of you, We have assigned a law and a way." (5:48), "Race, then, to good deeds." (5:48). And for whoever abandons his Law, God brings "a people whom He loves and who love Him, humble toward the believers, firm toward those who disown," (5:54).

The disciples ask for a table sent down from the sky (5:112); Issa answers God's question: "Glory be to You! it was not for me to say what is not my right." (5:116), and "I told them only what You ordered me: Obey God, my Guardian and your Guardian;" (5:117). The sura closes: "This is the day when truthfulness will benefit the truthful." (5:119).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 5:1**

أَوْفُوا۟ بِٱلْعُقُودِ

*"keep your contracts"*
The command that opens the sura and gives it its reading name.

**EXAMPLE 5:32**

فَكَأَنَّمَا قَتَلَ ٱلنَّاسَ جَمِيعًا

*"it is as if he had killed all mankind together"*
A single Self weighs as much as humanity.

**EXAMPLE 5:48**

فَٱسْتَبِقُوا۟ ٱلْخَيْرَٰتِ

*"Race, then, to good deeds."*
The diversity of laws turns into emulation.

## READ WITH

- 2:27: those who break God's engagement.
- 4:135: firm supporters in equity, even against oneself.
- 17:33: not killing the Self that God has made sacred.
- 19:30-36: Issa, the obedient one of God.
- Every order to fight has its cause and its limit: the limit that frames retaliation.

**IN BRIEF**

The contract binds, hatred excuses no injustice, and a single Self killed weighs as all mankind. Each community has its law and its way; the only race that counts is the race to good deeds.

SURA 6 · الانعام · AL-AN'AM

# The Guardian of Every Thing

> The sura is a plea for the oneness of the Creator against those who give Him equals. It sets the signs of creation against clear-sighted refusal, follows Ibrahim as he detaches himself from what disappears, dismantles invented prohibitions, and closes on the question: should I seek a Guardian other than God?

## READING

"Praise be to God, who created the heavens and the earth, and made the darknesses and the light; yet those who disown set up equals to their Guardian." (6:1). "He has prescribed benevolence upon Himself." (6:12). "There is no living being on the earth, nor bird flying with its two wings, but forms communities like you." (6:38). "He holds the keys of what escapes the senses: none knows them, save Him." (6:59); "No leaf falls but He knows it;" (6:59).

Ibrahim looks at the star, the moon, the sun; at each setting he says: "I do not love those that disappear." (6:76), then: "I have set my direction, without deviation, toward the One who originated the heavens and the earth," (6:79). Those who deny revelation "did not measure God with His true measure," (6:91).

"God is He who splits open the seed and the kernel." (6:95). "Sights do not reach Him, but He reaches sights." (6:103). The invented prohibitions on crops and cattle are dismantled, and the way is laid down: "And: this is My path, straight; follow it, then, and do not follow the [other] paths, which would scatter you away from His path:" (6:153).

The sura closes: "My Contact, my beneficent commitment, my life, and my death belong to God, Guardian of all beings;" (6:162); "Should I seek a Guardian other than God, when He is the Guardian of every thing?" (6:164). "and no bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another." (6:164), and each one is tested "in what He has given you." (6:165).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 6:164**

وَهُوَ رَبُّ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ

*"when He is the Guardian of every thing"*
The question that closes the sura and gives it its reading name.

**EXAMPLE 6:76**

لَآ أُحِبُّ ٱلْآفِلِينَ

*"I do not love those that disappear."*
What disappears cannot be a Guardian.

**EXAMPLE 6:12**

كَتَبَ عَلَىٰ نَفْسِهِ ٱلرَّحْمَةَ

*"He has prescribed benevolence upon Himself."*
God binds Himself by benevolence.

## READ WITH

- 17:23-39: the same law of conduct as in 6:151-153.
- 21:51-70: Ibrahim facing the idols.
- 37:83-99: Ibrahim and the gaze toward the stars.
- 39:67: they did not measure God with His true measure.
- RD-23: "no bearer of burden", one formula, one rendering (6:164, 17:15).

**IN BRIEF**

Nothing that disappears can be a Guardian; only the One who splits the seed and the dawn is, and He has prescribed benevolence upon Himself. The path is one, the paths scatter, and each bears only his own burden.

SURA 7 · الاعراف · AL-A'RAF

# Am I Not Your Guardian?

> The sura of the Heights unfolds human history as a sequence of engagements: the refusal of the Despairing One, Adam's fault and his return, five peoples and their envoys, Moussa and the Sons of Israel. Beneath it all, a primordial pact in which each one answered: Yes indeed, we bear witness.

## READING

"A Scripture has been revealed to you — let there be no distress in your chest because of it —" (7:2). The Agents prostrate before Adam, except the Despairing One: "I am better than him: You created me from fire, and You created him from clay." (7:12). Adam and his wife acknowledge their wrong: "Our Guardian, we have been unjust to ourselves;" (7:23).

The calls to the children of Adam follow: "We have sent down for you a garment that covers your nakedness, as well as an adornment; and the garment of guardedness — that is better." (7:26); "take your adornment at every moment of prostration, and eat and drink, but do not waste:" (7:31). "Is it not to Him that creation and the Order belong?" (7:54). "And do not sow corruption on the earth after its setting right," (7:56).

Nuh, Hud, Salih, Lut and Shu'ayb speak the same language, then Moussa faces Fir'awn. To his prayer, the answer: "and My benevolence embraces all things." (7:156). Then the primordial pact: "And remember when your Guardian drew forth from the children of Adam their descendants after them, and made them bear witness concerning themselves:" (7:172); "Am I not your Guardian?" (7:172).

Those who forget it have "cores with which they do not understand," (7:179). The conduct is simple: "Take what is easy, order what is recognized, and turn away from the ignorant." (7:199). The sura closes: "And when this Recitation is

recited, listen to it and keep silent," (7:204); "Those who are with your Guardian are not arrogant about obeying Him," (7:206).

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 7:172**

أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ

"*Am I not your Guardian?*"

The question of the primordial pact, which gives the sura its reading name.

**EXAMPLE 7:26**

وَلِبَاسُ ٱلتَّقْوَىٰ ذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ

"*and the garment of guardedness*"

The garment that matters is unseen.

**EXAMPLE 7:156**

وَرَحْمَتِي وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ

"*and My benevolence embraces all things*"

Benevolence precedes and exceeds punishment.

### READ WITH

- 2:30-39: Adam, the Despairing One and the return.
- 11:25-95: the same accounts of prophets.
- 30:30: the original nature on which God created people.
- 20:115: Adam forgot.
- The template of the prophets' accounts: one template for the accounts of prophets.

**IN BRIEF**

Before any Scripture, a pact: each one acknowledged his Guardian. The pride of the Despairing One disowns it, Adam's return renews it; between the two, human history. The sura begins with a Scripture free of distress and ends with a Recitation heard in silence.

SURA 8 · الانفال · AL-ANFAL

# What Gives You Life

> After the encounter at Badr, the question of the surpluses becomes a lesson: victory comes from God, and the believer responds to what gives him life. The sura regulates war and peace: one fights until there is no more trial, and one inclines toward peace when the other inclines toward it.

## READING

"They ask you about the surpluses [of war]." (8:1). The answer goes back to what matters: "So guard yourselves toward God, and set right [what is] between you," (8:1). "The believers are only those whose cores tremble when God is remembered," (8:2).

At Badr, victory does not belong to the fighters: "So it was not you who killed them, but it was God who killed them." (8:17). The call follows: "respond to God and to the messenger, when he calls you to what gives you life," (8:24), "and know that God interposes between the human being and his core," (8:24). "And guard yourselves against a trial that will not strike exclusively those among you who have done wrong," (8:25).

"And fight them until there is no more trial, and the Law is entirely for God." (8:39); "and do not disagree with one another, lest you falter and lose your momentum;" (8:46). The law of history is recalled: "That is because God never changes a blessing He has granted a people, until they change what is in themselves;" (8:53).

Force is prepared to deter, and peace remains the aim: "And if they incline toward peace, incline toward it also, and rely upon God." (8:61). "Now, God has lightened [your burden], and He has known that there was weakness in you." (8:66). The sura closes: "And the possessors of kinship ties have, toward one another, greater right according to God's Code." (8:75).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 8:24**

إِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا يُحْيِيكُمْ

"*when he calls you to what gives you life*"
The call that gives the sura its reading name.

**EXAMPLE 8:61**

وَإِن جَنَحُوا۟ لِلسَّلْمِ فَٱجْنَحْ لَهَا

"*And if they incline toward peace, incline toward it also*"
Peace offered is accepted.

**EXAMPLE 8:53**

حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا۟ مَا بِأَنفُسِهِمْ

"*until they change what is in themselves*"
The same law as in 13:11.

## READ WITH

- 13:11: God does not change what is in a people until they change it.
- 3:123: help at Badr, when the believers were abased.
- 4:59: disagreement referred to God and the messenger.
- 9:7: standing straight toward whoever stands straight.
- Every order to fight has its cause and its limit: war framed by its cause and its limit.

**IN BRIEF**

Victory comes from God, and what gives life is the response to His call. Fighting stops with the trial; peace offered is accepted; and a blessing changes only if the people change what is in themselves.

SURA 9 · التوبة · AT-TAWBA

# God Suffices Me

> The sura opens without the Basmala, on an exoneration from obligation toward those who broke their pacts. Fighting in it is framed by its cause and by its limit; the door of return stays open. It closes on a messenger to whom his people's suffering is grievous, and who says: God suffices me.

## READING

"Exoneration from obligation, from God and His messenger, toward those of the associators with whom you had made a pact." (9:1). The exception follows at once: those who failed in nothing, "fulfill your pact toward them until its term." (9:4). The associator who asks for protection is protected, "then convey him to his place of safety." (9:6); and "As long as they stand straight with you, stand straight with them." (9:7).

Fighting targets "a people who broke their oaths, who intended to expel the messenger, and who attacked you first?" (9:13), and is waged "as they fight you throughout all the months," (9:36). Return erases everything: "If they turn back [to God], maintain the Contact, and give the purifying alms, then they are your brothers in the Law." (9:11). Then the call: "Mobilize, light or heavy, and strive with your goods and your Selves in the way of God." (9:41).

"The alms are destined only for the poor, the destitute," (9:60). "The believers, men and women, are allies of one another:" (9:71). "God has bought from the believers their Selves and their goods, in exchange for the Garden that belongs to them." (9:111). Knowledge has its share: "so that they might gain deep understanding in the Law, and warn their people upon their return to them," (9:122).

The sura closes: "A messenger has indeed come to you, from among yourselves; it is grievous to him that you should suffer," (9:128), and: "God

suffices me; there is no deity but Him; upon Him I rely, and He is the Guardian of the immense Edifice." (9:129).

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 9:129**

حَسۡبِيَ ٱللَّهُ

*"God suffices me"*
The word that closes the sura and gives it its reading name.

**EXAMPLE 9:7**

فَمَا ٱسۡتَقَٰمُواْ لَكُمۡ فَٱسۡتَقِيمُواْ لَهُمۡ

*"As long as they stand straight with you, stand straight with them."*
Reciprocity sets the limit.

**EXAMPLE 9:11**

فَإِخۡوَٰنُكُمۡ فِي ٱلدِّينِ

*"then they are your brothers in the Law"*
Return turns the enemy into a brother.

### READ WITH

- 8:61: if they incline toward peace, incline toward it.
- 2:190: fighting those who fight, without aggression.
- 60:8: virtue and equity toward those who did not fight.
- 3:173: "God suffices us".
- Every order to fight has its cause and its limit: every order to fight framed by its cause and its limit.

**IN BRIEF**

The pact kept is honored until its term, the pact broken is denounced; one who asks for protection is conveyed to safety, one who returns becomes a brother. At the end of the mobilization, one assurance remains: God suffices.

SURA 10 · يونس · YUNUS

# The Abode of Peace

> God calls to the Abode of Peace; the human being calls upon Him only in hardship. Faith declared in the face of punishment is refused, to Fir'awn as to those who hastened it; only the people of Younes, who believed in time, profited from it.

## READING

"Is it then a wonder for people that We revealed to a man among them" (10:2)? "Your Guardian is God, who created the heavens and the earth in six days, then established Himself upon the Edifice." (10:3). "It is He who made the sun a brightness and the moon a light," (10:5).

"And when hardship touches the human being, he calls upon Us lying on his side, sitting, or standing;" (10:12); once delivered, he goes his way. "Mankind was but one single community, then they diverged." (10:19). Saved from the storm, "there they are, committing aggression on earth, without right. O mankind! your aggression falls back only upon yourselves," (10:23). The present life is an adorned earth its people think they master, until it becomes "a mown field, as if it had not flourished the day before." (10:24). "God calls to the Abode of Peace, and He guides whom He wills to a straight path." (10:25).

"Is one who guides to the truth more worthy of being followed, or one who does not guide himself unless he is guided?" (10:35). "This Recitation was not something that could have been invented besides God;" (10:37); the challenge follows: "Bring then a surah like it," (10:38). "To every community a term." (10:49); to those who hastened the punishment: "Now?! when you used to seek to hasten it!" (10:51). "O mankind! an admonition has come to you from your Guardian, a healing for what is in the chests," (10:57).

Moussa and Harun receive the command: "make your houses an anchor point; and maintain the Contact." (10:87). Fir'awn, engulfed, declares his belief; the answer falls: "Now?! when you disobeyed before, and were among the

corrupters!" (10:91); "Today, then, We save you as to your body, so that you may be a sign for those who come after you." (10:92). A single city saw its faith benefit it, "the people of Younes" (10:98). "Is it you who would compel people to become believers?" (10:99). The sura closes: "whoever is guided is guided only for himself," (10:108).

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 10:25**

دَارِ ٱلسَّلَٰمِ

*"the Abode of Peace"*
The call that gives the sura its reading name.

**EXAMPLE 10:91**

وَقَدْ عَصَيْتَ قَبْلُ

*"when you disobeyed before"*
Faith declared too late, refused to Fir'awn.

**EXAMPLE 10:98**

إِلَّا قَوْمَ يُونُسَ

*"except the people of Younes"*
The only city whose faith came before the punishment.

### READ WITH

- 40:84-85: faith declared before the onslaught does not profit.
- 37:139-148: Younes, and the city that believed.
- 2:256: no compulsion in the Law.
- 2:23: the challenge of a similar surah.
- "Now?!": faith declared too late: "Now?!", faith refused at the moment of punishment.

**IN BRIEF**

The call is to the Abode of Peace, and each is guided for himself. Faith that waits for punishment comes too late; faith that precedes it profits, as it did the people of Younes. No one is compelled to believe.

SURA 11 · هود · HUD

# Stand Straight

> Seven accounts follow the same template: an envoy calls his people to obey God alone, presents his proof, refuses any wage, then the people are saved or seized. The lesson is given to the messenger: stand straight, as he has been commanded, without exceeding the measure.

## READING

"A Scripture whose signs have been made firm, then made explicit, from a Wise, Informed One:" (11:1). "There is no living creature on earth whose provision does not fall to God;" (11:6). He created the heavens and the earth "so as to test you: which of you acts best." (11:7). Deprived of a benevolence, the human being loses himself: "he becomes indeed hopeless, a great disowner." (11:9).

Nuh builds the ship; when the oven boils over: "Load into it, of every kind, two elements of a pair," (11:40). His son thinks himself safe on a mountain: "There is no preserver today from God's command, except for him to whom He shows benevolence." (11:43). Then the word about that son: "he is not of your family: it is an unrighteous deed." (11:46). Salih reminds the Depleters: "It is He who brought you forth from the earth and settled you therein to dwell long:" (11:61). Shu'ayb sums up the mission of them all: "I only want reform, as much as I can; and my success rests only with God:" (11:88).

To the messenger, the conclusion: "So stand straight, as you have been commanded, and those who have turned back [to God] with you, and do not exceed the measure:" (11:112). "And maintain the Contact at the two ends of the day, and at close moments of the night: good deeds indeed dispel bad ones:" (11:114). "And your Guardian was not one to annihilate the cities unjustly, while their inhabitants were reforming." (11:117). "And had your Guardian willed, He would have made the people a single community;" (11:118).

These accounts are "that by which We make your Conscience firm;" (11:120). The sura closes: "and to Him the whole matter returns: so obey Him, and rely upon Him:" (11:123).

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 11:112**

فَٱسْتَقِمْ كَمَآ أُمِرْتَ

"*So stand straight, as you have been commanded*"
The command that gives the sura its reading name.

**EXAMPLE 11:114**

إِنَّ ٱلْحَسَنَٰتِ يُذْهِبْنَ ٱلسَّيِّـَٔاتِ

"*good deeds indeed dispel bad ones*"
The Contact maintained erases what preceded it.

**EXAMPLE 11:88**

إِنْ أُرِيدُ إِلَّا ٱلْإِصْلَٰحَ

"*I only want reform*"
The mission of all envoys, voiced by Shu'ayb.

### READ WITH

- 7:59-93: the same accounts, in the same order.
- 26:105-191: the same envoys, the same refusal of a wage.
- 42:15: "Stand straight as you have been commanded".
- 17:78: the times of the Contact.
- The template of the prophets' accounts: the template of the sura's accounts.

**IN BRIEF**

The accounts change people, not structure: the call, the proof, the refusal of a wage, the outcome. One command remains for the messenger: stand straight without exceeding the measure, and rely upon the One to whom the whole matter returns.

SURA 12 · يوسف · YUSUF

# The Finest of Accounts

> A single account, from beginning to end: a child's vision, his brothers' jealousy, the well, the seduction, the prison, power, then reconciliation. Behind every trial, God is victorious in His purpose; guarding oneself and patience never lose their reward.

## READING

"We relate to you the finest of accounts, by revealing to you this Recitation," (12:3). Youssof saw "eleven stars, and the sun and the moon," (12:4) prostrating before him; his father warns him: "the Diverter is, to the human being, a manifest enemy." (12:5). The brothers return with the shirt; the father answers: "Rather, your Self has suggested a course to you. Beautiful patience!" (12:18).

Sold in Egypt, Youssof enters the house of the one who says: "Make his stay honorable;" (12:21), and "God is victorious in His purpose," (12:21). Facing the seduction: "May God preserve me from that! He is my master: he has made my stay excellent:" (12:23); she had an intention, "and he would have had one toward her, had he not seen a proof of his Guardian:" (12:24). He chooses: "My Guardian, prison is dearer to me than what they call me to;" (12:33). In prison, he teaches: "judgment belongs only to God: He has commanded that you obey none but Him: that is the upright Law," (12:40).

The wife of the Mighty One confesses, and says: "the Self indeed incites to evil, except one to whom my Guardian shows benevolence." (12:53). The cup in the brother's bag: "thus did We scheme for Youssof:" (12:76); "and above every possessor of knowledge, there is one [more] knowing." (12:76). The father sends his sons: "do not lose hope of God's rest:" (12:87).

"I am Youssof, and this is my brother." (12:90); "whoever guards himself and is patient — God does not let go to waste the reward of those who do good." (12:90). "No reproach upon you: today, God forgives you," (12:92). The parents raised upon the Edifice, the vision comes true: "this is the interpretation of

my vision of old: my Guardian has made it true." (12:100). The sura closes: "There was indeed, in their account, a lesson for the possessors of intelligence:" (12:111).

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 12:3**

أَحْسَنَ ٱلْقَصَصِ

"*the finest of accounts*"
The title the sura gives itself, which becomes its reading name.

**EXAMPLE 12:53**

إِنَّ ٱلنَّفْسَ لَأَمَّارَةٌۢ بِٱلسُّوٓءِ

"*the Self indeed incites to evil*"
An admission true of every Self, except by the Guardian's benevolence.

**EXAMPLE 12:92**

لَا تَثْرِيبَ عَلَيْكُمُ

"*No reproach upon you*"
The account ends in pardon, not revenge.

### READ WITH

- 18:82: the interpretation that reveals benevolence behind the trial.
- 39:53: do not lose heart regarding God's benevolence.
- 3:134: those who pardon people.
- 6:84: Youssof among the guided progeny.
- "Thus do We recompense those who do good": "Thus do We reward those who do good" (12:22).

**IN BRIEF**

The finest of accounts spares no trial: betrayal, seduction, prison. It shows that God is victorious in His purpose, that the Self incites to evil except through His benevolence, and that patience ends in pardon.

SURA 13 · الرعد · AR-RA'D

# What Is in Themselves

> Heavens without pillars, an earth watered by the same water, thunder that glorifies: everything is a sign. God does not change what is in a people until they change what is in themselves; the froth goes off, what is useful remains.

## READING

"God is the One who raised the heavens without pillars that you can see;" (13:2). On the earth, "and of all the fruits, He placed therein two elements of a pair," (13:3). There are "neighboring plots," (13:4), "watered by the same water, and We favor some of them over others in what they yield as food." (13:4).

The law of change is laid down: "God does not change what is in a people until they change what is in themselves;" (13:11). "To Him belongs the call of truth;" (13:14); to call upon another is to be "like one who stretches out his palms toward water so that it may reach his mouth, never reaching it." (13:14).

Water comes down, the valleys flow, and the torrent carries its froth: "the froth goes off as scum, while what is useful to people remains on the earth." (13:17). Those who keep the covenant find peace: "Is it not in the remembrance of God that the cores find peace?" (13:28).

Even a Recitation that moved the mountains would not make them believe: "But to God belongs the command, entirely:" (13:31). "God effaces what He wills, and He affirms, and with Him is the Source of the Scripture." (13:39). The sura closes: "God suffices as witness between me and you, and whoever holds the knowledge of the Scripture." (13:43).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 13:11**

حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا۟ مَا بِأَنفُسِهِمْ

*"until they change what is in themselves"*
The law that gives the sura its reading name.

**EXAMPLE 13:17**

فَأَمَّا ٱلزَّبَدُ فَيَذْهَبُ جُفَآءً

*"the froth goes off as scum"*
Falsehood swells and passes; what is useful remains.

**EXAMPLE 13:28**

أَلَا بِذِكْرِ ٱللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ ٱلْقُلُوبُ

*"in the remembrance of God that the cores find peace"*
The core's repose has a single source.

## READ WITH

- 8:53: God does not change a blessing granted until the people change what is in themselves.
- 31:10: the heavens without pillars that you can see.
- 14:24-26: the good word that remains, the bad word uprooted.
- 3:7: the Source of the Scripture.

**IN BRIEF**

Change begins within: God does not change what is in a people until they change it themselves. Falsehood is froth; what is useful remains, and the cores find peace only in the remembrance of God.

SURA 14 · ابراهيم · IBRAHIM

# A Good Word

> The Scripture brings out of the darknesses into the light. A good word is a good tree, rooted and giving its fruit at every moment; a bad word, an uprooted tree. On the Day all appear, the Diverter himself admits he had no power but to call.

## READING

"A Scripture that We have sent down to you, so that you may bring the people out of the darknesses into the light," (14:1). "We have sent no messenger except in the language of his people, so that he might make [the message] clear to them;" (14:4). Moussa reminds his people of the promise: "If you are grateful, I shall surely increase you; but if you disown, My punishment is indeed severe." (14:7).

On the Day the matter is decided, the Diverter speaks: "I had no authority over you, except to call you, and you answered me. So do not blame me, but blame yourselves:" (14:22).

Then comes the example: "Have you not seen how God multiplies an example? A good word is like a good tree, whose root is firm and whose branches are in the sky, giving its fruit at every moment," (14:24-25). "And the example of a bad word is like a bad tree, uprooted from the surface of the earth, having no stability." (14:26). "God makes firm those who believe by the firm word, in the present life and in the last life," (14:27). The blessings follow, "and if you counted God's blessing, you could not enumerate it." (14:34).

Ibrahim prays: "Our Guardian, I have settled part of my progeny in a valley without cultivation, near Your Forbidden House," (14:37); "so make Consciences, among the people, incline toward them," (14:37). Then the announced day: "The Day the earth will be changed into another earth, and the heavens too," (14:48). The sura closes: "This is a transmission for the people, so that they may be warned by it," (14:52).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 14:24**

كَلِمَةً طَيِّبَةً كَشَجَرَةٍ طَيِّبَةٍ

"A *good word is like a good tree*"
The example that gives the sura its reading name.

**EXAMPLE 14:7**

لَئِن شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ

"*If you are grateful, I shall surely increase you*"
Gratitude is the condition of increase.

**EXAMPLE 14:22**

فَلَا تَلُومُونِي وَلُومُوٓاْ أَنفُسَكُم

"*So do not blame me, but blame yourselves*"
The Diverter's admission: the answering was theirs.

## READ WITH

- 16:18: the same formula of the blessing that cannot be counted.
- 2:124-129: Ibrahim, the House and the prayer for his progeny.
- 59:16: the Diverter disowning the one he pushed to disown.
- 39:69: the earth lit by the light of its Guardian.
- « أَلَمْ تَرَ »: "Have you not seen": "Have you not seen" opens the example (14:24).

**IN BRIEF**

A good word takes root and gives its fruit at every moment; a bad word has no stability. Gratitude increases the blessing; the Diverter has no power but the one granted him by those who answer him.

SURA 15 · الحجر · AL-HIJR

# Until Certainty Comes

> The Reminder has come down and God preserves it; the mockers change nothing. The sura retells the account of the origin, from resonant clay to the refusal of the Despairing One, then the accounts of the seized cities, and closes on a command: obey one's Guardian until certainty comes.

## READING

"These are the signs of the Scripture, and of a clear Recitation." (15:1). To those who call the envoy deranged: "It is indeed We who have sent down the Reminder, and it is We who are indeed its preservers." (15:9). "There is nothing whose treasures We do not hold, and We send it down only according to a known measure." (15:21).

"We have indeed created the human being from resonant clay, [drawn] from molded mud," (15:26). The Despairing One refuses to prostrate, then threatens: "My Guardian, for having let me be misled, I shall surely make [evil] appear pleasing to them on earth," (15:39). The answer: "Over My obedient ones, you have no authority, except over whoever follows you among the misled." (15:42). In the Garden: "And We shall have removed from their chests all rancor," (15:47). "Inform My obedient ones that it is I, the Most-Forgiving, the Benevolent," (15:49).

To Ibrahim, given tidings of a boy despite old age, belongs the word: "And who loses heart regarding his Guardian's benevolence, except the astray?" (15:56). Then Lut, the companions of the Thicket, those of al-Hijr. "We created the heavens, the earth, and what is between them, only with truth." (15:85); "so overlook, with a fine overlooking." (15:85).

"We have indeed given you seven iterative [verses], and the immense Recitation." (15:87). The warning targets "those who made of this Recitation

disparate fragments." (15:91). "So proclaim openly what you are commanded," (15:94), "and obey your Guardian until certainty comes to you." (15:99).

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 15:9**

وَإِنَّا لَهُۥ لَحَٰفِظُونَ

"*it is We who are indeed its preservers*"

The preservation of the Reminder belongs to the One who sent it down.

**EXAMPLE 15:42**

لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَٰنٌ

"*you have no authority*"

The Diverter's limit: he has a hold only on whoever follows him.

**EXAMPLE 15:99**

حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَكَ ٱلْيَقِينُ

"*until certainty comes to you*"

The command that closes the sura and gives it its reading name.

### READ WITH

- 38:71-85: the refusal of the Despairing One, another account of the origin.
- 17:65: over My obedient ones, you have no authority.
- 39:23: a Scripture of iterative repetitions.
- 41:42: falsehood reaches it neither from before nor from behind.
- One Arabic term, one word per language: one term, one rendering (غوى "mislead").

**IN BRIEF**

The Reminder is preserved by the One who sent it down. The Diverter has authority only over those who follow him; to the obedient one it falls to proclaim, to overlook with beauty, and to obey until certainty.

SURA 16 · النحل · AN-NAHL

# In Which There Is Healing

> The command of God has come; meanwhile the sura lists His blessings, from cattle to stars, down to the bee from which comes a drink in which there is healing. This blessing cannot be counted; the gratitude it calls for has a model: Ibrahim.

## READING

"The command of God has come: so do not seek to hasten it." (16:1). "He sends down the Agents with the Influx, by His command, upon whom He wills among His obedient ones" (16:2). The blessings follow: cattle, water, crops, stars: "And horses, mules, and donkeys, for you to ride, and as adornment. And He creates what you do not know." (16:8). "If you counted God's blessing, you could not enumerate it." (16:18).

"We have indeed raised up, in every community, a messenger:" (16:36), with a single message: obey God alone and avoid the Tyrant. "And We have sent down to you the Reminder, so that you may make clear to the people what has been sent down to them," (16:44). To those who assign daughters to God, the answer: "and to God belongs the most exalted example:" (16:60).

"And your Guardian inspired the bee" (16:68); "From their bellies comes forth a drink of varied colors, in which there is healing for the people:" (16:69). Then the examples: "a constrained one, having no power at all, and one to whom We have granted, from Us, a fine provision," (16:75). God commands justice, beneficence and giving to kin, "and He forbids indecency, the disavowed, and aggression:" (16:90). "And do not be like her who unravels her thread, after having firmly spun it," (16:92), by breaking one's oaths.

"Whoever does what is right, male or female, while being a believer, We shall surely make him live a good life," (16:97). "When you recite the Recitation, seek refuge with God from the banished Diverter." (16:98). Disowning is not held against one who is coerced, "while his core remains at peace in faith" (16:106).

A city "that was secure, at peace," (16:112) disowned the blessings, "and God made it taste the garment of hunger and fear," (16:112). Facing it: "Ibrahim was indeed a community unto himself," (16:120). The sura closes: "Call to the path of your Guardian with wisdom and fine admonition," (16:125); "God is with those who guard themselves and those who do good." (16:128).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 16:69**

فِيهِ شِفَآءٌ لِّلنَّاسِ

"*in which there is healing for the people*"
The blessing that gives the sura its reading name.

**EXAMPLE 16:92**

كَٱلَّتِى نَقَضَتْ غَزْلَهَا

"*like her who unravels her thread*"
Breaking an oath undoes one's own work.

**EXAMPLE 16:120**

كَانَ أُمَّةً قَانِتًا

"*a community unto himself*"
One grateful man is worth a community.

## READ WITH

- 14:34: God's blessing, which cannot be counted.
- 21:25: no messenger without the same message.
- 60:4: the fine example of Ibrahim.
- 29:46: arguing in the best way.
- RD-23: a repeated formula, one rendering (16:18 and 14:34).

**IN BRIEF**

God's blessings follow one another beyond counting, down to the drink of the bee. They call for gratitude: the city that disowns them tastes hunger and fear, Ibrahim who acknowledges them becomes a community unto himself.

SURA 17 · الاسراء · AL-ISRA

# To What Is Most Upright

> A night journey opens the sura; a Recitation that guides to what is most upright runs through it. Between the two, a law of conduct: obey God alone, honor one's parents, do not squander, do not kill, do not pursue what one does not know.

## READING

"Exalted is He who made His obedient one travel by night, from the inviolable place of prostration to the farthest place of prostration," (17:1). "And We gave Moussa the Scripture, and made it a guidance for the Sons of Israel" (17:2); they are told: "You will surely spread corruption on the earth twice," (17:4). The rule is laid down: "If you do well, you do well for yourselves, and if you do ill, it is against yourselves." (17:7). And the Recitation is defined: "This Recitation guides to what is most upright," (17:9).

"And to every human being We have fastened his own omen to his neck;" (17:13); "Read your register: today, it suffices that you be your own accountant." (17:14). "No bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another. And We never punish until We have raised up a messenger." (17:15).

The law of conduct follows. "Your Guardian has decreed that you obey none but Him," (17:23); toward parents: "And lower for them the wing of humility, out of tenderness," (17:24). "Do not kill your children for fear of poverty:" (17:31); "And do not kill the Self that God has made inviolable, except by right." (17:33). "Do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge: hearing, sight, and the Conscience — of all that, account will be asked." (17:36). "And do not walk upon the earth with insolence:" (17:37). And beyond the human: "there is nothing that does not glorify Him in praise, but you do not understand their glorification." (17:44).

"We have indeed honored the sons of Adam," (17:70). "The truth has come, and falsehood has vanished:" (17:81); "And We send down, from this Recitation, that

which is healing and benevolence for the believers," (17:82). "The Influx is of my Guardian's affair; and you have been given of knowledge only a little." (17:85). "And a Recitation that We have divided, so that you recite it to the people gradually," (17:106). The sura closes: "Praise be to God, who has not taken a child, who has no associate in sovereignty," (17:111).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 17:9**

يَهْدِى لِلَّتِى هِىَ أَقْوَمُ

"*This Recitation guides to what is most upright*"
The definition that gives the sura its reading name.

**EXAMPLE 17:14**

ٱقْرَأْ كِتَٰبَكَ

"*Read your register*"
Each one is his own accountant.

**EXAMPLE 17:36**

وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِۦ عِلْمٌ

"*Do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge*"
The faculties answer for what they assert.

## READ WITH

- 6:151-152: the same law of conduct, stated as commandments.
- 31:18-19: not walking upon the earth with insolence.
- 46:15: parents, gestation and gratitude.
- 25:32: the Recitation sent down in portions, to make firm.
- RD-23: "no bearer of burden", one formula, one rendering (17:15, 6:164).

**IN BRIEF**

The Recitation guides to what is most upright: each one reads his own register and bears his own burden. The conduct it traces is simple: obey God alone, honor one's parents, kill no Self unjustly, assert nothing without knowledge.

SURA 18 · الكهف · AL-KAHF

# Unless God Wills

> Four accounts test faith, wealth, knowledge and power: the young people of the Cave, the man with the two gardens, Moussa and the obedient one taught by God, Dhul-Qarnayn. All receive the same lesson: no one disposes of tomorrow without deferring to what God wills.

## READING

"Praise be to God, who has sent down upon His obedient one the Scripture and placed in it no deviation," (18:1). "We have made what is on the earth an ornament for it, so as to test them: which of them acts best." (18:7). The young people of the Cave pray: "Our Guardian, grant us, from Yourself, a benevolence, and prepare for us, in our affair, a path of rectitude." (18:10); "they were young people who believed in their Guardian, and We increased them in guidance." (18:13). People dispute their number; then the rule falls: no one says he will do a thing tomorrow without adding "unless God wills." (18:24), and "And remember your Guardian when you forget," (18:24).

"Hold yourself, with constancy, alongside those who call upon their Guardian morning and evening, seeking His direction," (18:28); "The truth is from your Guardian: so let whoever wishes believe, and whoever wishes disown." (18:29). The man with the two gardens did not say: "What God wills! No strength except in God!" (18:39), and everything is encircled by ruin. "Goods and children are the ornament of the present life;" (18:46), "and the enduring, righteous deeds are, with your Guardian, better in requital and better in hope." (18:46). On the Day of gathering, the register astonishes: "What is it with this register that it leaves out nothing, small or great, without counting it!" (18:49).

Moussa sets out: "I will not stop until I reach the meeting-place of the two seas, though I journey long." (18:60). He finds "an obedient one among Our obedient ones, to whom We had granted a benevolence from Us and to whom

We had taught, from Us, a knowledge." (18:65), who warns him: "You will never be able to be patient with me." (18:67). The boat holed, then the boy killed: "Have you killed a pure Self, without it being for [another] Self?" (18:74), then the wall set upright. The interpretation comes, and the avowal: "and I did not do that of my own accord." (18:82); "That is the interpretation of what you were not able to bear with patience." (18:82).

Dhul-Qarnayn raises the barrier and says: "This is a benevolence from my Guardian;" (18:98). Then the question: "Shall I inform you of those who are the greatest losers in their deeds — those whose effort has gone astray in the present life, while they think they are doing well?" (18:103-104). "If the sea were ink for the words of my Guardian, the sea would be exhausted before the words of my Guardian were exhausted," (18:109). The sura closes: "So whoever hopes for the meeting with his Guardian, let him do a righteous deed and associate no one in obedience to his Guardian." (18:110).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 18:24**

إِلَّآ أَن يَشَآءَ ٱللَّهُ

"*unless God wills*"
The rule that gives the sura its reading name.

**EXAMPLE 18:39**

مَا شَآءَ ٱللَّهُ لَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِٱللَّهِ

"*What God wills! No strength except in God!*"
The word missing from the man with the two gardens.

**EXAMPLE 18:82**

ذَٰلِكَ تَأْوِيلُ مَا لَمْ تَسْطِع عَّلَيْهِ صَبْرًا

"*That is the interpretation of what you were not able to bear with patience.*"
Knowledge given by God exceeds what human patience can bear.

**READ WITH**

- 68:17-33: the owners of the garden who made no reserve for what God wills.
- 76:30: you do not will unless God wills.
- 12:76: above every possessor of knowledge, one more knowing.
- 31:27: the trees as pens, the sea as ink.
- The system "testing": four roots, four words: "to test", one root, one word (18:7).

**IN BRIEF**

The world is an ornament for testing, and tomorrow belongs to God alone. One who knows suspends his judgment before what he does not yet understand: behind the apparent loss stands the Guardian's benevolence.

SURA 19 · مريم · MARYAM

# A Remembrance of Benevolence

> The sura is a remembrance of the Guardian's benevolence toward Zakariya and Yahya, Maryam and Issa, Ibrahim, Moussa, Ismail and Idris. It closes on what contradicts it: saying that the All-Benevolent has taken a child, while all come to Him as obedient ones.

## READING

"A remembrance of your Guardian's benevolence toward His obedient one Zakariya" (19:2-3). The old man calls in secret: "My Guardian, the bone has grown weak within me, the head has blazed white," (19:4). The answer comes: "We give you glad tidings of a boy: his attribute is Yahya," (19:7). Yahya receives the command: "O Yahya, take the Scripture with strength." (19:12), and peace is spoken over his whole life: "And peace be upon him the day he was born, the day he dies, and the day he is raised alive." (19:15).

Maryam "withdrew from her people to a place toward the east" (19:16). "So We sent to her Our Influx, who took before her the form of a well-formed human." (19:17). He said: "I am only the messenger of your Guardian, that He may grant you a pure boy." (19:19). The child speaks in the cradle: "I am the obedient one of God." (19:30), and receives the same peace: "And peace be upon me the day I was born, the day I die, and the day I am raised alive." (19:33). Hence the conclusion: "It is not for God to take a child." (19:35); "God is my Guardian and your Guardian: so obey Him." (19:36).

Ibrahim asks his father: "O my father, why do you obey what neither hears nor sees and avails you nothing?" (19:42). Moussa, Ismail and Idris follow; then comes a generation "who neglected the Contact and followed desires" (19:59). The Agents say it: "We do not descend except by the command of your Guardian." (19:64); "And your Guardian is never forgetful." (19:64). And the question: "Do you know anyone who shares His attribute?" (19:65).

They say: "The All-Benevolent has taken a child." (19:88). The answer fits in one verse: "There is none in the heavens and the earth but comes to the All-Benevolent as an obedient one." (19:93). "To those who have believed and done righteous deeds, the All-Benevolent will grant affection." (19:96). The Recitation has been made easy "so that you may give glad tidings by it to those who guard themselves and warn by it a contentious people." (19:97), and of the annihilated generations nothing remains: "Do you perceive a single one of them, or hear from them the faintest murmur?" (19:98).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 19:2**

ذِكْرُ رَحْمَتِ رَبِّكَ

"A *remembrance of your Guardian's benevolence*"

The opening that gives the sura its reading name.

**EXAMPLE 19:65**

هَلْ تَعْلَمُ لَهُۥ سَمِيًّا

"*Do you know anyone who shares His attribute?*"

The same word names Yahya's unprecedented attribute (19:7); here, the attribute no one shares.

**EXAMPLE 19:93**

إِلَّآ ءَاتِى ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ عَبْدًا

"*but comes to the All-Benevolent as an obedient one*"

The answer to the claim of a child.

## READ WITH

- 3:38-41: Zakariya's call and the tidings of Yahya.
- 3:45-47: the tidings given to Maryam.
- 21:89-91: Zakariya, Yahya and Maryam side by side.
- 112:3: He has not begotten, nor been begotten.

- Sura 19: the rhyme of the accounts of gift, and the child attributed to God: the rhyme in يّ carries the accounts of the gift.
- RD-23: a repeated formula, one rendering (19:15 and 19:33).

**IN BRIEF**

Each account is a remembrance of benevolence: a son to the old man, a child to Maryam, a word from the cradle. To attribute a child to the All-Benevolent is to forget that all come to Him as obedient ones.

SURA 20 · طه · TA-HA

# Not for You to Toil

> The Recitation was not sent down for the messenger to toil, but as a reminder. Moussa's account fills almost the whole sura: the fire, the call, the mission, the calf; then Adam, forgetful, chosen and guided. Whoever follows the guidance neither strays nor toils.

## READING

"We did not send down upon you the Recitation for you to toil, but as a reminder for whoever is in awe," (20:2-3). God "knows the secret, and what is even more hidden." (20:7). Moussa sees a fire and hopes to find there "some guidance." (20:10); he hears: "In truth, it is I, your Guardian." (20:11-12). "The Hour is coming — I keep it almost hidden — so that every Self may be recompensed for what it has striven toward." (20:15).

Sent to Fir'awn, Moussa asks: "My Guardian, open up my chest for me, ease my task for me, undo a knot from my tongue so that they may understand my speech" (20:25-30). God reminds him how He saved him as a child: "And I formed you for Myself." (20:41). The instruction is gentle: "Speak to him gently; perhaps he will be reminded, or feel awe." (20:43-44). To Fir'awn's question, Moussa answers: "Our Guardian is the One who gave to each thing its own form, then guided it." (20:50). The defeated workers of illusion believe and answer the threat: "So decide whatever you are to decide: you decide only over the present life." (20:72).

In Moussa's absence, as-Samiri makes a calf, and they say: "This is your deity, and the deity of Moussa" (20:88); yet "it returns them no word, and holds for them neither harm nor benefit?" (20:89). Harun pleads: "Son of my mother, do not seize me by the beard nor by the head" (20:94). The conclusion: "Your only deity is God, besides whom there is no deity, whose knowledge embraces all things." (20:98). To the messenger: "My Guardian, increase me in knowledge." (20:114).

Then Adam: "And We had already made a covenant with Adam before, but he forgot, and We found in him no firm resolve." (20:115). "And Adam disobeyed his Guardian, and was misled." (20:121); "Then his Guardian chose him, turned toward him, and guided him." (20:122). The rule follows: "whoever follows My guidance shall neither stray nor toil;" (20:123); "and whoever turns away from My remembrance shall have a straitened existence" (20:124), and will hear: "Our signs came to you, and you forgot them; and thus, today, you are forgotten." (20:126). The sura closes: "Each one waits in expectation" (20:135).

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 20:2**

مَآ أَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ ٱلْقُرْءَانَ لِتَشْقَىٰٓ

*"We did not send down upon you the Recitation for you to toil"*
The opening, answered by 20:123.

**EXAMPLE 20:50**

رَبُّنَا ٱلَّذِىٓ أَعْطَىٰ كُلَّ شَىْءٍ خَلْقَهُۥ ثُمَّ هَدَىٰ

*"Our Guardian is the One who gave to each thing its own form, then guided it"*
The definition of the Guardian, given to Fir'awn.

**EXAMPLE 20:122**

ثُمَّ ٱجْتَبَٰهُ رَبُّهُۥ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ وَهَدَىٰ

*"Then his Guardian chose him, turned toward him, and guided him"*
After the fault, the choice and the guidance.

### READ WITH

- 28:29-35: the fire, the tree and the mission.
- 26:50: the workers of illusion accept the threat.
- 7:148-154: the calf and Moussa's anger.
- 2:35-38: Adam, forgetting, and the words received.

- One Arabic term, one word per language: one term, one rendering per language.

**IN BRIEF**

The Recitation is not a burden but a reminder. Moussa receives the mission and asks for ease; Adam forgets, then he is chosen and guided. The same rule holds for all: whoever follows the guidance neither strays nor toils, whoever turns away lives in straitness.

SURA 21 · الانبياء · AL-ANBIYA

# We Answered Him

> Mankind's reckoning draws near, and they listen to the reminder while playing. Neither creation nor truth is a game. Then the messengers pass by, and the same verb returns: they called, and God answered them. All form a single community.

## READING

"Mankind's reckoning has drawn near, while they are turned away in heedlessness." (21:1). Every new reminder, they listen to it "while playing, their core distracted." (21:2-3). Three refusals of play answer: "We did not create the heaven and the earth, and what is between them, in play." (21:16); "We hurl truth against falsehood instead, so it crushes it, and at once it vanishes." (21:18); and those who are with Him do not tire of obeying Him.

"Had there been in them [the heaven and earth] deities other than God, both would have become corrupt." (21:22). "He is not questioned about what He does, while they will be questioned." (21:23). To every messenger it was revealed "that there is no deity but Me — so obey Me." (21:25). "And We made every living thing from water" (21:30). "Every Self will taste death, and We test you with bad and with good, as a trial;" (21:35). "The human being was created out of haste." (21:37). "And We shall set up the weights of equity for the Day of Appearance" (21:47).

Ibrahim asks: "What are these statues before which you remain posted?" (21:52); he breaks them, except the largest, and answers: "It was rather this, their great one, who did it — ask them, if they can speak." (21:63). Thrown into the fire: "O fire, be coolness and peace upon Ibrahim." (21:69). Then Lut, Nuh, Dawud and Sulayman, Ayyub, Ismail, Idris, Dhul-Kifl; Dhu'n-Nun calls out in the darkness: "There is no deity but You! Glory be to You! I have indeed been among the wrongdoers!" (21:87), and "So We answered him and saved him from distress;" (21:88). Zakariya and Maryam follow.

"This community of yours is a single community, and I am your Guardian — obey Me, then." (21:92); people have split it, but for whoever acts righteously, "his effort will never be disowned" (21:94). "The day We fold up the heaven as a binder closes over the writings it holds," (21:104), creation will be repeated, and "the earth will be inherited by My righteous obedient ones." (21:105). "And We did not send you except as a benevolence for all beings." (21:107).

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 21:88**

فَٱسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُۥ وَنَجَّيْنَٰهُ مِنَ ٱلْغَمِّ

"*So We answered him and saved him from distress*"
The verb that returns from messenger to messenger.

**EXAMPLE 21:69**

يَٰنَارُ كُونِى بَرْدًا وَسَلَٰمًا عَلَىٰٓ إِبْرَٰهِيمَ

"*O fire, be coolness and peace upon Ibrahim*"
Fire commanded, not endured.

**EXAMPLE 21:107**

وَمَآ أَرْسَلْنَٰكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَٰلَمِينَ

"*And We did not send you except as a benevolence for all beings*"
The whole mission in one sentence.

### READ WITH

- 44:38-39: creation is not a game.
- 23:91: each deity would have gone off with what it created.
- 37:139-148: Younes, the fish and glorification.
- 23:52-53: the single community and its splitting.
- RD-23: formulas with several occurrences rendered identically.

**IN BRIEF**

Nothing is play: neither creation, nor truth, nor the reckoning drawing near. The messengers called, and God answered them; they form one community, sent as a benevolence for all beings.

SURA 22 · الحج · AL-HAJJ

# Neither Their Meat nor Their Blood

> The tremor of the Hour opens the sura; the creation of the human being and the earth that revives answer those who doubt. Ibrahim receives the House and the call to the Hajj; yet neither the meat nor the blood of the offerings reaches God, but guardedness.

## READING

"O mankind, guard yourselves against your Guardian, for the tremor of the Hour is a tremendous thing." (22:1); that day, "you will see mankind as if drunk, though they are not drunk" (22:2). To whoever doubts — "if you are in doubt about the Deployment" (22:5) — answer the creation of the human being, from dust to maturity, and the barren earth: "And you see the earth barren, but when We send down water upon it, it stirs" (22:5).

Among people "is he who obeys God in a distorted manner" (22:11): content in good, turning back in trial. Yet "Have you not seen that to God prostrate whoever is in the heavens and whoever is on the earth" (22:18)? Ibrahim receives the site of the House with a single instruction, "Do not associate anything with Me," (22:26), and the order: "And proclaim to mankind the Hajj" (22:27-28); let them fulfill their commitments "and frequent the freed House." (22:29). The meaning of the offerings is said plainly: "Neither their meat nor their blood reaches God, but the guardedness from you reaches Him." (22:37).

"Permission is given to those who are being fought, because they have been wronged —" (22:39), expelled for saying that their Guardian is God. The reason is universal: "And were it not for God's defense of people, some by means of others, there would have been demolished hermitages, churches, synagogues, and places of prostration wherein the name of God is much mentioned." (22:40). The annihilated cities are empty: "For it is not the eyes that are blind, but rather the cores that are within the breasts." (22:46). "a day with your Guardian is like a thousand years of those you count." (22:47).

"those you invoke besides God will never create a fly, even if they gathered together for that." (22:73); "Weak are the seeker and the sought!" (22:73). The sura closes on the call to strive for God: "He has not placed upon you, in the Law, any hardship —" (22:78), "It is He who named you the true [obedient ones of God] before, and in this [Recitation]" (22:78).

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 22:37**

لَن يَنَالَ ٱللَّهَ لُحُومُهَا وَلَا دِمَآؤُهَا

"*Neither their meat nor their blood reaches God*"

The rite brought back to its purpose.

**EXAMPLE 22:46**

فَإِنَّهَا لَا تَعۡمَى ٱلۡأَبۡصَٰرُ وَلَٰكِن تَعۡمَى ٱلۡقُلُوبُ ٱلَّتِي فِي ٱلصُّدُورِ

"*it is not the eyes that are blind*"

Blindness placed in the core, not in the eye.

**EXAMPLE 22:73**

ضَعُفَ ٱلطَّالِبُ وَٱلۡمَطۡلُوبُ

"*Weak are the seeker and the sought*"

The conclusion of the example of the fly.

### READ WITH

- 2:125-127: Ibrahim and the House.
- 3:96-97: the first House, and the Hajj.
- 2:190-193: fighting those who fight, without transgressing.
- Every order to fight has its cause and its limit: every order to fight is framed by its cause.
- 32:5: a day whose measure is a thousand years.

**IN BRIEF**

Rites have a purpose: it is not meat nor blood that reaches God, but guardedness. Fighting is permitted only to those who are fought, and defense protects every place where His name is mentioned; what goes blind is not the eyes, but the cores.

SURA 23 · المؤمنون · AL-MU'MINUN

# Have Attained Success

> The sura opens on "the believers have attained success" and closes on "those who disown do not attain success"; between the two, it describes who succeeds. The messengers form a single community; people have split it into parties.

## READING

"The believers have attained success, those who, in their Contact, are humble, and those who turn away from frivolity," (23:1-3), who keep their trusts and commitments. The human being is created from an extract of clay, a drop, a clinging form, then God "brought it forth as another creation." (23:14); "Blessed is God, the best of creators!" (23:14).

Nuh, then a messenger of another generation, call to obey God; the courts answer: "This is nothing but a human like you" (23:24-25). The messengers form one whole: "And this community of yours is a single community," (23:52); "But they split, concerning their affair, into divided factions, each party rejoicing in what it holds." (23:53). Those who hasten toward good things are those who give what they give, "their core trembling [at the thought] that they are returning to their Guardian" (23:57-61). "And We do not burden a Self beyond its capacity," (23:62).

"And had the truth followed their emotions, the heavens, the earth, and those therein would have been corrupted." (23:71). Questioned — "To whom belongs the earth and what is in it, if you know?" (23:84-85) — they answer: to God. Were there other deities, "each deity would have gone off with what it created, and some would have risen above others." (23:91). To the messenger: "Repel evil with what is better —" (23:96).

At death, one of them says: "My Guardian, send me back, that I may act righteously in that which I left." (23:99-100); but "behind them there is a barrier, until the day they are raised up." (23:100). When the Horn is blown,

"there will be no ties of lineage between them that day" (23:101). "Did you then think that We created you in vain, and that you would not be returned to Us?" (23:115). The sura closes at the other end: "Those who disown do not attain success." (23:117).

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 23:1**

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ ٱلْمُؤْمِنُونَ

"*The believers have attained success*"
The opening, answered by the close (23:117).

**EXAMPLE 23:53**

كُلُّ حِزْبٍۭ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ فَرِحُونَ

"*each party rejoicing in what it holds*"
The same formula as in 30:32.

**EXAMPLE 23:115**

أَفَحَسِبْتُمْ أَنَّمَا خَلَقْنَٰكُمْ عَبَثًا

"*Did you then think that We created you in vain*"
The question that closes the scene of the Day.

### READ WITH

- 70:22-35: the same qualities, in the same order.
- 22:5: from the drop to the lump.
- 21:92-93: a single community, split apart.
- 41:34: repelling with what is better.
- "Now?!": faith declared too late: faith that comes too late.

**IN BRIEF**

Success rests on concrete acts: humility in the Contact, turning from frivolity, faithfulness to trusts and commitments. A single community of messengers, split by people into self-satisfied parties; and a life not created in vain.

SURA 24 · النور · AN-NUR

# Light upon Light

> A sura made obligatory, whose light is first that of conduct: witnesses required, calumny defeated, gazes lowered, houses respected. At its center, God is the Light of the heavens and the earth; facing it, the deeds of those who disown are a mirage.

## READING

"This is a surah which We have sent down and which We have made obligatory" (24:1). It sets the sanction for fornication, and punishes those who accuse protected women and "then do not bring four witnesses" (24:4). On the calumny against a believing woman: "do not think it is an evil for you, no, it is a good for you." (24:11). The lesson is given: "If only, upon hearing it, the believing men and women had thought well of themselves" (24:12); they received it "with your tongues and said with your mouths that of which you had no knowledge, deeming it trivial while it is, in the sight of God, immense." (24:14-15). To those who swear to give no more: "let them rather efface and overlook. Would you not love for God to forgive you?" (24:22).

The rules of shared life follow: not entering another's house "until you have made yourselves known and greeted their occupants" (24:27); "Say to the believing men to lower their gazes and guard their private parts" (24:30), and likewise to the believing women (24:31).

At the center: "God is the Light of the heavens and the earth." (24:35). "The example of His Light is like a niche wherein is a lamp." (24:35), then the glass, the olive tree, the oil, and: "Light upon light." (24:35). This light dwells in houses where He is glorified by "men whom neither trade nor commerce diverts from the remembrance of God" (24:36-37). Facing it, the deeds of those who disown "are like a mirage in a desert plain, which the thirsty one takes for water" (24:39), or layered darknesses: "And he to whom God grants no light has no light." (24:40).

Everything glorifies Him: "Each one knows its Contact and its glorification," (24:41). The believers, called to judgment, say: "We have heard and we obey." (24:51). To those who believe, God promises succession on the earth, "and that He will surely change their state, after their fear, into security." (24:55). The sura closes on the moments of privacy, shared meals, for "There is no fault in your eating together or separately." (24:61), and the permission asked of the messenger.

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 24:35**

ٱللَّهُ نُورُ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ

*"God is the Light of the heavens and the earth"*
The center of the sura, and its name.

**EXAMPLE 24:11**

لَا تَحْسَبُوهُ شَرًّا لَّكُم بَلْ هُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ

*"do not think it is an evil for you"*
The calumny becomes a lesson.

**EXAMPLE 24:40**

وَمَن لَّمْ يَجْعَلِ ٱللَّهُ لَهُۥ نُورًا فَمَا لَهُۥ مِن نُّورٍ

*"And he to whom God grants no light has no light"*
The opposite of "light upon light" (24:35).

### READ WITH

- 4:15-16: indecency and the four witnesses.
- 49:12: avoiding much conjecture.
- 33:59: the cloaks of believing women.
- 2:257: from darkness to light.
- One Arabic term, one word per language: one term, one rendering per language.

**IN BRIEF**

God's light first illuminates conduct: verifying before accusing, thinking well of one's own, lowering the gaze, asking permission. Without that light, deeds are only a mirage.

SURA 25 · الفرقان · AL-FURQAN

# The Obedient Ones of the All-Benevolent

> The Criterion comes down upon God's obedient one so that he may be a warner to all beings; facing it, deities that create nothing. Those who disown demand an extraordinary messenger; the sura closes on the portrait of the obedient ones of the All-Benevolent.

## READING

"Blessed is He who sent down the Criterion upon His obedient one, that he may be a warner to all beings," (25:1). Besides Him, they have taken "deities that create nothing and are themselves created" (25:3). They are astonished: "What is with this messenger, that he eats food and walks in the marketplaces?" (25:7-8). Yet every messenger ate and walked in this way, "And We have made some of you a trial for others. Will you endure?" (25:20).

On the Day, the unjust one bites his hands: "If only I had not taken so-and-so as an intimate friend!" (25:27-29). The messenger will say: "O my Guardian, my people have forsaken this Recitation." (25:30). They ask: "Why was the Recitation not sent down upon him all at once!" (25:32); the answer: "Thus, so that We may steady your Conscience through it —" (25:32). "Have you seen him who has taken his emotion as his deity?" (25:43); "They are but like cattle — or even further astray from the way." (25:44).

The signs follow: "Have you not seen your Guardian, how He extends the shadow?" (25:45); "It is He who made the two seas meet" (25:53). The messenger is only a bearer of good news and a warner: "Rely upon the Living One who does not die," (25:58).

Then the portrait: "And the obedient ones of the All-Benevolent are those who walk upon the earth with humility, and who, when the ignorant address them, say: Peace." (25:63). They spend without excess: they "neither waste nor withhold excessively, standing between the two with just measure," (25:67). For whoever repents, "those, God will change their bad deeds into good

deeds," (25:68-70). They pass by frivolity "with dignity," (25:72), and before the signs they "do not collapse upon them as deaf and blind," (25:73). The sura closes: "My Guardian would care little for you, were it not for your invocation." (25:77).

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 25:63**

وَعِبَادُ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ ٱلَّذِينَ يَمْشُونَ عَلَى ٱلْأَرْضِ هَوْنًا

*"the obedient ones of the All-Benevolent are those who walk upon the earth with humility"*
The first trait of the portrait.

**EXAMPLE 25:30**

يَٰرَبِّ إِنَّ قَوْمِى ٱتَّخَذُوا۟ هَٰذَا ٱلْقُرْءَانَ مَهْجُورًا

*"my people have forsaken this Recitation"*
The messenger's complaint, on the Day.

**EXAMPLE 25:67**

لَمْ يُسْرِفُوا۟ وَلَمْ يَقْتُرُوا۟

*"neither waste nor withhold excessively"*
Just measure in spending.

### READ WITH

- 17:94-95: a human sent as messenger.
- 45:23: the one who has taken his emotion as his deity.
- 17:106: the Recitation divided into parts.
- 17:29: neither the hand chained nor the hand fully open.
- One Arabic term, one word per language: one term, one rendering per language.

**IN BRIEF**

The messenger eats food and walks in the marketplaces: he is human, and the Recitation comes down in parts to steady him. The obedient ones of the All-Benevolent are known by their gait, their measure, their repentance, and the way they receive the signs.

SURA 26 · الشعراء · ASH-SHU'ARA

# A Sound Core

> The same refusal returns from people to people, and the same answer follows it: a sign most do not believe, and the reminder that God is the All-Powerful, the Benevolent. Ibrahim asks for the only thing that will avail: to come to God with a sound core.

## READING

"Perhaps you will consume yourself with grief because they are not believers." (26:3). "No new reminder comes to them from the All-Benevolent without them turning away from it." (26:5). After each account returns the same refrain: "In that, there is indeed a sign. But most of them are not believers." (26:8); "And your Guardian is indeed the All-Powerful, the Benevolent." (26:9).

Moussa answers the favor Fir'awn reproaches him with: "And this blessing you reproach me with is that you enslaved the Sons of Israel!" (26:22). Fir'awn asks: "And what is the Guardian of all beings?" (26:23); Moussa answers: "The Guardian of the east and the west and what is between them, if you would reason." (26:28). The workers of illusion, defeated, believe and accept the threat: "No harm! It is to our Guardian that we are turning back." (26:50). Before the sea, his people cry out: "We are certainly overtaken!" (26:61); Moussa: "My Guardian is indeed with me; He will guide me." (26:62).

Ibrahim describes his Guardian, "the one who created me and who guides me," (26:77-78), "and who, when I am ill, heals me," (26:79-80). He asks for "a tongue of truth among those who come after," (26:84), and not to be disgraced on the day "when neither goods nor sons will be of use, except to one who comes to God with a sound core." (26:87-89). Nuh, Hud, Salih, Lut and Shu'ayb then say the same thing, in the same words: "I ask you no reward for this;" (26:109). The peoples answer with monuments built "in play" (26:128-130), the mutilated she-camel, cheating on the measure; Shu'ayb tells them: "Give full measure," (26:181).

As for the revelation: "The trustworthy Influx came down with it, upon your core, so that you may be among the warners, in impeccable, explicit tongue." (26:193-195). "And warn your closest clan" (26:214-215). The sura closes on the rhetoricians: "And the beguiling rhetoricians, it is the misled who follow them." (26:224); they say "what they never do?" (26:225-226), except "those who have believed, done righteous deeds, remembered God much" (26:227).

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 26:89**

إِلَّا مَنْ أَتَى ٱللَّهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ

"*except to one who comes to God with a sound core*"
The same expression as in 37:84.

**EXAMPLE 26:62**

إِنَّ مَعِيَ رَبِّي سَيَهْدِينِ

"*My Guardian is indeed with me; He will guide me*"
Moussa's trust before the sea.

**EXAMPLE 26:226**

وَأَنَّهُمْ يَقُولُونَ مَا لَا يَفْعَلُونَ

"*that they say what they never do*"
What separates the rhetorician from the messenger.

### READ WITH

- 37:84: Ibrahim comes to his Guardian with a sound core.
- 11:25-95: the same messengers, the same template.
- The refrain "Woe, that Day, to the deniers!": an identical verdict after each proof.
- The template of the prophets' accounts: each prophet's account follows the same template.
- 36:69: the Recitation is not beguiling rhetoric.

**IN BRIEF**

From one people to the next, the same call, the same refusal, the same sign. What avails on the last day is neither wealth nor offspring, but a sound core; and the Recitation is not the speech of rhetoricians who say what they do not do.

SURA 27 · النمل · AN-NAML

# Will I Acknowledge, or Disown?

> Knowledge and kingship given by God are recognized by gratitude, not by exaltation. Sulayman hears the ant and gives thanks; the Queen of Saba, before a palace of crystal, becomes true to God alone. Five questions then ask: is there a deity alongside God?

## READING

Those who do not believe in the last life, "We have made their deeds seem fair to them, and they wander blindly." (27:4). Moussa receives nine signs; Fir'awn and his people "stubbornly rejected them, while their own selves were certain of them, out of injustice and arrogance." (27:14).

Sulayman says: "we have been taught the language of birds" (27:16). An ant warns its kind: "O ants, enter your dwellings, lest Sulayman and his troops crush you without perceiving it." (27:18). He smiles and asks: "My Guardian, inspire me to acknowledge the blessing You have granted me" (27:19). The hoopoe returns with news: "I have grasped what you have not grasped" (27:22); it has seen a queen and her people "prostrating before the sun, besides God" (27:24-25). The queen consults her court and knows what kings are worth: "Kings, when they enter a city, corrupt it" (27:34).

The queen's Edifice is brought before a glance can return; Sulayman says: "This is from the favor of my Guardian, to test me: will I acknowledge, or will I disown?" (27:40). Before the palace of crystal, the queen concludes: "My Guardian, I have wronged myself, and I am true, with Sulayman, to God, Guardian of all beings." (27:44). Salih and Lut face plots and indecency: "They plotted a plot, and We plotted a plot, without their perceiving it." (27:50).

Five questions follow, each closed by the same: "Is there a deity alongside God?" (27:60). "Is it not He who answers the one in distress, when he calls upon Him" (27:62)? "None, in the heavens and on the earth, knows what escapes the senses, except God;" (27:65). "You do not make the dead hear"

(27:80). "And you see the mountains, you think them fixed, while they pass as the clouds pass:" (27:88). The sura closes: "He will show you His signs, and you will recognize them." (27:93).

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 27:40**

هَٰذَا مِن فَضْلِ رَبِّي لِيَبْلُوَنِيٓ ءَأَشْكُرُ أَمْ أَكْفُرُ

"*will I acknowledge, or will I disown*"
The gift presented as a test.

**EXAMPLE 27:18**

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّمْلُ ٱدْخُلُوا۟ مَسَٰكِنَكُمْ

"O *ants, enter your dwellings*"
The word of an ant, heard by a king.

**EXAMPLE 27:60**

أَءِلَٰهٌ مَّعَ ٱللَّهِ

"*Is there a deity alongside God*"
The question repeated five times (27:60-64).

### READ WITH

- 34:12-14: Sulayman, the wind, the Occulted and the staff.
- 14:7: if you are grateful, I will increase you.
- 46:15: "inspire me to be grateful", the same request.
- 41:53: He will show them His signs in the horizons.
- The series in أم: "Or ... ?": a series of questions dismantles the claims.

**IN BRIEF**

Every gift is a test: one acknowledges it or disowns it. Sulayman gives thanks, the Queen of Saba admits her wrong and joins integrity; to every question the same answer imposes itself: there is no deity alongside God.

SURA 28 · القصص · AL-QASAS

# Neither Exaltation nor Corruption

> God makes the weakened into leaders and heirs. Fir'awn, who raises himself through power, and Qaroon, who raises himself through wealth, are swallowed up; the last abode belongs to those who seek neither exaltation nor corruption.

## READING

"Fir'awn rose up with excess in the land and split its people into factions;" (28:4). Facing him, the divine will: "We wanted to favor those who had been kept weak in the land, to make them leaders, to make them the heirs" (28:5-6). Moussa's mother is inspired: "cast him into the river, without fear or grief," (28:7). Fir'awn's household picks him up, "so that he would become, in the end, an enemy and a source of grief for them" (28:8), and God returns him to his mother, "so that her gaze might settle" (28:13).

As a man, Moussa strikes an adversary and says: "This is the work of the Diverter;" (28:15), then: "My Guardian, I have wronged myself; forgive me." (28:16). He flees to Madian, waters the flocks of two women and says: "My Guardian, I am in great need of whatever good You would send down to me." (28:24). One of them recommends him: "the best one you could hire is one who is strong and trustworthy." (28:26). The term fulfilled, he is called from the tree: "O Moussa, it is I, God, the Guardian of all beings!" (28:30-31). Fir'awn tells his court: "O court, I know of no deity for you other than myself." (28:38), and ends cast into the river.

The messenger was present neither at the Mount nor in Madian; what he recites is "a benevolence from your Guardian, so that you may warn a people to whom no warner had come before you" (28:46). Those who had received the Scripture believe in it and are rewarded twice, "for having repelled evil with good" (28:54). "You do not guide whom you love; but God guides whom He wills," (28:56). "Your Guardian creates what He wills and chooses; the

choice does not belong to them." (28:68). Who but He would bring light, "if God made the night perpetual for you until the Day of Appearance" (28:71)?

Qaroon, of Moussa's people, is told: "Do not exult; God does not love those who exult [with arrogance];" (28:76), "seek instead, in what God has given you, the last abode, without forgetting your share of the present life;" (28:77). He answers: "It has only been given to me on account of a knowledge that is mine." (28:78). "We caused the earth to swallow him and his dwelling;" (28:81). The lesson follows: "That last abode — We reserve it for those who seek, in the land, neither to raise themselves above others, nor corruption;" (28:83). The sura closes: "Everything perishes, except His Face." (28:88).

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 28:5**

وَنُرِيدُ أَن نَّمُنَّ عَلَى ٱلَّذِينَ ٱسْتُضْعِفُوا۟ فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ

*"We wanted to favor those who had been kept weak in the land"*

God's will, set against Fir'awn's.

**EXAMPLE 28:78**

إِنَّمَآ أُوتِيتُهُۥ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ عِندِىٓ

*"It has only been given to me on account of a knowledge that is mine"*

Wealth attributed to oneself.

**EXAMPLE 28:83**

لِلَّذِينَ لَا يُرِيدُونَ عُلُوًّا فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ وَلَا فَسَادًا

*"those who seek, in the land, neither to raise themselves above others, nor corruption"*

The criterion that gives this reading its name.

### READ WITH

- 20:38-40: the mother, the chest and the sister.
- 26:18-22: Fir'awn reproaches Moussa with his former favor.

- 39:49: "this was only given to me because of some knowledge", the same claim.
- 55:26-27: all upon it perishes, the Face remains.
- "Now?!": faith declared too late: faith that comes too late.

**IN BRIEF**

God raises the weakened and lowers those who raise themselves. Fir'awn's power and Qaroon's wealth end under the water and under the earth; the last abode is for those who seek neither to dominate nor to corrupt.

SURA 29 · العنكبوت · AL-ANKABUT

# The Flimsiest of Dwellings

> Faith is not a word one utters but a trial one goes through; God distinguishes those who speak truly from the liars. To take allies besides Him is to shelter in the flimsiest of dwellings, the spider's.

## READING

"Do the people think that it will be enough for them to say" (29:2) that they believe, "without being put to the trial?" (29:2). Those before were tried, "so that God will surely distinguish those who have spoken truly, and will surely distinguish the liars." (29:3). "Whoever strives, strives only for himself," (29:6). Parents receive kindness, but not obedience in association: "but if they force you to associate with Me that of which you have no knowledge, do not obey them;" (29:8). Some, at the first harm suffered, "equate the trial inflicted by people with God's punishment." (29:10). Others propose: "Follow our way, and we will carry your faults" (29:12); they will carry their own burdens.

Nuh "remained among them a thousand years, less fifty conventional years" (29:14). Ibrahim tells his people that their idols hold nothing for them: "so seek provision with God," (29:17); then he leaves: "I am emigrating toward my Guardian;" (29:26). Lut, Madian, the Recidivists, the Depleters, Qaroon, Fir'awn and Haman follow: "Each of them We seized for his offense;" (29:40), and "God was not going to wrong them; but it was themselves that they wronged." (29:40).

Then the image: "The example of those who take, besides God, allies, is that of the spider that builds itself a dwelling; and the flimsiest of dwellings is indeed the dwelling of the spider" (29:41). These examples are put forth for people, "but only those with knowledge grasp them with reason." (29:43). "the Contact turns one away from indecency and from what is disavowed; and the remembrance of God is greater still;" (29:45). "Do not argue with the People of the Writ except in the best way," (29:46). The Scripture is "clear signs in the chests of those to whom knowledge has been given;" (29:49).

"My earth is vast" (29:56); "Every Self will taste death," (29:57). "How many a living being does not carry its own provision!" (29:60). "This present life is nothing but distraction and play; and the last abode, that is the true life" (29:64). The sura closes on a promise: "Those who have striven for Us — We will surely guide them on Our ways;" (29:69).

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 29:41**

وَإِنَّ أَوْهَنَ ٱلْبُيُوتِ لَبَيْتُ ٱلْعَنكَبُوتِ

*"the flimsiest of dwellings is indeed the dwelling of the spider"*

The image that gives the sura its name.

**EXAMPLE 29:10**

جَعَلَ فِتْنَةَ ٱلنَّاسِ كَعَذَابِ ٱللَّهِ

*"they equate the trial inflicted by people with God's punishment"*

Confusing people's pressure with God's judgment.

**EXAMPLE 29:69**

وَٱلَّذِينَ جَٰهَدُوا۟ فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا

*"Those who have striven for Us — We will surely guide them on Our ways"*

Striving precedes guidance.

### READ WITH

- 2:214: entering the Garden without being tried like those before?
- 31:14-15: parents, without obedience in association.
- 6:164: no one bears the burden of another.
- 16:125: arguing in the best way.
- 3:185: every Self will taste death.
- One Arabic term, one word per language: one term, one rendering per language.

**IN BRIEF**

Saying "we believe" is not enough: the trial distinguishes those who speak truly. Allies taken besides God are a spider's web; those who strive for Him, He guides on His ways.

SURA 30 · الروم · AR-RUM

# The Original Nature

> The command belongs to God, before and after: the victorious Romans will be defeated. The signs of creation, from spouses to tongues and colors, call one to set one's direction toward the Law, according to the original nature given to mankind, rather than to split into parties.

## READING

"The Romans were victorious, in the nearest land; but after their victory, they will be defeated, within a few years" (30:2-4). "to God belongs the command, before and after." (30:4). Most people see no further: "They know only an outward aspect of the present life" (30:7). Earlier peoples were stronger; "and it was not God who wronged them, but they used to wrong themselves." (30:9). "God originates the creation, then remakes it" (30:11).

The signs follow one another: "He created for you, from yourselves, spouses, so that you might find rest in them, and He placed between you affection and benevolence" (30:21); and "the diversity of your tongues and your colors" (30:22). Then the example: "He proposes to you an example drawn from yourselves" (30:28); no one makes his subordinate an equal partner in his goods; how then give partners to God?

Hence the command: "Set your direction toward the Law, wholly turned toward God — the original nature God gave mankind" (30:30). "There is no changing God's creation" (30:30). Its opposite is division: "among those who split up their Law and became factions, each party rejoicing in what it has." (30:32). "So give the close relative his due, and the destitute, and the stranded traveler;" (30:38); what is lent to grow through people's goods "does not increase with God" (30:39). "Corruption has appeared on land and sea because of what people's hands have earned" (30:41).

"So look at the trace of God's benevolence" (30:50): the earth lives again after its death. Yet "You certainly cannot make the dead hear" (30:52). "God is He who created you from weakness, then made, after weakness, strength, then made, after strength, weakness and old age;" (30:54). On the day of the Hour, "the severed will swear they remained but an hour;" (30:55). The sura closes: "So be patient: God's promise is truth; and do not let those who lack certainty shake you." (30:60).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 30:4**

لِلَّهِ ٱلْأَمْرُ مِن قَبْلُ وَمِنۢ بَعْدُ

*"to God belongs the command, before and after"*
The Romans' victory and defeat brought back to their source.

**EXAMPLE 30:30**

فِطْرَتَ ٱللَّهِ ٱلَّتِى فَطَرَ ٱلنَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا

*"the original nature God gave mankind"*
The word that gives this reading its name.

**EXAMPLE 30:32**

كُلُّ حِزْبٍۭ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ فَرِحُونَ

*"each party rejoicing in what it has"*
Division, the opposite of the single direction toward the Law.

## READ WITH

- 48:16: a people of severe rigor, to be fought.
- 7:172: the covenant taken from the children of Adam.
- 16:71: sharing one's goods with one's subordinates?
- 6:159: those who split up their Law.
- 2:275-276: usury and alms.
- 22:5: weakness, strength, then the most abject age.

**IN BRIEF**

The command is God's, before and after. People are created upon an original nature that does not change: setting one's direction toward the Law is being faithful to it, instead of splitting into parties each rejoicing in what it has.

SURA 31 · لقمان · LUQMAN

# Be Grateful to God

> Wisdom begins with gratitude to God and refuses all association. Luqman teaches it to his son: associate nothing, honor one's parents without obeying them in association, maintain the Contact, walk with measure. Whoever renders his direction true to God alone has grasped the firmest handhold.

## READING

Among people "is he who buys distracting talk, to lead [others] astray from the way of God without knowledge" (31:6); when the signs are recited to him, he turns away "as though there were deafness in his ears" (31:7). "He created the heavens without pillars" (31:10); to the associators, the challenge: "so show Me what those besides Him have created." (31:11).

"And We certainly gave Luqman wisdom" (31:12): to be grateful to God. To his son he says: "O my son, do not associate [any partner] with God; association is certainly a great injustice." (31:13). In the middle of the exhortation, God recalls the parents: "his mother carried him, weakness upon weakness," (31:14); yet if they press toward association, "do not obey them; but accompany them in the present life in a recognized manner," (31:15).

Luqman resumes: even "the weight of a mustard seed" (31:16), God will bring it forth. "O my son, maintain the Contact, enjoin what is recognized, forbid what is disavowed, and be patient over what befalls you" (31:17). "And do not turn your cheek away from people [in disdain]," (31:18); "Be moderate in your pace, and lower your voice" (31:19).

Others say: "We rather follow what we found our ancestors upon." (31:21). But "whoever renders his direction true to God alone, while being virtuous, has certainly grasped the firmest handhold;" (31:22). Were the trees pens and the sea ink, "the words of God would not be exhausted" (31:27); "Your creation and your deployment are but as [that of] a single Self;" (31:28). The sura closes on

"a day when no father will avail his child" (31:33), and on what God alone knows: "God certainly has knowledge of the Hour," (31:34); "and no Self knows in what land it will die;" (31:34).

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 31:13**

إِنَّ ٱلشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيمٌ

"*association is certainly a great injustice*"
Luqman's first counsel, and its reason.

**EXAMPLE 31:15**

فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا وَصَاحِبْهُمَا فِى ٱلدُّنْيَا مَعْرُوفًا

"*do not obey them*"
Refusing association without breaking the bond.

**EXAMPLE 31:19**

وَٱقْصِدْ فِى مَشْيِكَ وَٱغْضُضْ مِن صَوْتِكَ

"*Be moderate in your pace*"
Wisdom down to one's step and voice.

### READ WITH

- 29:8 and 46:15: kindness to parents, without obedience in association.
- 17:23-24: do not say "fie" to them, lower the wing of humility.
- 2:256: the firmest handhold.
- 18:109: the sea as ink for the words of the Guardian.
- 6:59: the keys of what escapes the senses.

**IN BRIEF**

Wisdom fits in few words: gratitude, no association, honoring one's parents without following them into error, measure in step and in voice. What man does not know of his tomorrow and his death, God alone knows.

SURA 32 · السجدة · AS-SAJDA

# The Rest of the Gaze

> The Scripture comes from the Guardian of all beings to warn those who had no warner. Hearing, sight and Consciences are given to believe before the meeting, not after; for those who prostrate, a hidden reward that no Self knows.

## READING

"The descent of the Scripture, without doubt, is from the Guardian of all beings." (32:2). It comes "that you may warn a people to whom no warner has come before you" (32:3). "He governs the Order from the sky to the earth" (32:5), He "who perfected everything He created" (32:7). He begins the creation of the human being from clay, then "breathed into him of His Influx, and He appointed for you hearing, sight, and Consciences — how little you are grateful!" (32:9).

Those who disown ask: "When we are dissolved into the earth, will we truly be in a new creation?" (32:10). The severed, heads bowed, will say too late: "Our Guardian, we have seen and heard, so return us" (32:12). Hearing and sight acknowledged on the day they no longer help.

"Only those believe in Our signs who, when they are reminded of them, fall down in prostration" (32:15). "Their sides draw away from their beds, calling upon their Guardian in fear and hope" (32:16). "And no Self knows what has been hidden for it of a rest of the gaze" (32:17). "Is he who is a believer like him who is an overstepper?" (32:18). The nearer punishment comes before the greater: "And We will surely let them taste the nearer punishment, short of the greater punishment, that they might return" (32:21).

Moussa received the Scripture, "And We appointed among them leaders guiding by Our command, when they had endured patiently," (32:24). The annihilated generations and the water driven to the barren land raise two questions: "Do they not then listen?" (32:26); "Do they not then see?" (32:27).

On the day of judgment, "faith will no longer benefit those who disowned" (32:29). "So turn away from them, and wait: they too are waiting." (32:30).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 32:12**

رَبَّنَآ أَبۡصَرۡنَا وَسَمِعۡنَا فَٱرۡجِعۡنَا

"*Our Guardian, we have seen and heard, so return us*"

Hearing and sight acknowledged too late (32:9).

**EXAMPLE 32:16**

تَتَجَافَىٰ جُنُوبُهُمۡ عَنِ ٱلۡمَضَاجِعِ

"*Their sides draw away from their beds*"

Faith described by a movement of the body.

**EXAMPLE 32:17**

فَلَا تَعۡلَمُ نَفۡسٞ مَّآ أُخۡفِيَ لَهُم مِّن قُرَّةِ أَعۡيُنٖ

"*no Self knows what has been hidden for it of a rest of the gaze*"

A reward the text declines to describe.

## READ WITH

- 23:12-14: from clay to the completed creation.
- 16:78: hearing, sight and Consciences, that you may be grateful.
- 6:27-28: those who ask to return.
- 51:17-18: little sleep at night.
- "Now?!": faith declared too late: faith that comes too late.
- « أَلَمۡ تَرَ »: "Have you not seen": "Have they not seen": an accomplished fact.

**IN BRIEF**

Hearing and sight are given to believe now; the severed will say they have seen and heard when it is too late. Those who leave their beds to call upon their Guardian have a hidden reward that no Self knows.

SURA 33 · الاحزاب · AL-AHZAB

# A Single Core

> The believer has only one core: he follows what is revealed to him and obeys neither those who disown nor the hypocrites. The sura undoes the fictions of speech, goes through the trial of the parties, sets the household of the Prophet in order, and closes on the trust the human being agreed to bear.

## READING

"O Prophet, guard yourself before God, and do not obey those who disown nor the hypocrites." (33:1); "And follow what is revealed to you from your Guardian." (33:2). Then the rule: "God has not assigned to any man two cores within his chest." (33:4). The fictions of speech fall: the wife declared excluded is not a mother, "nor has He made your adopted sons your [true] sons." (33:4); "That is only your saying, [uttered] by your mouths;" (33:4). "Call them by their fathers' names: that is more equitable with God." (33:5).

The parties come "from above you and from below you," (33:10), and the cores reach the throats. The hypocrites say: "God and His messenger promised us nothing but delusion" (33:12), and look for a pretext: "they wanted nothing but to flee." (33:13). "You have certainly had, in the messenger of God, a beautiful example" (33:21). The believers, seeing the parties, say: "This is what God and His messenger promised us, and God and His messenger spoke truly" (33:22); among them, men kept their pledge, "and they have not changed in the least" (33:23-24).

The wives of the Prophet choose: "If you desire the present life and its adornment" (33:28), or God and His messenger. The sura then names men and women equally: "Men true to God alone and women true to God alone, believing men and believing women" (33:35), and concludes: "God has prepared for them forgiveness and an immense reward." (33:35). When God and His messenger have decided a matter, it is not for anyone "to have the choice in their own affair." (33:36). Concerning Zayd, the messenger is

admonished: "fearing the people, when God is more deserving that you fear Him." (33:37).

"Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but rather the messenger of God and the seal of the prophets." (33:40), sent as witness, bearer of good news, warner, "and as an illuminating torch." (33:45-46). Then come the rules of the Prophet's houses and God's norm against the rumor-mongers. The sura closes: "We offered the trust to the heavens, the earth, and the mountains; they refused to bear it and were afraid of it," (33:72), "and the human being bore it: he was certainly deeply unjust, deeply ignorant" (33:72-73).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 33:4**

مَّا جَعَلَ ٱللَّهُ لِرَجُلٍ مِّن قَلْبَيْنِ فِى جَوْفِهِۦ

*"God has not assigned to any man two cores within his chest"*
The rule that opens the sura and runs through it.

**EXAMPLE 33:21**

لَّقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِى رَسُولِ ٱللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ

*"You have certainly had, in the messenger of God, a beautiful example"*
The example is given at the heart of the trial of the parties.

**EXAMPLE 33:72**

وَحَمَلَهَا ٱلْإِنسَٰنُ ۖ إِنَّهُۥ كَانَ ظَلُومًا جَهُولًا

*"and the human being bore it: he was certainly deeply unjust, deeply ignorant"*
The trust accepted, and the risk it carries.

## READ WITH

- 58:2: the exclusion formula does not make a wife a mother.
- 3:173: faith that grows in the face of the parties.
- 60:4-6: a beautiful example, in Ibrahim.
- 59:7: what the messenger gives you, take it.

- 4:58: rendering trusts to those entitled to them.
- Every order to fight has its cause and its limit: every order to fight is framed by its cause.

**IN BRIEF**

One core, one obedience: no fictions of speech, no double talk in the face of trial. Men and women are named equally before forgiveness, and the human being accepted a trust that the heavens and the mountains refused.

SURA 34 · سبأ · SABA

# Two by Two, or One by One

> Nothing escapes God, not even the weight of a grain; neither goods nor children bring one nearer to Him. Saba' had two gardens and a good land, and turned away. The messenger exhorts to one thing only: to stand up for God, two by two or one by one, and reflect.

## READING

Those who disown say the Hour will not come; it will come, by the Knower of what escapes the senses, "from whom nothing escapes, not the weight of a grain, in the heavens or on the earth," (34:3). "And those who were given knowledge see that what has been revealed to you from your Guardian is the truth" (34:6); the others ask: "Has he invented a lie against God, or is he afflicted with some derangement?" (34:8).

Dawud receives a favor: "O mountains, echo [Our praise] with him, and the birds [as well]." (34:10). The family of Dawud is told to work in gratitude, "but few of My obedient ones are grateful." (34:13). The death of Sulayman stays hidden: "nothing informed them of his death except a creature of the earth eating away his staff;" (34:14), and the Occulted discover that they did not know what escapes the senses.

Saba' had a sign: "two gardens, on the right and on the left." (34:15), "a good land, and a Most-Forgiving Guardian." (34:15). "But they turned away, so We sent upon them the destructive flood of the dam," (34:16); "so We made them into cautionary tales" (34:19). "And the Despairing One [Iblis] had certainly confirmed his conjecture about them" (34:20). Those who are invoked "do not possess the weight of a grain" (34:22). The messenger sets out the alternative: "And indeed, either we or you are upon guidance, or in manifest error." (34:24).

The privileged of every city say: "We have more goods and children, and we will not be punished." (34:35); yet "it is not your goods or your children that bring you nearer to Us" (34:37). The messenger asks little: "I only exhort you

to one thing: that you stand up for God, two by two or one by one, then reflect" (34:46). "The truth has come, and falsehood can neither begin nor return." (34:49). Those who will want to believe too late will reach for it "from so distant a place" (34:52-53).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 34:46**

أَن تَقُومُواْ لِلَّهِ مَثۡنَىٰ وَفُرَٰدَىٰ ثُمَّ تَتَفَكَّرُواْ

*"that you stand up for God, two by two or one by one, then reflect"*

No crowd, no pressure: reflection alone or in pairs.

**EXAMPLE 34:14**

مَا دَلَّهُمۡ عَلَىٰ مَوۡتِهِۦٓ إِلَّا دَآبَّةُ ٱلۡأَرۡضِ تَأۡكُلُ مِنسَأَتَهُۥ

*"nothing informed them of his death except a creature of the earth eating away his staff"*

The Occulted did not know what escapes the senses (34:14).

**EXAMPLE 34:24**

وَإِنَّآ أَوۡ إِيَّاكُمۡ لَعَلَىٰ هُدًى أَوۡ فِي ضَلَٰلٖ مُّبِينٖ

*"either we or you are upon guidance, or in manifest error"*

The alternative set out without claiming victory.

## READ WITH

- 10:61: nothing escapes your Guardian, not even the weight of a grain.
- 38:17-19: Dawud, the mountains and the birds.
- 27:22-44: Saba' and its queen.
- 7:16-17: the threat of the Despairing One.
- 18:46: goods and children, adornment of the present life.
- 17:81: the truth has come, falsehood has vanished.

**IN BRIEF**

Goods and children do not bring one nearer to God; Saba' lost its gardens for turning away. The only demand is to stand up for God, alone or in pairs, and reflect.

SURA 35 · فاطر · FATIR

# The Poor Before God

> God opens and withholds benevolence and none can oppose Him; people are the poor before the One who is Self-Sufficient. Only those who know truly fear God, and those who inherit the Scripture are not all alike.

## READING

Praise be to God, "who made the Agents messengers organized into departments" (35:1). "Whatever benevolence God opens up for mankind, none can withhold it," (35:2). The warning follows: "nor let the great deceiver deceive you concerning God." (35:5); "The Diverter is an enemy to you: so take him as an enemy." (35:6). "To Him ascends the good word, and the righteous deed, He raises it." (35:10).

"The two seas are not alike:" (35:12) one sweet, the other bitter, and from each come fresh meat and ornaments. Those invoked besides God "do not possess even the skin of a date-stone." (35:13). Then the sentence that carries the sura: "O mankind, it is you who are the poor before God, while God is the Self-Sufficient, the Praiseworthy." (35:15). "No bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another;" (35:18).

"The blind and the seeing are not equal" (35:19-21). Mountains, people and beasts have varied colors, and "Only those among His obedient ones who know truly fear God." (35:28). Those who recite the Scripture "hope for a trade that will never perish" (35:29-30). Among those who inherit it, "some of them wrong their own Self, some follow a moderate course, and some race ahead in good deeds, by God's permission." (35:32).

In the Fire, they ask to come out and do better; the answer: "Did We not grant you a life long enough that whoever wished to reflect could reflect?" (35:37). "God holds the heavens and the earth, lest they cease to exist;" (35:41). Those who swore they would be better guided drew only aversion from the warner

who came: "it only increased them in aversion," (35:42); "But evil plotting only envelops its own doers." (35:43). Were God to seize people for what they have earned, nothing would remain on the earth, "but He defers them until an appointed term." (35:45).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 35:15**

أَنتُمُ ٱلْفُقَرَآءُ إِلَى ٱللَّهِ

"*it is you who are the poor before God*"

Poverty is the human condition, not an accident.

**EXAMPLE 35:28**

إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى ٱللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ ٱلْعُلَمَٰٓؤُا۟

"*Only those among His obedient ones who know truly fear God*"

Knowledge comes right after the colors of creation (35:27-28).

**EXAMPLE 35:43**

وَلَا يَحِيقُ ٱلْمَكْرُ ٱلسَّيِّئُ إِلَّا بِأَهْلِهِۦ

"*But evil plotting only encircles its own doers*"

The plot returns upon the one who weaves it.

## READ WITH

- 47:38: God is Self-Sufficient, you are the poor.
- 25:53: the two seas, and the barrier between them.
- 6:164 and 17:15: no bearer of burden.
- 39:9: those who know and those who do not know.
- 33:62 and 48:23: God's norm, without change.
- 16:61: deferral until an appointed term.

**IN BRIEF**

Everything comes from God, and the human being is only poor before Him; each carries his own burden. Knowledge that leads to fearing God is true knowledge, and the respite granted is not forgetfulness.

SURA 36 · يس · YA-SIN

# Who Will Give Life to the Bones?

> The Recitation full of wisdom warns the living. A man hurries from the farthest end of the city to support the envoys and enters the Garden; his people are extinguished by a single cry. To whoever asks who will give life to the bones, the answer is: He who brought them into being the first time.

## READING

"By the Recitation full of wisdom, you are truly among the envoys," (36:2-4). For many, the word has proven true: "And We have placed a barrier before them and a barrier behind them" (36:9). "You can only warn usefully one who follows the Reminder and fears the All-Benevolent unseen" (36:11). Nothing is lost: "We record what they put forth and the traces they leave behind." (36:12).

The people of a city call three envoys liars and see an ill omen in them; the answer: "Your omen lies with yourselves." (36:19). "And a man came hurrying from the farthest end of the Capital." (36:20). He tells his people: "follow those who ask no reward of you, and who let themselves be guided." (36:20-21). It is said to him: "Enter the Garden." (36:26); and he says: "If only my people knew" (36:26-27). His people are extinguished by a single cry: "What regret for the obedient ones!" (36:30).

The signs follow one another: "A sign for them: the dead earth, which We bring to life" (36:33); "It is not for the sun to overtake the moon, nor for the night to outrun the day. Each sails along in an orbit." (36:40). Yet when called to spend, those who disown answer: "Shall we feed one whom God, if He willed, would feed Himself?" (36:47). On the appointed Day: "This day, no Self will be wronged in the least" (36:54); "This day, We seal their mouths; their hands will speak to Us, and their feet will bear witness to what they used to earn." (36:65).

"We did not teach him beguiling rhetoric" (36:69): the Recitation is not a poem. The human being, created from a drop, becomes a quarreller: "He sets forth for Us an example, forgetting his own creation." (36:78), and asks: "Who will give life to the bones once they are decayed?" (36:78). Answer: "He who brought them into being the first time will give them life" (36:79). "His command, when He wills a thing, is only to say to it" (36:82): be, and it is.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 36:20**

وَجَآءَ مِنْ أَقْصَا ٱلْمَدِينَةِ رَجُلٌ يَسْعَىٰ

"*And a man came hurrying from the farthest end of the Capital*"
A single man, come from afar, against a whole city.

**EXAMPLE 36:40**

وَكُلٌّ فِى فَلَكٍ يَسْبَحُونَ

"*Each sails along in an orbit*"
The order of the heavenly bodies as a sign.

**EXAMPLE 36:79**

قُلْ يُحْيِيهَا ٱلَّذِىٓ أَنشَأَهَآ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ

"*He who brought them into being the first time will give them life*"
The answer to the objection of the bones (36:78).

## READ WITH

- 26:224-227: the Recitation is not the work of poets.
- 40:28: another man defending the envoys within his people.
- 41:20-21: hearing, sights and skins testifying.
- 22:5: from the drop to the resurrection.
- « أَلَمْ تَرَ »: "Have you not seen": "Have you not seen": an accomplished fact.

**IN BRIEF**

The Recitation warns those who are alive; a single man, come from afar, was enough to tell his people the truth. The objection of the bones falls by itself: He who brought into being the first time will give life again.

SURA 37 · الصافات · AS-SAFFAT

# Peace upon the Envoys

> Those who mock the Awakening will be gathered with what they used to obey; the purified obedient ones are spared. Then the messengers pass by, each closed by the same peace and the same refrain; and those who attribute daughters to God have no authority.

## READING

The sura opens on oaths and an affirmation: "your deity is indeed one," (37:1-4). On the Day of Separation the order is given: "Gather those who did wrong, their spouses, and what they used to obey besides God" (37:22-23). "And they turn to one another, questioning each other." (37:27), passing the blame. They had said: "Shall we abandon our deities for a deranged beguiling rhetorician?" (37:35-36). In the Garden, an obedient one remembers: "I had a companion" (37:51-53), and says to him, seeing him in the Blaze: "By God, you nearly caused my ruin" (37:56-57). The others "found their ancestors astray, and rushed headlong in their footsteps." (37:69-70).

The messengers come next, and each account closes the same way. For Nuh: "Peace upon Nuh, among all beings!" (37:79); "Thus do We recompense those who do good." (37:80). Ibrahim comes to his Guardian "with a sound core" (37:83-85) and asks his people: "Do you obey what you carve, when God created you and what you make?" (37:95-96).

To his son he says: "O my son, I see in a dream that I am sacrificing you; consider, then, what you think." (37:102). The son answers: "O my father, do what you are commanded;" (37:102). When both have become true to God alone, the call comes: "O Ibrahim, you have indeed confirmed the vision." (37:103-105). "And We ransomed him with a great sacrifice." (37:107). Elias asks: "Do you call upon Ba'l, forsaking the best of creators," (37:123-125); Younes is saved from the fish because he glorified: "Had he not been among those who glorify, he would indeed have remained in its belly" (37:143-144); sent "to a hundred thousand [people], or more," (37:147), "and they believed" (37:148).

Then the question: "does your Guardian have daughters, while they have sons?" (37:149). Those who claim it have no writ. God's word has gone forth in favor of the envoys: "they are indeed the ones who are helped" (37:171-173). The sura closes: "And peace upon the envoys!" (37:181).

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 37:84**

إِذْ جَآءَ رَبَّهُۥ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ

"*when he came to his Guardian with a sound core*"
What Ibrahim brings: a core, not an offering.

**EXAMPLE 37:102**

يَٰٓأَبَتِ ٱفْعَلْ مَا تُؤْمَرُ

"*O my father, do what you are commanded*"
The son is consulted and answers; integrity is shared by both (37:103).

**EXAMPLE 37:79**

سَلَٰمٌ عَلَىٰ نُوحٍ فِى ٱلْعَٰلَمِينَ

"*Peace upon Nuh, among all beings*"
The first of the greetings of peace; Ibrahim, Moussa and Harun, Ilyasin follow.

### READ WITH

- 6:74-83: Ibrahim facing his father and the stars.
- 21:51-70: the idols broken, the fire made cool.
- 21:87-88: Younes in the darkness, and his glorification.
- 53:21-22: "for you the males, and for Him the females?"
- "Thus do We recompense those who do good": "thus do We recompense those who do good".
- RD-23: formulas with several occurrences rendered identically.

**IN BRIEF**

Each messenger receives the same peace and the same verdict: those who do good are recompensed, the purified obedient ones are spared. Ibrahim and his son show what it is to become true to God alone; those who rush in the footsteps of astray ancestors have no authority.

SURA 38 · ص · SAD

# The One Who Keeps Turning Back

> The Recitation charged with the Reminder collides with the pride of those who disown. Facing them, tried obedient ones who keep turning back to God: Dawud, Sulayman, Ayyub. The sura closes on the refusal of Iblis, who thinks himself better.

## READING

"By the Recitation charged with the Reminder," (38:1) those who disown are astonished: "Has he made the deities a single deity? This is indeed a strange thing!" (38:5). Yet do they hold "the treasures of the benevolence of your Guardian" (38:9)? The parties before them denied, and the sanction proved true.

The messenger must be patient: "remember Our obedient one Dawud, endowed with strength, he never ceased turning back [to God]." (38:17). Two parties come before him: "we are two opposing parties, one of us has committed aggression against the other" (38:22); one "has ninety-nine ewes, and I have but one ewe." (38:23). Dawud judges, then understands: "And Dawud understood that We had [thus] tried him; he sought his Guardian's forgiveness, fell down bowing, and turned back [to Him]." (38:24). He receives the charge: "so judge among the people with truth, and do not follow emotion, lest it lead you astray from the path of God." (38:26).

"We did not create the heaven and the earth and all that is between them in vain." (38:27). "Here is a blessed Scripture that We sent down to you, so that they may reflect on its signs" (38:29). "And We certainly tried Sulayman" (38:34): he too turns back, and receives the wind and the Diverters made subservient. Ayyub calls out: "The Diverter has touched me with hardship and suffering." (38:41); he is healed and given back his own: "We found him patient," (38:44).

Those who guard themselves have a fine place of return; those who exceed all bounds quarrel in the Fire. The sura closes on the creation of the human and the refusal of Iblis: "I am better than him: You created me from fire, and You created him from clay." (38:76). He threatens: "By Your might, I will mislead them all, except Your purified obedient ones among them." (38:82-83). And the Recitation remains "a reminder for all beings," (38:87).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 38:24**

فَٱسْتَغْفَرَ رَبَّهُۥ وَخَرَّ رَاكِعًا وَأَنَابَ

*"he sought his Guardian's forgiveness, fell down bowing, and turned back [to Him]"*

Turning back, not the absence of fault, makes the obedient one.

**EXAMPLE 38:26**

وَلَا تَتَّبِعِ ٱلْهَوَىٰ فَيُضِلَّكَ عَن سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ

*"do not follow emotion, lest it lead you astray from the path of God"*

The condition set for the judge.

**EXAMPLE 38:76**

أَنَا۠ خَيْرٌ مِّنْهُ

*"I am better than him"*

The refusal of Iblis lies in a comparison.

## READ WITH

- 34:10-11: Dawud, the mountains and the iron.
- 21:78-79: Dawud and Sulayman judge together.
- 21:83-84: Ayyub calls, and he is answered.
- 7:12: "I am better than him", the same refusal.
- 47:24: reflecting upon the Recitation.

- One Arabic term, one word per language: one term, one rendering per language.

**IN BRIEF**

Pride rejects the Reminder; the tried obedient one turns back. Dawud, Sulayman and Ayyub are not without fault: they are the ones who keep turning back. Iblis does not turn back: he thinks himself better.

SURA 39 · الزمر · AZ-ZUMAR

# Do Not Lose Heart

> The pure Law belongs to God alone; whoever takes intermediaries to draw near to Him is like a man owned by quarrelling partners. To those excessive against themselves, the sura says not to lose heart: God forgives all wrongs to whoever turns back before it is too late.

## READING

"so obey God, devoting the Law exclusively to Him." (39:2); "In truth, the pure and exclusive Law belongs to God." (39:3). Those who take other allies justify themselves: "We only obey them so that they may bring us nearer to God, as near as can be" (39:3). God creates the human being "creation after creation, in three darknesses" (39:6); yet when harm touches him he calls upon his Guardian, then, once favored, "he forgets what he used to call upon before, and sets up equals to God" (39:8).

"Are those who know equal to those who do not know?" (39:9). Good news goes to those "who listen to the word and follow the best of it" (39:18). "God has sent down the most beautiful of discourse, a Scripture of verses corresponding to one another, repeated in cycles, at which the skins of those who fear their Guardian shiver; then their skins and their cores soften toward the remembrance of God" (39:23). The example sets two men side by side: "a man belonging to quarrelling partners, and a man belonging wholly to one man" (39:29).

"You will die, and they will die" (39:30-31). "Is God not sufficient for His obedient one?" (39:36). "God takes back the Selves at the time of their death, and those that have not died, during their sleep" (39:42). When God alone is mentioned, "the cores of those who do not believe in the last life shrink with revulsion" (39:45). Once favored, the human being says: "This was only given to me because of some knowledge [I possess]." (39:49); "Rather, it is a trial," (39:49).

Then the central call: "O My obedient ones who have been excessive against yourselves, do not lose heart regarding the benevolence of God; God forgives all wrongs" (39:53). "Turn back to your Guardian, and be true to Him alone, before the punishment comes to you" (39:54), before the moment when one will say: "If only I had a return, I would be among those who do good." (39:58). "They did not measure God with His true measure" (39:67). "The earth will shine with the light of its Guardian" (39:69). Two processions close the sura: "Those who disown will be driven toward Jahannam, in troops," (39:71); "And those who guarded themselves before their Guardian will be led toward the Garden, in troops," (39:73).

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 39:29**

رَّجُلًا فِيهِ شُرَكَآءُ مُتَشَٰكِسُونَ وَرَجُلًا سَلَمًا لِّرَجُلٍ

*"a man belonging to quarrelling partners, and a man belonging wholly to one man"*

Association made visible: one servant pulled between several masters.

**EXAMPLE 39:53**

لَا تَقۡنَطُواْ مِن رَّحۡمَةِ ٱللَّهِ

*"do not lose heart regarding the benevolence of God"*

Addressed to those excessive against themselves, not to the blameless.

**EXAMPLE 39:67**

وَمَا قَدَرُواْ ٱللَّهَ حَقَّ قَدۡرِهِۦ

*"They did not measure God with His true measure"*

The root of all association: too small a measure.

### READ WITH

- 10:18: the intercessors invoked besides God.
- 16:53-54: calling in hardship, associating in favor.

- 28:78: "I was given it only because of knowledge", the same claim.
- 15:56: who despairs of his Guardian's benevolence but the astray?
- 4:48: what is forgiven, and what is not.
- Verbal aspect carries meaning: verbal aspect carries the meaning.

**IN BRIEF**

The Law is pure or it is not: one does not serve quarrelling masters. Yet the door stays open: God forgives all wrongs to whoever turns back to Him before the punishment comes.

SURA 40 · غافر · GHAFIR

# My Guardian Is God

> God forgives and accepts repentance, but He is severe in sanction. At the heart of the sura, a believing man from the clan of Fir'awn defends Moussa; at the end, those who rejoiced in their own knowledge believe on seeing the rigor, too late.

## READING

The descent of the Scripture comes from God, "He who forgives offense and accepts repentance, severe in sanction" (40:3). "Only those who disown argue concerning the signs of God" (40:4), like the parties before them, "arguing by falsehood to refute the truth with it" (40:5). The bearers of the Edifice implore: "Our Guardian, You encompass all things in benevolence and knowledge" (40:7). Those who disown learn it too late: "when God alone was invoked, you disowned" (40:12). "To whom belongs the dominion today? To God, the One, the Overpowering." (40:16).

Moussa is sent to Fir'awn, Haman and Qaroon. Fir'awn says: "Leave me to kill Moussa, and let him call upon his Guardian!" (40:26). Then speaks "A believing man from the clan of Fir'awn, who concealed his faith" (40:28): "Will you kill a man for saying, 'My Guardian is God,' when he has brought you clear proofs from your Guardian?" (40:28). He adds: "If he is lying, his lie is upon him" (40:28). Fir'awn claims: "I guide you only to the path of rectitude." (40:29); the believing man takes up the same words in the opposite sense: "follow me; I will guide you to the path of rectitude" (40:38).

He recalls Youssof, of whom they said at his death: "God will not send a messenger after him" (40:34). Fir'awn wants a tower: "O Haman, build me a tower" (40:36); but "Fir'awn's scheming was nothing but ruin." (40:37). The man concludes: "I entrust my affair to God" (40:44), and "God protected him from the evils of what they plotted" (40:45). In the Fire, the weak ask the arrogant to relieve them; these answer: "We are all in it" (40:48).

"We surely help Our messengers and those who believe, in the present life and on the day the witnesses rise" (40:51). Your Guardian has said: "Call upon Me, I will answer you" (40:60). The sura closes on those who "rejoiced in the knowledge they already possessed" (40:83). Seeing the rigor, they said they believed in God alone; "But their faith did not benefit them once they saw Our rigor" (40:85): "such is God's norm, already past among His obedient ones" (40:85).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 40:28**

أَتَقْتُلُونَ رَجُلًا أَن يَقُولَ رَبِّيَ ٱللَّهُ

*"Will you kill a man for saying"*
The argument of a single man, within the very clan of Fir'awn.

**EXAMPLE 40:60**

ٱدْعُونِيٓ أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ

*"Call upon Me, I will answer you"*
The same promise as in 2:186.

**EXAMPLE 40:85**

فَلَمْ يَكُ يَنفَعُهُمْ إِيمَٰنُهُمْ لَمَّا رَأَوْا۟ بَأْسَنَا

*"But their faith did not benefit them once they saw Our rigor"*
The same rule as in 10:90-91.

## READ WITH

- 10:90-91: faith declared before drowning, refused.
- "Now?!": faith declared too late: faith that comes too late.
- 4:18: the repentance of one whom death has already reached.
- 2:186: God answers the call of whoever calls upon Him.
- 28:38: Fir'awn and his tower.

**IN BRIEF**

Forgiveness is open, but the sanction is severe for whoever argues about the signs by falsehood. A single man, within the very clan of Fir'awn, said that his Guardian is God and entrusted his affair to God; faith that waits to see the rigor comes too late.

SURA 41 · فصلت · FUSSILAT

# Their Skins Will Testify

> The Recitation is made distinct and flawless; those who turn away stop their own ears. On the day of the gathering, their hearing, their sights and their skins will testify against them. Repelling with what is better turns an enemy into a warm friend.

## READING

The sura opens on "a Scripture whose signs are made distinct, a flawless recitation for a people who know" (41:3). Those who turn away say: "Our cores are under coverings against what you call us to, and there is a deafness in our ears, and between us and you a veil." (41:5). The messenger answers: "I am only a human like you; it is revealed to me that your deity is a single deity." (41:6).

The One who created the earth and apportioned its provisions "established Himself toward the sky, which was smoke" (41:11); sky and earth answer: "We come obediently." (41:11). The Recidivists said: "Who is stronger than us in might?" (41:15); the Depleters "preferred blindness over guidance" (41:17).

"The day We gather the enemies of God toward the Fire" (41:19), "their hearing, their sights, and their skins will testify against them about what they used to do." (41:20). They will say to their skins: "Why did you testify against us?" (41:21). Their fault lay in a thought: "you thought that God did not know much of what you were doing." (41:22). Those who disown had said: "Do not listen to this recitation, and drown it out, so that you may prevail." (41:26).

Upon those who say "Our Guardian is God" then stand straight, "the Agents descend upon them" (41:30). "The good deed and the bad deed are not equal." (41:34); "Repel with what is better; then the one between you and whom there was enmity will be like a warm friend." (41:34). The Recitation is "an impregnable Scripture, which falsehood cannot reach from before it or from behind it" (41:41-42); for those who believe, it is "guidance and healing" (41:44).

The sura closes on the promise: "We will show them Our signs in the horizons and in themselves, until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth." (41:53).

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 41:21**

وَقَالُوا۟ لِجُلُودِهِمْ لِمَ شَهِدتُّمْ عَلَيْنَا

"*Why did you testify against us*"

The body testifies against the one who thought he was hiding.

**EXAMPLE 41:26**

لَا تَسْمَعُوا۟ لِهَٰذَا ٱلْقُرْءَانِ وَٱلْغَوْا۟ فِيهِ

"*Do not listen to this recitation, and drown it out*"

An organized refusal to hear.

**EXAMPLE 41:34**

ٱدْفَعْ بِٱلَّتِى هِىَ أَحْسَنُ

"*Repel with what is better*"

Enmity turned into warm friendship.

### READ WITH

- 16:103: a confused tongue, a clear Arabic tongue.
- 24:24 and 36:65: tongues, hands and feet as witnesses.
- 46:13: the same formula, and no fear.
- 23:96: repelling evil with what is better.
- 7:200: the incitement of the Diverter, and refuge in God.

**IN BRIEF**

The Recitation is made distinct for whoever wants to hear; stopping one's ears does not remove the witness, since the body itself will testify. The Agents descend upon those who stand straight, and the good deed disarms enmity.

SURA 42 · الشورى · ASH-SHURA

# One Single Law

> Revelation is one single Law, given to Nuh, Ibrahim, Moussa, Issa and the messenger; people divide over it only out of aggression, after knowledge. What is with God belongs to those who consult one another, defend themselves when aggressed, and know how to efface and reconcile.

## READING

"Thus God, the All-Powerful, the Wise, reveals to you — as He did to those before you." (42:3). "The heavens are about to be rent asunder from above them" (42:5), while the Agents ask forgiveness for whoever is on the earth. The messenger does not answer for those who take other allies: "and you are not, yourself, their trustee." (42:6). "And whatever you differ about, its judgment rests with God." (42:10). "Nothing resembles Him" (42:11).

"He has ordained for you, in the Law, what He enjoined upon Nuh" (42:13), and what He enjoined upon Ibrahim, Moussa and Issa: "Uphold the Law, and do not become divided within it." (42:13). Yet "they became divided only after knowledge had come to them, out of mutual aggression among themselves." (42:14). Hence the instruction: "call and stand straight as you have been commanded, and do not follow their emotions." (42:15); "to us our deeds, and to you your deeds" (42:15). Those who ordain in the Law what God has not authorized make themselves His associates (42:21).

God "is Subtle toward His obedient ones" (42:19): "And were God to extend provision abundantly to His obedient ones, they would commit aggression on the earth" (42:27). What is with God is better for those who "conduct their affairs by mutual consultation" (42:38), and for those who, "when aggression befalls them, defend themselves." (42:39). The measure stays fixed: "The recompense of an evil is an evil equal to it; but whoever effaces and reconciles, his reward is upon God" (42:40). "And whoever endures patiently and forgives, that is indeed among matters of firm resolve." (42:43).

The messenger is not sent as a keeper: "upon you rests only the transmission." (42:48). "It is not for any human that God should speak to him, except by revelation, or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger" (42:51). "Thus have We revealed to you an Influx from Our own command; you did not know what the Scripture was, nor faith" (42:52).

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 42:13**

أَنْ أَقِيمُوا۟ ٱلدِّينَ وَلَا تَتَفَرَّقُوا۟ فِيهِ

"*Uphold the Law, and do not become divided within it*"

The instruction common to Nuh, Ibrahim, Moussa and Issa.

**EXAMPLE 42:38**

وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَىٰ بَيْنَهُمْ

"*conduct their affairs by mutual consultation*"

The word that gives the sura its name.

**EXAMPLE 42:40**

فَمَنْ عَفَا وَأَصْلَحَ فَأَجْرُهُۥ عَلَى ٱللَّهِ

"*whoever effaces and reconciles, his reward is upon God*"

Equal recompense is permitted; effacing is preferred.

### READ WITH

- 4:163: revelation to Nuh and the prophets after him.
- 45:17 and 3:19: division out of aggression, after knowledge.
- 11:112: standing straight, as commanded.
- 3:159: consulting in the matter.
- 16:126: repaying in equal measure, or enduring.

**IN BRIEF**

One single Law, from Nuh to the messenger: dividing it is aggression, not a lack of knowledge. The believers consult one another, defend themselves when aggressed, and know that forgiving and reconciling is better than returning evil for evil.

SURA 43 · الزخرف · AZ-ZUKHRUF

# In the Footsteps of the Ancestors

> Neither the ornaments of the present life nor the legacy of the ancestors prove anything. Ibrahim disavows what his people obey and leaves a lasting word; Fir'awn, master of the rivers of Egypt, scorns Moussa and drags his people into drowning.

## READING

"By the clear Scripture! We have made it a flawless recitation, that you may reason." (43:2-3). Those who disown nonetheless acknowledge the Creator: "The All-Powerful, the All-Knowing, created them." (43:9). Yet they attribute daughters to God and make the Agents "female beings." (43:19). "Did they witness their creation?" (43:19). They know nothing of it: "they do nothing but engage in baseless guesswork." (43:20).

Their only argument is inheritance: "We found our ancestors upon a way, and it is in their footsteps that we walk." (43:23). The warner asks: "Even if I brought you [guidance] more right than what you found your ancestors upon?" (43:24). Ibrahim, on the contrary, says to his father and his people: "I disavow what you obey, except Him who originated me" (43:26-27), "and he made it a lasting word among his descendants" (43:28).

They demand an important man: "Why was this recitation not sent down upon some great man from the two cities?" (43:31). Answer: "Is it they who apportion the benevolence of your Guardian?" (43:32). Roofs of silver, stairways, couches and ornaments could have been given to those who disown; "And all that is nothing but the enjoyment of the present life" (43:35). Whoever turns away from the Reminder receives "a Diverter who becomes an inseparable companion to him" (43:36).

Fir'awn calls out to his people: "does not the dominion of Egypt belong to me, and these rivers flowing beneath me?" (43:51). He scorns Moussa, who "can hardly express himself clearly" (43:52). "He made light of his people, and they

obeyed him" (43:54). The son of Maryam, for his part, "is only an obedient one whom We blessed" (43:59). On that Day, "close friends will be, to one another, enemies, except those who guard themselves." (43:67). The final instruction is simple: "So overlook them" (43:89), and speak peace.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 43:23**

إِنَّا وَجَدْنَآ ءَابَآءَنَا عَلَىٰٓ أُمَّةٍ وَإِنَّا عَلَىٰٓ ءَاثَٰرِهِم مُّقْتَدُونَ

*"it is in their footsteps that we walk"*
The argument of the affluent of every city.

**EXAMPLE 43:28**

وَجَعَلَهَا كَلِمَةًۢ بَاقِيَةً فِى عَقِبِهِۦ

*"he made it a lasting word among his descendants"*
Ibrahim's break becomes a legacy.

**EXAMPLE 43:54**

فَٱسْتَخَفَّ قَوْمَهُۥ فَأَطَاعُوهُ

*"He made light of his people, and they obeyed him"*
Power that despises those who follow it.

## READ WITH

- 2:170 and 31:21: following what one found one's ancestors upon.
- 6:116: baseless guesswork.
- 60:4: Ibrahim disavows his people.
- 16:58: the face darkened at the news of a daughter.
- 3:59: the example of Issa, like that of Adam.

**IN BRIEF**

Neither ornaments nor ancestors are proof. Ibrahim broke with the inherited way and made it a lasting word; Fir'awn ruled through contempt, and his people followed him into drowning.

SURA 44 · الدخان · AD-DUKHAN

# You Will Relapse

> The warning is a benevolence; those who take it as a game promise to believe when the punishment touches them, then relapse as soon as it is removed. The people of Fir'awn left their gardens to others, and neither the sky nor the earth wept over them.

## READING

"By the clear Scripture! We sent it down in a blessed night" (44:2-3). "In it, every wise matter is decided" (44:4); the descent is "a benevolence from your Guardian." (44:6).

"But they play in doubt." (44:9). "So watch for the day when the sky brings a clear smoke that envelops the people" (44:10-11). They implore: "Our Guardian, remove the punishment from us; we believe." (44:12). The answer comes at once: "We will remove the punishment for a little while, but you will relapse." (44:15).

"Before them, We tried the people of Fir'awn" (44:17); a noble messenger asks them: "Hand over to me the obedient ones of God" (44:18). Drowned, they leave everything behind: "How many gardens and springs they left behind" (44:25). "Neither the sky nor the earth wept over them, and they were granted no reprieve." (44:29). The Sons of Israel, for their part, are saved "from the humiliating punishment [coming] from Fir'awn." (44:30).

Those who deny the Awakening say: "we will not be awakened." (44:35). But "We did not create the heavens and the earth and what is between them in play." (44:38), and "The Day of Separation is the appointed time for them all" (44:40). To the hardened transgressor, plunged in boiling water, it is said: "You, yes you, the mighty, the noble!" (44:49). The sura closes: "We have only made it easy in your tongue, so that they may remember." (44:58); "So watch, they too are watching." (44:59).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 44:15**

إِنَّكُمْ عَآئِدُونَ

*"but you will relapse"*

A promise made under punishment does not hold.

**EXAMPLE 44:29**

فَمَا بَكَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ ٱلسَّمَآءُ وَٱلْأَرْضُ

*"Neither the sky nor the earth wept over them"*

A disappearance without mourning.

**EXAMPLE 44:49**

إِنَّكَ أَنتَ ٱلْعَزِيزُ ٱلْكَرِيمُ

*"You, yes you, the mighty, the noble"*

The title the arrogant gave himself, returned as a sentence.

## READ WITH

- 97:1: the descent in a night.
- 32:21-22: the nearer punishment, before the greater one.
- 26:57-59: gardens and springs left to another people.
- « يَوْمُ ٱلْفَصْلِ »: the Day of Separation: "the Day of Separation".
- 54:17: the Recitation made easy for remembrance.

**IN BRIEF**

A punishment removed is not a gain: those who promise under constraint relapse. The Recitation has been made easy for remembrance; what remains is to watch, each on his own side.

SURA 45 · الجاثية · AL-JATHIYA

# Emotion Taken as a Deity

> The signs are everywhere: in creation, the rain, the winds, the subjected sea. Whoever hears them recited and then persists in arrogance has made his emotion a deity; on the day of the Hour, every community will be kneeling before its record.

## READING

"Indeed, in the heavens and the earth are signs for the believers." (45:3). The signs are addressed in turn to a people who have certainty, who reason, who reflect. "So in what discourse, after God and His signs, will they believe?" (45:6). "Woe to every transgressive liar" (45:7), who hears the signs of God "then persists arrogantly, as if he had not heard them." (45:8).

"And He subjected for you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth, all from Him." (45:13). Those who believe are told "to forgive those who do not expect the days of God" (45:14), for each acts for himself: "Whoever does what is right, it is for his own Self, and whoever does wrong, it is against his own Self" (45:15).

The Sons of Israel received the Scripture, the judgment and prophethood; "They did not differ except after knowledge had come to them, out of aggression among themselves." (45:17). The messenger is placed "upon a legislated way from the Command" (45:18), and must not follow the emotions of those who do not know. Then comes the central question: "Have you seen the one who has taken his emotion [overriding reason] as his deity?" (45:23). Those who say "nothing annihilates us but time" (45:24) have no knowledge of it: "they only conjecture." (45:24).

On the day of the Hour: "You will see every community kneeling, every community will be called to its record." (45:28). The record speaks: "This is Our record; it speaks about you in truth" (45:29). Those who forgot the meeting are forgotten in turn: "Today We forget you, as you forgot the

meeting of this your day" (45:34). The sura closes on greatness: "And to Him belongs greatness in the heavens and the earth" (45:37).

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 45:23**

أَفَرَءَيْتَ مَنِ ٱتَّخَذَ إِلَٰهَهُۥ هَوَىٰهُ

"*the one who has taken his emotion [overriding reason] as his deity*"

The same question as in 25:43.

**EXAMPLE 45:28**

وَتَرَىٰ كُلَّ أُمَّةٍ جَاثِيَةً

"*You will see every community kneeling*"

The word that gives the sura its name.

**EXAMPLE 45:24**

وَمَا يُهْلِكُنَآ إِلَّا ٱلدَّهْرُ

"*nothing annihilates us but time*"

A claim without knowledge, nothing but conjecture (45:24).

### READ WITH

- 2:164: the diversity of the winds among the signs.
- 25:43: the one who has taken his emotion as his deity.
- 41:46: for his own Self, or against it.
- 42:14: division out of aggression, after knowledge.
- 7:51: forgotten as they forgot the meeting of this day.

**IN BRIEF**

The signs are in creation and in the recited Recitation; whoever hears them and persists has put his emotion in the place of God. Each acts for his own Self, and the record will speak in truth.

SURA 46 · الاحقاف · AL-AHQAF

# No Novelty Among the Messengers

> Truth need not be new to be true: the messenger follows what is revealed to him, and the Scripture confirms that of Moussa. Those who reject it repeat the refusal of earlier peoples; some of the Occulted, for their part, listen to it and become warners.

## READING

"We did not create the heavens and the earth, and what is between them, except in truth and for an appointed term." (46:3). Those invoked besides God have created nothing; their followers are asked for "a Writ prior to this one, or a remnant of knowledge" (46:4). These objects of invocation remain "heedless of their invocation" (46:5), and at the gathering "they will disown that obedience" (46:6).

To the accusation of invention, the messenger answers: "I am not a novelty among the messengers" (46:9), and again: "I follow only what is revealed to me." (46:9). A witness among the Sons of Israel recognized the conformity of the Scripture and believed (46:10). "And before it was the Scripture of Moussa, as a reference and a benevolence." (46:12). For those who say "Our Guardian is God" then stand straight, "no fear will be upon them, nor will they grieve." (46:13).

Then comes the human being before his parents: "His mother carried him with hardship and bore him with hardship." (46:15). At forty, he asks: "My Guardian, inspire me to be grateful for Your blessing" (46:15). Another says to his parents: "Fie on you both!" (46:17), and calls the promise "nothing but legends of the ancients." (46:17). Those who disown will be told: "You exhausted your good things in your present life and enjoyed them." (46:20).

The brother of the Recidivists warns his people at the Ahqaf. Seeing a cloud approach, they say: "This is a cloud bringing us rain." (46:24); it was "a wind carrying a painful punishment" (46:24). "And they became such that nothing

could be seen except their dwellings." (46:25). Hearing, sight and Consciences availed them nothing, "since they used to stubbornly reject the signs of God" (46:26). A group of the Occulted listens to the Recitation; "Then, when it was concluded, they turned back to their people as warners." (46:29), and they say: "O our people, respond to the caller of God and believe in him" (46:31). The sura closes on patience: "So be patient, as the resolute among the messengers were patient" (46:35).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 46:9**

مَا كُنتُ بِدْعًا مِّنَ ٱلرُّسُلِ

"*I am not a novelty among the messengers*"
The answer to the accusation of invention (46:8).

**EXAMPLE 46:9**

إِنْ أَتَّبِعُ إِلَّا مَا يُوحَىٰٓ إِلَيَّ

"*I follow only what is revealed to me*"
The same words as in 6:50.

**EXAMPLE 46:24**

هَٰذَا عَارِضٌ مُّمْطِرُنَا

"*This is a cloud bringing us rain*"
The sign read backwards: it was the punishment.

## READ WITH

- 6:50: "I follow only what is revealed to me", the same words.
- 11:17: the Scripture of Moussa, a reference and a benevolence.
- 41:30: the same formula, then the Agents who descend.
- 31:14: the mother who carries her child with hardship.
- 72:1: some of the Occulted listening to a recitation.
- 20:108 and 54:8: the caller of God.

**IN BRIEF**

The messenger brings no novelty: he follows what is revealed to him, and the Scripture confirms that of Moussa. To reject what is not new, or to wait for something other than what comes, is to mistake the wind of punishment for a rain cloud.

SURA 47 · محمد · MUHAMMAD

# Locks Upon the Cores

> Everything is played out between following falsehood and following the truth: God renders the deeds of some astray and sets right the condition of others. The sura asks why some draw nothing from it: do they not reflect upon the Recitation, or are there locks upon their cores?

## READING

The division is set at once. Those who disown and turn people away from the path of God, "He renders their deeds astray." (47:1); those who have believed, "He covers their bad deeds and sets right their condition." (47:2). The reason: "those who disown follow falsehood, while those who believe follow the truth from their Guardian." (47:3).

The encounter in combat is regulated: "multiply the captives." (47:4), then "either grace freely, or exchange of captives, until the war lays down its burdens." (47:4). God could take vengeance Himself, "but [He does otherwise] so as to test some of you by means of others." (47:4). "if you help God, He will help you and make firm your feet." (47:7). Those who disown, for their part, "enjoy themselves and eat as cattle eat" (47:12).

Some listen to the messenger without retaining anything; once outside, they ask: "What did he say just now?" (47:16). Those in whose core is a sickness falter as soon as fighting is mentioned (47:20). The question falls: "Do they not then reflect deeply upon the Recitation, or are there locks upon their cores?" (47:24). Those who turned back, "it is the Diverter who enticed them" (47:25), "and [God] granted them a delay." (47:25). The messenger will know them "by the tone of their speech." (47:30).

The end calls for steadfastness: "So do not weaken and call for peace, while you are the most exalted, and God is with you" (47:35). "This present life is but play and distraction." (47:36). Spending is asked, and the stingy is stingy only

against himself: "And God is Self-Sufficient, while you are the poor." (47:38). If they turn away, "He will replace you with another people who will not be like you." (47:38).

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 47:24**

أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ ٱلْقُرْءَانَ أَمْ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَالُهَآ

"*Do they not then reflect deeply upon the Recitation, or are there locks upon their cores*"

The question that gives this reading its name.

**EXAMPLE 47:7**

إِن تَنصُرُواْ ٱللَّهَ يَنصُرْكُمْ

"*if you help God, He will help you*"

The same rule as in 22:40.

**EXAMPLE 47:38**

وَأَنتُمُ ٱلْفُقَرَآءُ

"*while you are the poor*"

Facing it: God, Self-Sufficient.

### READ WITH

- 22:40: helping God, being helped by Him.
- 13:35: the example of the promised Garden.
- 4:82: the same invitation to reflect upon the Recitation.
- 2:264: do not render your alms vain.
- 57:20: the present life, play and distraction.
- Every order to fight has its cause and its limit: every order to fight is framed by its cause.

**IN BRIEF**

Following falsehood renders deeds astray, following the truth sets the condition right. The Recitation is to be reflected upon: whoever hears it and retains nothing has a lock upon the core; and God, Self-Sufficient, can replace them with another people.

SURA 48 · الفتح · AL-FATH

# The Hand Above Their Hands

> Victory comes from God and is received in the core: tranquility descends on those who pledge allegiance, while those who stay behind say with their tongues what is not in their cores. The sura closes on a seed that stands upon its stalk.

## READING

"We have granted you a manifest victory" (48:1): the sura opens on a gift and on its purpose, "so that God may forgive you your past and future wrongs" (48:2). "It is He who sent down tranquility into the cores of the believers, so that they might add faith to their faith." (48:4). Facing them, the hypocrites and the associators, "who form an evil conjecture about God." (48:6).

The messenger is sent "as a witness, a bearer of good news, and a warner" (48:8). To pledge allegiance to the messenger is to pledge it to God: "The hand of God is above their hands." (48:10). "Whoever breaks [this pledge] breaks it only to his own detriment." (48:10). The notables who stayed behind excuse themselves by their goods and families; "They say with their tongues what is not in their cores." (48:11). They had conjectured "that the messenger and the believers would never return to their own people" (48:12), and now want to follow for the spoils: "They want to change the word of God." (48:15).

"God was certainly satisfied with the believers when they pledged allegiance to you beneath the tree; He knew what was in their cores" (48:18). He held back the hands of both camps "in the hollow of Makka" (48:24), because of believing men and women who were not known (48:25). When those who disowned placed in their cores "the zeal of the age of ignorance." (48:26), God "bound them to the word of guardedness" (48:26).

"God has certainly made the vision of His messenger come true, in very truth" (48:27). The Law of truth is sent "so as to make it prevail over every [other] law." (48:28). The sura closes on those who are with Muhammad, "firm toward

those who disown, benevolent among themselves." (48:29), and on their image in the Injil, "that of a seed that puts forth its shoot, strengthens it, and it thickens and stands straight upon its stalk" (48:29).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 48:10**

يَدُ ٱللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ

*"The hand of God is above their hands"*
Allegiance to the messenger is allegiance to God.

**EXAMPLE 48:11**

يَقُولُونَ بِأَلْسِنَتِهِم مَّا لَيْسَ فِى قُلُوبِهِمْ

*"They say with their tongues what is not in their cores"*
The tongue against the core.

**EXAMPLE 48:26**

حَمِيَّةَ ٱلْجَٰهِلِيَّةِ

*"the zeal of the age of ignorance"*
Facing it, the word of guardedness (48:26).

## READ WITH

- 9:33 and 61:9: the Law of truth, to make it prevail.
- 9:40: tranquility sent down upon the messenger.
- 5:119: God satisfied with them, and they satisfied with Him.
- 3:154: the conjecture of the age of ignorance.
- 22:25: those who bar from the inviolable place of prostration.
- 33:62 and 35:43: God's norm, without change.

**IN BRIEF**

Victory is a gift, and allegiance given to the messenger is given to God. Everything is played out in the core: tranquility for some, evil conjecture for others; the community grows like a seed.

SURA 49 · الحجرات · AL-HUJURAT

# Distinguish Clearly

> A community of believers holds together through restraint, through verifying what is reported, through reconciliation and mutual respect. The most noble is not the best born but the most guarded, and faith is not declared: it enters the core.

## READING

The sura opens on a series of calls "O you who have believed!". The first: "do not put yourselves before God and His messenger." (49:1). Then the voice: "do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet" (49:2), "lest your deeds collapse without your realizing it." (49:2). Those who lower their voices "are those whose cores God has examined for guardedness." (49:3).

Reported speech is to be verified: "if an overstepper brings you news, distinguish clearly, lest you harm a people out of ignorance" (49:6). If two groups of believers fight, they are reconciled; if one commits aggression against the other, "fight the one that commits aggression until it returns to the command of God." (49:9), then "reconcile between them with justice, and be equitable." (49:9). The reason follows at once: "The believers are but brothers" (49:10).

Mutual respect follows from it: "let not a people mock [another] people: it may be that they are better than them" (49:11). "avoid much conjecture." (49:12); "And do not spy." (49:12). Backbiting someone absent amounts to wishing to "eat the flesh of his dead brother" (49:12).

Then the call widens to all: "O mankind! We created you from a male and a female, and made you into peoples and tribes, so that you may recognize one another." (49:13). The measure is neither people nor tribe: "The most noble of you, with God, is the most guarded." (49:13). The notables who claim to have believed are told to say rather that they have become true to God alone, "for faith has not yet entered your cores." (49:14). The believers are those who

believed, "then have not doubted, and have striven with their goods and their Selves in the way of God." (49:15).

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 49:6**

إِن جَآءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌۢ بِنَبَإٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوٓا۟

"*if an overstepper brings you news, distinguish clearly*"

Verify before harming anyone: the same instruction as in 4:94.

**EXAMPLE 49:10**

إِنَّمَا ٱلْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ

"*The believers are but brothers*"

The reason for reconciliation, given right after the order.

**EXAMPLE 49:13**

إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِندَ ٱللَّهِ أَتْقَىٰكُمْ

"*The most noble of you, with God, is the most guarded*"

Neither people nor tribe: nobility is measured by guardedness.

### READ WITH

- 4:94: distinguishing clearly, before harming anyone.
- 104:1: woe to every slanderer and disparager.
- 53:28: conjecture is no substitute for truth.
- 3:103: made brothers by the blessing of God.
- 42:39-40: defending oneself against aggression, then effacing and reconciling.
- Every order to fight has its cause and its limit: every order to fight is framed by its cause.

**IN BRIEF**

Verify before acting, reconcile with equity, neither mock nor spy: the believers are brothers. With God, the most noble is the most guarded, and faith is judged in the core, not in the declaration.

SURA 50 · ق · QAF

# Closer Than the Jugular Vein

> They marvel at the return after death. The answer: the earth revived by water shows the coming forth, and the Creator was not exhausted. He is closer to the human being than his jugular vein, and every word he speaks is recorded, until the day his veil is removed.

## READING

"By the glorious Recitation!" Those who disown marvel: "That return is far-fetched." (50:1-3). The answer begins with knowledge: "We know what the earth diminishes of them, and We have a record that keeps everything." (50:4). Then with a look: the sky built "without a single crack in it" (50:6), the earth spread out, the blessed water: "And by it We gave life to a dead land." (50:11). "Such will be the coming forth [from the earth]." (50:11).

The peoples before denied, and the threat proved true. "Were We then exhausted by the first creation?" (50:15).

Then nearness. "We know what his [own] Self whispers to him; and We are closer to him than the jugular vein." (50:16). Two receivers record: "He does not utter a word without an observer, ready [to record], being at his side." (50:18). Then the intoxication of death, then the Horn; every Self comes with a driver and a witness, and is told: "so We removed your veil, and your sight today is piercing." (50:22).

The Garden is brought near to whoever "feared the All-Benevolent without seeing Him and came with a core ever turning back [to God]" (50:33). The sura closes on patience, glorification, listening for the Caller, and an instruction to the messenger: "you are not a tyrant over them." (50:45). "So remind, by the Recitation, whoever fears My threat." (50:45).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 50:16**

وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ حَبْلِ ٱلْوَرِيدِ

"*We are closer to him than the jugular vein*"

Nearness, before the reckoning.

**EXAMPLE 50:18**

مَّا يَلْفِظُ مِن قَوْلٍ إِلَّا لَدَيْهِ رَقِيبٌ عَتِيدٌ

"*He does not utter a word without an observer*"

Every word is recorded.

**EXAMPLE 50:45**

وَمَآ أَنتَ عَلَيْهِم بِجَبَّارٍ

"*you are not a tyrant over them.*"

The messenger reminds; he does not compel.

## READ WITH

- 67:3: the sky without a fissure.
- 82:10-12: the guardians who write.
- 56:83-85: We are nearer to it than you.
- 88:21-22: a reminder, without compulsion.
- 114:4-5: the one who whispers in the chests.
- Oaths on feminine participles: "by those that ...": oaths on feminine participles.

**IN BRIEF**

The return is as simple for God as the first creation: the dead earth comes alive with water. He is closer to the human being than his jugular vein, every word is recorded, and the messenger reminds without compelling.

SURA 51 · الذاريات · ADH-DHARIYAT

# Flee to God

> The Retribution is as certain as the fact that you speak. The signs are on the earth and within yourselves; the peoples before all said the same thing to the messenger. So flee to God, who created humans only to obey Him.

## READING

Four oaths, and their object: "what you are promised is indeed true, and the Retribution will, in truth, fall." (51:5-6). May the conjecturers perish, "plunged in blindness, absent-minded" (51:11), who ask when the Day will come.

Those who guard themselves were doers of good: "They slept but little" (51:17), implored forgiveness in the last hours of the night, "And in their goods there was a due for the one who asks and the one who is deprived [without asking]." (51:19). The signs are everywhere: "And on the earth there are signs for those who have certainty" (51:20), "as well as within yourselves." (51:21). "Do you not then see?" (51:21). What is promised is true "just as it is true that you speak." (51:23).

Then Ibrahim's guests, who announce to him "a knowledgeable boy" (51:28), then the people of Lut, Moussa and Fir'awn, the Recidivists, the Depleters, the people of Nuh. The sky is built with might, the earth spread out, "And of every thing, We created a pair, so that you may remember." (51:49). Hence the call: "So flee to God: I am to you, from Him, a clear warner." (51:50).

Every generation said the same thing to the messenger: "A worker of illusion, or a deranged one." (51:52). "Have they enjoined it upon one another?" (51:53). The reason for creation is given: "I did not create the Occulted and mankind except to obey Me." (51:56). He wants from them neither provision nor food: "God is, indeed, the Provider" (51:58).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 51:23**

إِنَّهُۥ لَحَقٌّ مِّثْلَ مَآ أَنَّكُمْ تَنطِقُونَ

"*it is indeed the truth, just as it is true that you speak*"
A certainty as simple as speech.

**EXAMPLE 51:50**

فَفِرُّوٓاْ إِلَى ٱللَّهِ

"*So flee to God*"
One flees toward Him, not away from Him.

**EXAMPLE 51:56**

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ ٱلْجِنَّ وَٱلْإِنسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

"*I did not create the Occulted and mankind except to obey Me.*"
The reason for creation, in one sentence.

## READ WITH

- 70:24-25: the known right for the one who asks and the deprived.
- 15:51-62 and 11:69-83: Ibrahim's guests, in longer accounts.
- 103:3 and 90:17: enjoining one another.
- 52:29 and 54:9: the messenger called deranged.
- Oaths on feminine participles: "by those that ...": oaths on feminine participles.
- The imprecation « قُتِلَ »: "May ... perish!": "May ... perish!".

**IN BRIEF**

What is promised is as true as the words you speak; the signs are outside and within. The generations repeat the same accusation as if they had handed it on; the human being was created to obey the One who needs nothing.

SURA 52 · الطور · AT-TUR

# Unanswered Questions

> The punishment of the Guardian will fall; nothing can repel it. Those who guard themselves remember their past apprehension. Then fifteen questions in "Or …?" undo the opponents' claims one by one; none of them receives an answer.

## READING

Five oaths: the Mount, a written record, the Frequented House, the raised canopy, the sea set aboil; "The punishment of your Guardian will, indeed, fall" (52:7), "nothing can repel it." (52:8). The deniers are pushed toward the fire: "Is this, then, an illusion, or do you not see?" (52:15).

Those who guard themselves are "in gardens and bliss" (52:17). Their descendants join them, and the rule remains: "Every person is a pledge for what they have earned." (52:21). They remember: "We were before, among our own, filled with apprehension" (52:26), and God protected them.

Then the series. "Or do they say: 'He invented it'?" (52:33) — the answer: "Let them then produce a discourse like it, if they are truthful!" (52:34). "Or were they created out of nothing, or are they themselves the creators?" (52:35). "Or do they possess the treasuries of your Guardian, or are they the ones who compel?" (52:37). "Or do they have another deity besides God?" (52:43). Each question awaits an answer no one can give.

Their scheme will avail them nothing (52:46). To the messenger: "Be patient with the judgment of your Guardian: you are, indeed, under Our eyes." (52:48), and glorify Him when you arise, at night, and "at the fading of the stars." (52:49).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 52:34**

فَلْيَأْتُوا۟ بِحَدِيثٍ مِّثْلِهِۦٓ

*"Let them then produce a discourse like it, if they are truthful!"*

The answer to "he invented it".

**EXAMPLE 52:35**

أَمْ خُلِقُوا۟ مِنْ غَيْرِ شَىْءٍ أَمْ هُمُ ٱلْخَٰلِقُونَ

*"Or were they created out of nothing, or are they themselves the creators?"*

A question with no possible answer.

**EXAMPLE 52:26**

إِنَّا كُنَّا قَبْلُ فِىٓ أَهْلِنَا مُشْفِقِينَ

*"We were before, among our own, filled with apprehension"*

Those who guard themselves remember their fear.

## READ WITH

- 77:15: the same "woe, that Day, to the deniers".
- 74:38: every Self a pledge.
- 68:37-47: another series in "Or ...?".
- 68:48 and 76:24: patience with the judgment of the Guardian.
- The series in أم: "Or ... ?": the series in "Or ...?".
- The refrain "Woe, that Day, to the deniers!": the refrain of woe.

**IN BRIEF**

The punishment is certain, and the opponents have no hold to escape it: each question sends them back to what they cannot claim. Each remains a pledge for what he has earned; the messenger is under the eyes of his Guardian.

SURA 53 · النجم · AN-NAJM

# Vision and Conjecture

> The messenger does not speak from emotion: he saw, and his gaze did not swerve. His opponents follow nothing but conjecture and what their Selves desire. The human being will have nothing but what he strove for, and no one will bear another's burden.

## READING

"By the star when it sets: your companion has not strayed, nor has he been misled. He does not speak from emotion" (53:1-3). What he says comes from a vision: "The Conscience did not lie about what it saw." (53:11); near the Lote Tree of the Utmost Boundary, "The gaze did not turn aside, nor did it exceed the measure." (53:17).

Facing this, Al-Lat, Al-Uzza and Manat: "They are nothing but attributes you have named, you and your forefathers; God has sent down no authority for them." (53:23). The text names the source: "They follow nothing but conjecture, and what the Selves desire." (53:23). And its limit: "And conjecture does not avail at all against the truth." (53:28). On one side a verified vision, on the other a desire passing itself off as knowledge.

Then a rule for all: "So do not claim yourselves to be pure." (53:32); "He knows best who has guarded himself." (53:32). The one who gave a little and then stopped is referred to the scrolls of Moussa and Ibrahim: "that no bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another" (53:38), "and that the human being will have nothing but what he strove for" (53:39), "and that his effort will soon be shown" (53:40).

A series of "and that" follows: it is He who causes laughter and weeping, death and life, who created the pair from a drop, "and that upon Him rests the other genesis" (53:47). The sura closes on the Imminent drawing near, and on an instruction: "So prostrate to God, and obey [Him]." (53:62).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 53:17**

مَا زَاغَ ٱلْبَصَرُ وَمَا طَغَىٰ

"*The gaze did not turn aside, nor did it exceed the measure.*"
A verified vision.

**EXAMPLE 53:23**

إِن يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا ٱلظَّنَّ وَمَا تَهْوَى ٱلْأَنفُسُ

"*They follow nothing but conjecture, and what the Selves desire.*"
Facing it, a desire passing itself off as knowledge.

**EXAMPLE 53:39**

وَأَن لَّيْسَ لِلْإِنسَٰنِ إِلَّا مَا سَعَىٰ

"*and that the human being will have nothing but what he strove for*"
What the former scrolls already said.

## READ WITH

- 87:18-19: the scrolls of Ibrahim and Moussa.
- 39:7 and 6:164: no bearer of burdens will bear another's burden.
- 10:36: conjecture does not avail against the truth.
- 12:40: attributes you have named.
- 79:44: to your Guardian is its final boundary.
- Sura 72: the speech of the Occulted and the revealed speech: the series of "and that".

**IN BRIEF**

The messenger saw, and his gaze did not swerve; his opponents follow conjecture and desire. No one declares himself pure, no one bears another's burden: each has nothing but what he strove for.

SURA 54 · القمر · AL-QAMAR

# The Recitation Made Easy

> Five peoples, each in a few verses, and two refrains. One says the warning came true: "So how were My punishment and My warnings?" The other, that it is still offered: "We have indeed made the Recitation easy for remembrance: is there then anyone to take heed?"

## READING

"The Hour has drawn near, and the moon has split." (54:1). They see a sign and turn away; "They denied, and followed their emotions." (54:3). Yet they received "a consummate wisdom" (54:5); "but of what avail are warnings [to them]?" (54:5).

Five accounts follow. The people of Nuh call the messenger deranged; he calls out: "I am overpowered, so grant [me] help." (54:10), and the waters meet "according to a matter already decreed." (54:12). The Recidivists, swept away by an icy wind. The Depleters, who refuse to follow "a single human from among us" (54:24) and hamstring the she-camel. The people of Lut, of whom only the family is saved: "Thus do We recompense whoever is grateful." (54:35). The clan of Fir'awn, who "denied all Our signs" (54:42).

Each account closes on two refrains. The first looks to the past: "So how were My punishment and My warnings?" (54:16). The second addresses the listener: "We have indeed made the Recitation easy for remembrance: is there then anyone to take heed?" (54:17). The first states, the second still offers.

Then the question turns to the listeners: "Are those of you who disown better than those" (54:43)? "We have indeed created every thing according to a measure." (54:49); "And everything, small or great, is inscribed." (54:53). The sura closes on those who guard themselves: "in a seat of truth, near a Sovereign, Capable." (54:55).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 54:16**

فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عَذَابِي وَنُذُرِ

"*So how were My punishment and My warnings?*"
The refrain that looks to the past.

**EXAMPLE 54:17**

وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا ٱلْقُرْءَانَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِن مُّدَّكِرٍ

"*made the Recitation easy for remembrance: is there then anyone to take heed?*"
The refrain that still offers.

**EXAMPLE 54:49**

إِنَّا كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْنَٰهُ بِقَدَرٍ

"*We have indeed created every thing according to a measure.*"
The measure, before the record.

## READ WITH

- 11:25-49, 11:50-60, 11:61-68, 11:77-83: the same peoples, in longer accounts.
- 69:6-7 and 41:16: the icy wind.
- 91:14: the she-camel hamstrung.
- 68:43 and 70:44: the humbled eyes.
- RD-23: the same Arabic, the same translation.
- The refrain divides the sura into stanzas: the refrain divides the sura into stanzas.

**IN BRIEF**

The warning came true for five peoples, and it is still offered: the Recitation was made easy for whoever wants to take heed. Every thing is created according to a measure, and all that is done is inscribed.

SURA 55 · الرحمن · AR-RAHMAN

# Which of the Blessings?

> Thirty-one times, the same question to humans and the Occulted: "Which then of your Guardian's blessings do you both deny?" It follows the Recitation, the balance, the two seas, the pearl; it also follows the warning, which is itself a blessing.

## READING

"The All-Benevolent taught the Recitation." (55:1-2). "He created the human being, He taught him clear expression." (55:3-4). The sun and the moon follow a reckoning; the sky is raised, and the balance set up: "so that you would not exceed the measure in the balance: maintain the weight with equity and do not cause loss to the balance." (55:8-9). The word balance returns three times in two verses.

Then, after each blessing, the question: "Which then of your Guardian's blessings do you both deny?" (55:13). It follows the earth and its fruits, the creation of humans and the Occulted, the two seas: "between them a barrier they do not cross." (55:20), the pearl and the coral, the ships.

It also follows what does not look like a blessing. "Everything upon it is perishing, and only the Face of your Guardian remains" (55:26-27). "O assembly of the Occulted and humans, if you are able to pass beyond the confines of the heavens and the earth, then pass beyond them." (55:33). The severed "will be seized by their forelocks and their feet." (55:41). Even the warning is a blessing: the question returns after it.

"And for whoever feared standing before his Guardian, two gardens" (55:46), then two more. In the middle, the rule: "Is the recompense of good conduct anything but good conduct?" (55:60). The sura closes as it opened, on the name: "Blessed be the name of your Guardian, holder of majesty and nobility." (55:78).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 55:13**

فَبِأَيِّ ءَالَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ

"*Which then of your Guardian's blessings do you both deny?*"
Thirty-one times, after each blessing.

**EXAMPLE 55:9**

وَلَا تُخْسِرُوا۟ ٱلْمِيزَانَ

"*do not cause loss to the balance*"
The balance, three times in two verses.

**EXAMPLE 55:60**

هَلْ جَزَآءُ ٱلْإِحْسَٰنِ إِلَّا ٱلْإِحْسَٰنُ

"*Is the recompense of good conduct anything but good conduct?*"
The rule, in the midst of the gardens.

## READ WITH

- 83:1-3: those who cause loss to the measure.
- 57:25: the balance sent down for equity.
- 79:40-41 and 89:27-30: fearing to stand before one's Guardian.
- 53:55: which of the blessings do you doubt?
- The refrain divides the sura into stanzas: the refrain divides the sura into stanzas.
- The refrain that turns warning into a blessing: the refrain that makes the warning a blessing.

**IN BRIEF**

Everything the human being receives is a blessing, even the warning; denying it is the one impossible answer. The recompense of good conduct is nothing but good conduct.

SURA 56 · الواقعة · AL-WAQI'A

# Is It You, or Is It We?

> The Event sorts human beings into three groups: the foremost, the right, the left. For those who doubt being resurrected, four questions of the same form: the seed, the crop, the water, the fire — is it you who make them, or We?

## READING

"When the Event occurs, none will be able to deny its coming." (56:1-2). It will abase some, exalt others, and divide human beings into three categories (56:7). The foremost are "the ones brought near, in the gardens of bliss." (56:11-12). The companions of the right are among "thornless lote trees" and "extended shade" (56:28-30). The companions of the left are "In scorching wind, and boiling water, and a shade of black smoke" (56:42-43).

What the latter used to do is stated: "Indeed, they were before that among the privileged." (56:45); "And they used to persist in the great perjury." (56:46). And they doubted: shall we be resurrected, we and our earliest forefathers? (56:47-48).

The answer takes the form of four questions. The seed: "Is it you who create it, or are We the Creator?" (56:58-59). The crop: "Is it you who sow it, or are We the Sower?" (56:63-64). The water: "Is it you who sent it down from the clouds, or are We the Sender?" (56:68-69). The fire: "Is it you who brought its tree into being, or are We the One who brings it into being?" (56:71-72). The link with the doubt is explicit: "And you have already known the first genesis." (56:62) — "So why do you not remember?" (56:62).

Then an oath by the positions of the stars: "it is a noble Recitation, in a well-guarded scripture" (56:77-78). At the last breath, no one can bring the soul back (56:83-87); the three groups receive what is theirs. "Indeed, this is the truth of certainty." (56:95). "So glorify in the name of your Guardian, the Immense." (56:96).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 56:59**

ءَأَنتُمْ تَخْلُقُونَهُۥٓ أَمْ نَحْنُ ٱلْخَٰلِقُونَ

"*Is it you who create it, or are We the Creator?*"
The first of the four questions.

**EXAMPLE 56:62**

وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمُ ٱلنَّشْأَةَ ٱلْأُولَىٰ

"*And you have already known the first genesis.*"
The first genesis answers the doubt about the second.

**EXAMPLE 56:95**

إِنَّ هَٰذَا لَهُوَ حَقُّ ٱلْيَقِينِ

"*Indeed, this is the truth of certainty.*"
The same formula as 69:51.

## READ WITH

- 90:18-19: the right side and the left side.
- 53:46-47: the drop, and the other genesis.
- 69:51-52: the truth of certainty, the same glorification.
- 37:16-17: the same question about the forefathers.
- "Is it you who … or are We …?": the same root on both sides: "Is it you who … or are We …?".
- Affirming as true, the opposite of denying: affirming, the opposite of denying.

**IN BRIEF**

The Event sorts by deeds. To whoever doubts the second birth, the sura shows the first: the seed, the crop, the water and the fire do not come from you. So why do you not remember?

SURA 57 · الحديد · AL-HADID

# What You Hold in Trust

> Wealth does not belong to the one who holds it: he is its trustee, and the inheritance of the heavens and the earth belongs to God. The present life is vegetation that delights, then yellows. The Scripture, the balance and iron were sent down so that people may maintain equity.

## READING

"He is the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden." (57:3); "And He is with you wherever you are." (57:4). Hence an instruction: "Believe in God and His messenger, and spend from that which He has made you trustees of." (57:7). And a question: "what is [the matter] with you that you do not spend in the way of God, while to God belongs the inheritance of the heavens and the earth?" (57:10). Whoever spends lends God a goodly loan, which God multiplies (57:11).

On the Day, the believers' light runs before them. The hypocrites ask: "Wait for us that we may borrow from your light." (57:13). A wall rises; they call: "Were we not with you?" (57:14), and the answer names their deeds: "you put yourselves to trial, and awaited, and doubted" (57:14). To the believers, the question: "Has the time not come for those who believe that their cores should become humble at the remembrance of God" (57:16), before they harden like those before.

The present life is described: "play, distraction, adornment, mutual boasting among you, and rivalry in accumulation of goods and children" (57:20), like vegetation that delights, yellows and becomes debris. Every calamity is already in a register, "so that you do not lament for what has escaped you, nor exult [excessively] over what He has given you." (57:23). God does not love "Those who are stingy and enjoin stinginess upon people." (57:24).

Then the reason for the messengers: God "sent down with them the Scripture and the balance that people may maintain equity." (57:25), and iron, "in which is great strength and benefits for the people." (57:25). The sura closes on favor: "[all] favor is in the hand of God, which He gives to whom He wills." (57:29).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 57:7**

وَأَنفِقُواْ مِمَّا جَعَلَكُم مُّسْتَخْلَفِينَ فِيهِ

"*spend from that which He has made you trustees of*"
Wealth is entrusted, not owned.

**EXAMPLE 57:23**

لِّكَيْلَا تَأْسَوْاْ عَلَىٰ مَا فَاتَكُمْ

"*so that you do not lament for what has escaped you*"
Knowing all is recorded frees from regret.

**EXAMPLE 57:25**

لِيَقُومَ ٱلنَّاسُ بِٱلْقِسْطِ

"*that people may maintain equity*"
The reason for the Scripture and the balance.

## READ WITH

- 2:245: the goodly loan.
- 66:8: the believers' light running before them.
- 102:1: the race for accumulation.
- 4:37: being stingy and enjoining stinginess.
- 55:7-9: the balance set up.
- "Has glorified" and "glorifies": the aspect of the openings in سبّح: "has glorified" and "glorifies".
- Wealth is a trust: wealth is a trust.

**IN BRIEF**

What one holds, one holds in trust: the inheritance belongs to God. The present life delights and then yellows; the balance and the Scripture were sent down for equity, and favor stays in the hand of God.

SURA 58 · المجادلة · AL-MUJADALA

# God Has Heard

> A woman argues with the messenger and complains to God: God has heard. No word escapes Him, even spoken low: there is no secret talk among three but He is their fourth. The sura closes on two parties, that of the Diverter and that of God.

## READING

"God has certainly heard the words of the one who argues with you about her husband and complains to God; and God hears your exchange." (58:1). Her husband pronounced the exclusion formula, which likens a wife to a mother: "they are not their mothers." (58:2), and it is "a disavowed and false word" (58:2). It is atoned for in steps: freeing a person from debt, otherwise abstaining two months, otherwise feeding "sixty destitute people." (58:4).

Then secret speech. "There is no secret talk among three but He is their fourth, nor among five but He is their sixth" (58:7). Secret talk is not bad in itself: it becomes so by its object. Do not hold it "in transgression, hostility, and disobedience to the messenger." (58:9); "But hold secret talk in virtue and guardedness." (58:9). Even a private consultation with the messenger is preceded by alms (58:12).

Facing them, those who ally themselves with a people with whom God is angry "swear to falsehood knowingly." (58:14). "They have taken their oaths as a shield" (58:16), and on the day God resurrects them, "they will swear to Him as they swear to you" (58:18). "The Diverter has taken hold of them and made them forget the remembrance of God." (58:19).

Two almost identical sentences close the sura: "Indeed, the party of the Diverter — they are the losers." (58:19); "Indeed, the party of God — they are the successful." (58:22). One does not belong to the second while loving those who set themselves against God, "even if they be their fathers, their sons, their brothers, or their clan." (58:22).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 58:1**

قَدْ سَمِعَ ٱللَّهُ قَوْلَ ٱلَّتِى تُجَٰدِلُكَ

*"God has certainly heard the words of the one who argues with you"*

The sura opens on a word that was heard.

**EXAMPLE 58:7**

مَا يَكُونُ مِن نَّجْوَىٰ ثَلَٰثَةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ رَابِعُهُمْ

*"There is no secret talk among three but He is their fourth"*

No word is entirely secret.

**EXAMPLE 58:22**

أَلَآ إِنَّ حِزْبَ ٱللَّهِ هُمُ ٱلْمُفْلِحُونَ

*"Indeed, the party of God — they are the successful."*

The same sentence as 58:19, two words changed.

## READ WITH

- 33:4: the exclusion formula, and mothers.
- 63:2: oaths as a shield.
- 60:1-4 and 60:13: not taking as allies those who fight.
- 4:114: secret talk that does good.
- « أَلَمْ تَرَ »: "Have you not seen": "Have you not seen".
- A formula that returns with a single word changed: a formula that recurs with a single word changed.

**IN BRIEF**

God hears every word, even whispered. Secret talk is worth what its object is worth; oaths do not protect; two parties face each other, and the word that changes between two sentences says which loses and which succeeds.

SURA 59 · الحشر · AL-HASHR

# The Vain Strongholds

> They thought their strongholds would protect them from God; God came upon them from where they did not expect. What is restored to the messenger does not circulate among the wealthy. Facing those who welcome and prefer others over themselves, hypocrites who promise and do not keep their word.

## READING

"It is He who expelled from their homes those who, among the People of the Scripture, disowned" (59:2). No one expected it, not even they: "And they thought their strongholds would protect them from God." (59:2); "But God came upon them from where they did not expect." (59:2). "They destroyed their houses with their own hands and the hands of the believers." (59:2). "So take heed, O possessors of sight." (59:2).

What God restored to His messenger without fighting has its recipients: relatives, orphans, the destitute, the traveler, "so that it does not circulate among the wealthy among you." (59:7). It also goes "for the poor emigrants who were expelled from their homes and goods" (59:8). Those who welcomed them "find in their chests no need for what they were given, and prefer them over themselves, even if they themselves suffer privation." (59:9). Those who come after ask: "put no rancor in our cores toward those who believe." (59:10).

Facing them, those who practiced hypocrisy promise their allies to leave and fight with them; "And God testifies that they are indeed liars." (59:11). They will fight only "entrenched in fortified towns or behind walls" (59:14): "You think them united, while their cores are divided." (59:14). Their model is the Diverter, who says to the human being "Disown!" and then, once it is done, declares himself clear of him (59:16).

The sura then turns to the believers: "let every Self consider what it has prepared for tomorrow." (59:18). "Had We sent down this Recitation upon a

mountain, you would have seen it humbled, split apart out of fear of God." (59:21). It closes on the attributes: "To Him belong the most beautiful attributes." (59:24).

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 59:2**

وَظَنُّوٓاْ أَنَّهُم مَّانِعَتُهُمْ حُصُونُهُم مِّنَ ٱللَّهِ

"*they thought their strongholds would protect them from God*"
A protection that does not protect.

**EXAMPLE 59:7**

كَيْ لَا يَكُونَ دُولَةَۢ بَيْنَ ٱلْأَغْنِيَآءِ مِنكُمْ

"*so that it does not circulate among the wealthy among you*"
The reason for the sharing, given by the text.

**EXAMPLE 59:9**

وَيُؤْثِرُونَ عَلَىٰٓ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ

"*prefer them over themselves, even if they themselves suffer privation*"
The opposite of the Self's avarice (59:9).

### READ WITH

- 33:26: other People of the Scripture brought down from their fortresses.
- 8:41: the share of the messenger, relatives, orphans, the destitute.
- 64:16: protected from the avarice of his Self.
- 8:48 and 14:22: the Diverter declaring himself clear of those he pushed.
- 60:4: Ibrahim declares himself clear of his people, out of faithfulness.
- "Has glorified" and "glorifies": the aspect of the openings in سبّح: "has glorified" and "glorifies".
- "That is because they are a people who do not ...": a faculty named: a people who do not understand, who do not reason.

**IN BRIEF**

Nothing protects from God, not even a stronghold. The wealth restored to the messenger goes to those in need, so as not to circulate among the rich; those who welcome prefer others over themselves, the hypocrites promise and do not keep their word.

SURA 60 · الممتحنة · AL-MUMTAHANA

# The Boundary of Alliance

> The enemy is not the one who believes otherwise, but the one who fights and expels. Beneficence and equity are never forbidden; only alliance with the aggressor is. Ibrahim is the model, with a limit.

## READING

The sura opens on a prohibition: "Do not take My enemy and your enemy as allies" (60:1). The enemy is defined by deeds: they "have disowned the truth that has come to you" and drive out the messenger and the believers "because you believe in God, your Guardian." (60:1). Confiding affection in secret deceives no one: "I know best what you have concealed and what you have revealed." (60:1). On the Day of Appearance, neither kinship nor children will benefit (60:3).

Ibrahim is the model: "You have had a good example in Ibrahim and those with him" (60:4), who disowned their people until they believed in God alone. The model has its limit, named in the same verse: "except the saying of Ibrahim to his father: I will surely ask forgiveness for you" (60:4).

Hostility is not an end: "It may be that God will place affection between you and those you have held as enemies among them" (60:7). Then the rule, in two verses. What is permitted: "God does not forbid you from being virtuous and equitable toward those who did not fight you concerning the Law and did not expel you from your homes." (60:8). What is forbidden, and that alone: taking as allies "those who fought you concerning the Law, expelled you from your homes, and supported your expulsion." (60:9).

The believing women who emigrate are examined; "God knows best their faith." (60:10). If they are known to believe, they are not sent back, and expenses are returned on both sides. Their pledge is a commitment to deeds: associating nothing with God, not stealing, not killing their children, not

bringing forth slander (60:12). The sura closes as it opened: "Do not take as allies a people with whom God is angry" (60:13).

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 60:8**

أَن تَبَرُّوهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوٓاْ إِلَيْهِمْ

*"from being virtuous and equitable toward those who did not fight you"*
What is never forbidden.

**EXAMPLE 60:9**

إِنَّمَا يَنْهَىٰكُمُ ٱللَّهُ عَنِ ٱلَّذِينَ قَٰتَلُوكُمْ

*"God only forbids you from taking as allies those who fought you"*
The prohibition, and that alone.

**EXAMPLE 60:4**

إِلَّا قَوْلَ إِبْرَٰهِيمَ لِأَبِيهِ لَأَسْتَغْفِرَنَّ لَكَ

*"except the saying of Ibrahim to his father: I will surely ask forgiveness for you"*
The limit of the model, in the same verse.

### READ WITH

- 9:114: Ibrahim's request for forgiveness for his father, and its end.
- 41:34: repel with what is better, and the enemy becomes a friend.
- 2:190 and 4:90: fighting those who fight, without transgressing.
- 48:10: the pledge of allegiance.
- The verb ألقى إلى: "offer", على for "cast": offering affection.
- The verb تَوَلَّىٰ: turning away, or taking as an ally: turning away, or taking as ally.
- The model and its limit: the model and its limit.

**IN BRIEF**

The prohibition concerns alliance with those who fight and expel, not virtue and equity toward others. The enemy is defined by deeds; and God can place affection where there was hostility.

SURA 61 · الصف · AS-SAFF

# Saying Without Doing

> "Why do you say what you do not do?" Moussa is troubled by a people who know he is a messenger; Issa announces a messenger to come, and is called an illusion. The only trade that saves: believing, and striving with one's goods and one's Self.

## READING

The sura asks its question at the outset: "O you who have believed! Why do you say what you do not do?" (61:2). "It is greatly abhorrent to God that you say what you do not do." (61:3). The opposite image follows: "Indeed, God loves those who fight in His way in ranks, as if they were a compact structure." (61:4).

Two messengers bear witness. Moussa: "O my people, why do you trouble me, when you know that I am the messenger of God sent to you?" (61:5). Knowing and doing part ways, and the consequence follows: "So when they deviated, God caused their cores to deviate." (61:5). Issa: he confirms the Tawrah and announces "a messenger to come after me, whose attribute is: the most worthy of praise." (61:6). But faced with the proofs: "This is manifest illusion." (61:6).

"They want to extinguish the light of God with their mouths, but God perfects His light" (61:8). Then the offer: "Shall I guide you to a trade that will save you from a painful punishment?" (61:10). The trade is made of deeds: "You believe in God and His messenger, and strive in the way of God with your goods and your Selves" (61:11).

The sura closes on a call that answers the opening: "Be helpers of God" (61:14). The disciples of Issa said: "We are the helpers of God." (61:14); a group believed, another disowned, and those who believed "became dominant." (61:14).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 61:2**

لِمَ تَقُولُونَ مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ

*"Why do you say what you do not do?"*
The question that opens the sura.

**EXAMPLE 61:5**

وَقَد تَّعْلَمُونَ أَنِّى رَسُولُ ٱللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ

*"when you know that I am the messenger of God sent to you"*
Knowing, and not acting.

**EXAMPLE 61:10**

هَلْ أَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ تِجَٰرَةٍ

*"Shall I guide you to a trade"*
A trade made of deeds.

## READ WITH

- 2:44: enjoining goodness on people and forgetting oneself.
- 7:157: the messenger announced in the Tawrah and the Gospel.
- 9:32-33: extinguishing the light of God with mouths.
- 3:52 and 5:111: the disciples, helpers of God.
- 62:1: the neighboring sura, the same opening.
- "Has glorified" and "glorifies": the aspect of the openings in سبّح: "has glorified" and "glorifies".

**IN BRIEF**

Saying without doing is abhorrent to God. Moussa's people knew and did not act; the trade that saves is made of deeds: believing, and striving with one's goods and one's Self.

SURA 62 · الجمعة · AL-JUMU'A

# The Donkey Carrying Books

> A messenger is raised among people without Scripture, to purify and teach them. Those entrusted with the Tawrah who did not carry it are like a donkey carrying books. On the day of gathering, leave off selling for the remembrance of God; yet a trade passes, and people leave.

## READING

"Whatever is in the heavens and on the earth glorifies God, the Sovereign, the Most Holy, the All-Powerful, the Wise." (62:1). "It is He who raised among the people without Scripture a messenger from among themselves, reciting to them His signs, purifying them, and teaching them the Scripture and wisdom" (62:2). A favor God gives to whom He wills (62:4).

Then the image: "The example of those who were entrusted with the Tawrah, and then did not carry it, is like the example of a donkey carrying books." (62:5). The same verb says "entrust" and "carry": one can hold a text without carrying it. Those who claim to be "the allies of God, excluding other people" are challenged: "then wish for death, if you are truthful." (62:6). "But they will never wish for it, because of what their hands have prepared." (62:7). The death they flee will meet them (62:8).

Then an instruction: "When the call is made for the Contact, on this day of gathering, hasten to the remembrance of God and leave off selling." (62:9). Once the Contact is concluded, one may disperse and seek the favor of God (62:10). But the sura closes on what happens: "But when they saw a trade or a distraction, they dispersed toward it and left you standing." (62:11). "What is with God is better than distraction and than trade." (62:11).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 62:5**

حُمِّلُواْ ٱلتَّوۡرَىٰةَ ثُمَّ لَمۡ يَحۡمِلُوهَا

*"those who were entrusted with the Tawrah, and then did not carry it"*
The same verb for entrusting and carrying.

**EXAMPLE 62:9**

فَٱسۡعَوۡاْ إِلَىٰ ذِكۡرِ ٱللَّهِ وَذَرُواْ ٱلۡبَيۡعَ

*"hasten to the remembrance of God and leave off selling"*
The instruction of the day of gathering.

**EXAMPLE 62:11**

ٱنفَضُّوٓاْ إِلَيۡهَا وَتَرَكُوكَ قَآئِمٗا

*"they dispersed toward it and left you standing"*
What happens, despite the instruction.

## READ WITH

- 2:129 and 3:164: a messenger who recites, purifies and teaches.
- 7:176: another animal example, for the one who abandons the signs.
- 2:94-95: wishing for death.
- 24:37: men whom neither trade nor selling distracts.
- 61:1: the neighboring sura, the same opening.
- "Has glorified" and "glorifies": the aspect of the openings in سبّح: "has glorified" and "glorifies".

**IN BRIEF**

Receiving a text is not carrying it: the donkey carries books and draws nothing from them. On the day of gathering, the remembrance of God comes before selling; what is with God is better than trade.

SURA 63 · المنافقون · AL-MUNAFIQUN

# Oaths as a Shield

> The hypocrites testify that Muhammad is a messenger, and God testifies that they are liars. Their oaths are a shield, their appearance pleases, yet they are like propped-up pieces of wood. They want to cut off provisions; but the treasures of the heavens and the earth belong to God.

## READING

"When the hypocrites come to you, they say: We testify that you are indeed the messenger of God." (63:1). The verse answers in two steps: "And God knows that you are indeed His messenger." (63:1); "And God testifies that the hypocrites are surely liars." (63:1). What they say is true; it is their testimony that is false.

"They have taken their oaths as a shield" (63:2). Appearance deceives: "when you see them, their appearance pleases you" (63:4), but "they are like propped-up pieces of wood." (63:4). Their fear betrays them: "They think every shout is against them." (63:4).

Their deeds define them. Invited to ask forgiveness, they turn their heads aside. They say: "Do not spend on those who are with the messenger of God until they disperse." (63:7). But "to God belong the treasures of the heavens and the earth" (63:7). They also say that "the mightier will surely expel the more abased" (63:8); yet "to God belongs might, and to His messenger, and to the believers" (63:8).

The sura then turns to the believers: "Let not your goods or your children distract you from the remembrance of God." (63:9). Let them spend before death comes and one of them asks for a short delay to give charity: "But God will never delay a Self when its term has come." (63:11).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 63:1**

وَٱللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ إِنَّ ٱلْمُنَٰفِقِينَ لَكَٰذِبُونَ

*"And God testifies that the hypocrites are surely liars."*
The sentence is true, the testimony false.

**EXAMPLE 63:4**

كَأَنَّهُمْ خُشُبٌ مُّسَنَّدَةٌ

*"they are like propped-up pieces of wood"*
An appearance that cannot stand on its own.

**EXAMPLE 63:8**

وَلِلَّهِ ٱلْعِزَّةُ وَلِرَسُولِهِۦ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

*"But to God belongs might, and to His messenger, and to the believers"*
The answer to "the mightier will expel the more abased".

## READ WITH

- 2:8-9: saying "we believe" without believing.
- 9:80: asking forgiveness for them, or not.
- 4:139: might belongs to God.
- 64:15: goods and children, a trial.
- 23:99-100: asking for delay at death.
- The text defines by deeds: the text defines by deeds.

**IN BRIEF**

A true statement can be a false testimony: the hypocrites say what is so without believing it. Their oaths serve as a shield, their appearance pleases; their deeds reveal them: cutting off provisions, claiming to be the mightiest.

SURA 64 · التغابن · AT-TAGHABUN

# Who Was Deceived?

> The Day of Gathering is the Day of Mutual Deception: there it is seen who was deceived. Among spouses and children there may be an enemy; goods and children are but a trial. The one who succeeds is protected from the avarice of his own Self.

## READING

"Whatever is in the heavens and on the earth glorifies God." (64:1). "It is He who created you, and among you is one who disowns, and among you is a believer." (64:2). He knows what is concealed and what is revealed (64:4).

The peoples before received proofs and answered: "Shall humans guide us?" (64:6). Those who disown "claim that they will never be resurrected" (64:7); the answer: "Yes, by my Guardian, you will surely be resurrected" (64:7).

Then the name of the Day: "The Day He will gather you for the Day of Gathering — that is the Day of Mutual Deception." (64:9). On that day it is seen who gained and who lost in the exchange. Nothing happens by chance: "No calamity strikes except by the permission of God." (64:11), and "whoever believes in God — He guides his core" (64:11).

Deception can come from near at hand. "Indeed, among your spouses and your children is an enemy to you, so beware of them." (64:14); but the sura adds at once: "if you efface, overlook, and forgive — then indeed God is Most-Forgiving, Benevolent." (64:14). "Your goods and your children are but a trial" (64:15). Hence the instruction: guard yourselves as much as you can, listen, obey, spend; "And whoever is protected from the avarice of his Self — those are the ones who succeed." (64:16). A loan made to God is multiplied (64:17).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 64:9**

ذَٰلِكَ يَوْمُ ٱلتَّغَابُنِ

*"that is the Day of Mutual Deception."*
The day it is seen who lost in the exchange.

**EXAMPLE 64:14**

وَإِن تَعْفُواْ وَتَصْفَحُواْ وَتَغْفِرُواْ

*"if you efface, overlook, and forgive"*
Be wary, without ceasing to forgive.

**EXAMPLE 64:16**

وَمَن يُوقَ شُحَّ نَفْسِهِۦ

*"whoever is protected from the avarice of his Self"*
The nearest danger is within.

## READ WITH

- 63:9: let not goods and children distract.
- 8:28: goods and children, a trial.
- 59:9: protected from the avarice of his Self.
- 2:245 and 57:11: the good loan.
- 65:9: tasting the consequence of one's conduct.

**IN BRIEF**

On the Day of Gathering it is seen who was deceived. The trial passes through goods and children; it is crossed by forgiving, by spending, and by guarding against the avarice of one's own Self.

SURA 65 · الطلاق · AT-TALAQ

# Whoever Guards Himself

> The separation of a couple is set out step by step: the waiting period, housing, the recognized manner, two witnesses, taking charge of the child. After each measure the same promise returns: whoever guards himself toward God finds a way out and ease.

## READING

"When you divorce women, divorce them with regard to their prescribed waiting period, and count that period precisely." (65:1). They do not leave their homes during that time. "Those are the limits of God." (65:1). And a reason to wait: "You do not know: perhaps God will bring about, after that, a new turn of events." (65:1).

At the term, two ways, one manner: "retain them in a recognized manner or part from them in a recognized manner" (65:2), before two just witnesses. Then the promise: "And whoever guards himself toward God, He grants him a way out, and provides for him from where he does not expect." (65:2-3).

The waiting periods are specified, and the promise returns: "He makes his affair easy for him." (65:4); then again: "He covers his misdeeds and increases his reward." (65:5). Housing and spending follow: "House them where you yourselves dwell, according to your means" (65:6); if they take charge of the child, "give them their rewards, and consult together in a recognized manner." (65:6). Each according to what he has: "God does not burden a Self beyond what He has given it." (65:7), and "God will bring ease after hardship." (65:7).

The towns that defied the command of their Guardian tasted the consequence of their conduct (65:8-9). The sura closes on the command that descends: "God is the One who created seven heavens, and of the earth their like." (65:12). The same word that orders the heavens orders a separation between two people.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 65:2**

فَأَمْسِكُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ فَارِقُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ

*"retain them in a recognized manner or part from them in a recognized manner"*

Two outcomes, one manner.

**EXAMPLE 65:2-3**

يَجْعَل لَّهُۥ مَخْرَجًا وَيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ

*"He grants him a way out, and provides for him from where he does not expect."*

The promise that follows each measure.

**EXAMPLE 65:7**

سَيَجْعَلُ ٱللَّهُ بَعْدَ عُسْرٍ يُسْرًا

*"God will bring ease after hardship."*

For whoever spends according to his means.

## READ WITH

- 2:228-237: divorce, waiting periods and spending.
- 94:5-6: with hardship, ease.
- 2:286: God burdens no Self beyond its capacity.
- 67:3 and 71:15: seven heavens.
- The refrain "And whoever guards himself toward God, He ...": the refrain "And whoever guards himself toward God, He ...".

**IN BRIEF**

A separation happens within the limit and in a recognized manner: waiting period, housing, witnesses, spending according to means. Each measure carries its promise: for whoever guards himself, a way out, unexpected provision, ease.

SURA 66 · التحريم · AT-TAHRIM

# Four Women as Examples

> The Prophet forbids himself what God made lawful for him, and a confided secret is disclosed. Each must guard himself and his own. Four women serve as examples: being close to a just man does not save, being close to a tyrant does not doom.

## READING

The sura opens on a reproach: "O Prophet! Why do you forbid what God has made lawful for you, seeking the approval of your wives?" (66:1). "God has prescribed for you the release from your oaths" (66:2). A matter confided in secret is disclosed; "The All-Knowing, the Informed informed me." (66:3).

Then the believers: "Guard your Selves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is people and stones" (66:6). No excuse will count: "you are only being recompensed for what you used to do." (66:7). The door remains open: "Turn to God in sincere repentance." (66:8), and the believers' light "will run before them and on their right." (66:8).

Four examples follow. For those who disowned: the wife of Nuh and the wife of Lut. "they were under two of Our righteous obedient ones, yet they betrayed them, so those two were of no avail to them against God" (66:10). For those who believe: the wife of Fir'awn, who asks: "My Guardian, build for me, near You, a home in the Garden, and save me from Fir'awn and his doing" (66:11). And Maryam, "who protected her intimacy"; "She declared true the words of her Guardian and His scriptures" (66:12).

The four examples say the same thing in two ways: closeness to a just man does not save the one who betrays him, closeness to a tyrant does not doom the one who breaks away. Each answers for his own deeds.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 66:10**

فَخَانَتَاهُمَا فَلَمْ يُغْنِيَا عَنْهُمَا مِنَ ٱللَّهِ شَيْـًٔا

"*yet they betrayed them, so those two were of no avail to them against God*"
Closeness to a just man does not save.

**EXAMPLE 66:11**

وَنَجِّنِي مِن فِرْعَوْنَ وَعَمَلِهِۦ

"*save me from Fir'awn and his doing*"
Closeness to a tyrant does not doom.

**EXAMPLE 66:12**

وَصَدَّقَتْ بِكَلِمَٰتِ رَبِّهَا وَكُتُبِهِۦ

"*She declared true the words of her Guardian and His scriptures*"
Maryam, defined by what she did.

## READ WITH

- 5:87: not forbidding what God has made lawful.
- 2:24: a Fire whose fuel is people and stones.
- 57:12-13: the believers' light running before them.
- 11:40-46 and 11:81: Nuh's family and Lut's wife.
- 28:9: the wife of Fir'awn.
- 21:91 and 3:35-37: Maryam.
- The text defines by deeds: the text defines by deeds.

**IN BRIEF**

No one is saved or doomed by the person they live with: the wives of Nuh and Lut betrayed two just men, the wife of Fir'awn broke away from a tyrant, Maryam declared true the words of her Guardian. Each answers for his deeds.

SURA 67 · الملك · AL-MULK

# Return Your Gaze

> The One in whose hand is the dominion created death and life to test who acts best. The sura asks us to look: heavens without a fissure, a manageable earth, birds held up in the air. The people of the Inferno admit it: had they listened or reasoned, they would not be there.

## READING

"Blessed is He in whose hand is the dominion" (67:1), "who created death and life to test you: which of you acts best." (67:2). The sura first invites us to look: "You do not see in the creation of the All-Benevolent any disharmony." (67:3). Then it asks us to check: "Return your gaze: do you see any fissure?" (67:3), and twice more: "your gaze will return to you humbled and exhausted." (67:4).

Those who disowned their Guardian are thrown into the Fire. Questioned by its keepers, they admit that a warner came and that they denied, then: "If we had listened or reasoned, we would not be among the companions of the Inferno." (67:10). Facing them: "Those who fear their Guardian without seeing Him will have forgiveness and a great reward." (67:12). And the question: "Would He who created not know, while He is the Subtle, the Informed?" (67:14).

What holds things up is pointed out. "It is He who made the earth manageable for you" (67:15); but are you safe from its swallowing you, or from a storm of stones (67:16-17)? The birds: "Nothing holds them up except the All-Benevolent." (67:19). Then a series of questions: who would be an army for you, who would provide for you if He withheld His provision (67:20-21)? "Is he who walks fallen on his face better guided, or he who walks upright on a straight path?" (67:22).

The sura closes on the faculties and on water. "It is He who brought you into being and gave you hearing, sight, and Consciences." (67:23). And the last

question: "if your water were to sink into the ground, who then would bring you spring water?" (67:30).

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 67:3**

فَٱرْجِعِ ٱلْبَصَرَ هَلْ تَرَىٰ مِن فُطُورٍ

"*Return your gaze: do you see any fissure?*"

An invitation to check, not to believe without seeing.

**EXAMPLE 67:10**

لَوْ كُنَّا نَسْمَعُ أَوْ نَعْقِلُ

"*If we had listened or reasoned*"

The admission: the two neglected faculties.

**EXAMPLE 67:19**

مَا يُمْسِكُهُنَّ إِلَّا ٱلرَّحْمَٰنُ

"*Nothing holds them up except the All-Benevolent.*"

What holds, and by whom.

### READ WITH

- 11:7 and 18:7: testing which of you acts best.
- 71:15: seven heavens in layers.
- 37:6-10: the nearest heaven adorned, and the missiles.
- 7:179: having cores and not understanding.
- 56:68-70: the water you drink.
- The series in أم: "Or … ?": the series in "Or …?".

**IN BRIEF**

The text does not ask us to believe without looking: it asks us to return our gaze, to listen and to reason. The earth, the air and the water are held up by the One in whose hand is the dominion; the people of the Inferno admit they neither listened nor reasoned.

SURA 68 · القلم · AL-QALAM

# The Scorched Garden

> Those who think themselves capable because they have goods and sons: owners swear to harvest everything without exception and keep out the destitute; by morning, the garden is scorched. The messenger, for his part, must be patient with the judgment of his Guardian.

## READING

"By the pen and what they inscribe in lines! You are not, by the blessing of your Guardian, deranged." (68:1-2). It will be seen who is the one tried: "You will see, and they will see, which of you is the one put to trial." (68:5-6).

Then the portrait of the one not to follow: swearer of oaths, slanderer, hinderer of good, "because he has goods and sons" (68:14). Faced with the signs, he answers: "Legends of the ancients!" (68:15).

Then the parable. The companions of the garden "swore they would harvest it in the morning, without exception" (68:17-18), set out whispering that no destitute person should enter, and went early, "determined, [deeming themselves] capable." (68:25). But "a round from your Guardian went over it while they slept, so that it became like scorched land." (68:19-20). Before the ruins, they acknowledge: "We have indeed been wrongdoers." (68:29), and turn to their Guardian: "to our Guardian we turn in desire." (68:32).

A series of questions undoes every claim: "Or do you have a scripture in which you study" (68:37), oaths upon God, a guarantor, partners? "On the day when a shin is uncovered, and they are called to prostrate, they will not be able" (68:42), they who were called while they were sound. To the messenger: "So be patient with the judgment of your Guardian, and do not be like the companion of the fish" (68:48), whom a blessing from his Guardian reached.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 68:17-18**

أَقْسَمُوا۟ لَيَصْرِمُنَّهَا مُصْبِحِينَ وَلَا يَسْتَثْنُونَ

*"they swore they would harvest it in the morning, without exception"*
An oath without reserve, as if all depended on them.

**EXAMPLE 68:25**

وَغَدَوْا۟ عَلَىٰ حَرْدٍ قَٰدِرِينَ

*"determined, [deeming themselves] capable."*
What they thought they could do, a round scorched.

**EXAMPLE 68:32**

إِنَّآ إِلَىٰ رَبِّنَا رَٰغِبُونَ

*"to our Guardian we turn in desire."*
The return, after the loss.

## READ WITH

- 18:32-44: the two gardens, and the owner who thought himself safe.
- 107:1-3 and 89:18: keeping out the destitute.
- 70:44: eyes humble, humiliation covering them.
- 21:87-88 and 37:139-148: the companion of the fish.
- « ذَرْنِي وَ... »: "Leave Me with ...": "Leave Me with ...".
- The series in أم: "Or ... ?": the series in "Or ...?".
- The same gesture in both camps: the same gesture in both camps.

**IN BRIEF**

Goods and sons do not make anyone capable: what one thinks one holds can be scorched in a night. The companions of the garden understood too late and turned to their Guardian; the messenger is called to patience.

SURA 69 · الحاقة · AL-HAQQA

# Read My Record

> That which establishes the real was denied, and every denial met its seizure. At the single blast, each receives his record: in the right hand, one holds it out to others; in the left, one wishes one had never received it. This text is the word neither of a rhetorician nor of a soothsayer.

## READING

The sura opens on a question: "That which establishes the real! What is that which establishes the real?" (69:1-2). Then history: Thamud and Aad "denied the Crash" (69:4). Some were annihilated by the excessive cry, others by an icy wind for "seven nights and eight days in succession" (69:7). "Do you see any remnant of them?" (69:8). Fir'awn and the overturned cities disobeyed, "so He seized them with an ever-intensifying seizure." (69:10).

Then the Day: "When the Horn is blown with a single blast" (69:13), the earth and the mountains are crushed, the heaven splits apart. "On that day you will be exposed, and nothing about you will remain hidden." (69:18).

Two records. The one who receives his in the right hand holds it out to others: "Here, read my record!" (69:19), and says why he is ready: "I thought that I would meet my reckoning." (69:20). The one who receives it in the left hand says: "Oh, would that I had not been given my record" (69:25), then: "My goods have not availed me" (69:28), "my authority has vanished from me." (69:29). His fault is named by his deeds: "He did not believe in God, the Immense, nor did he urge the feeding of the destitute." (69:33-34).

The sura closes on the text itself. "this is indeed the word of a noble messenger, and it is not the word of a beguiling rhetorician" (69:40-41), nor of a soothsayer: it is "A revealed descent from the Guardian of all beings." (69:43). Had he fabricated sayings, he would have been seized (69:44-47). "And this is indeed the truth of certainty." (69:51).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 69:19**

هَآؤُمُ ٱقْرَءُوا۟ كِتَٰبِيَهْ

"*Here, read my record!*"
The one who is ready holds his record out to others.

**EXAMPLE 69:20**

إِنِّى ظَنَنتُ أَنِّى مُلَٰقٍ حِسَابِيَهْ

"*I thought that I would meet my reckoning.*"
His reason: he expected the reckoning.

**EXAMPLE 69:29**

هَلَكَ عَنِّى سُلْطَٰنِيَهْ

"*my authority has vanished from me.*"
What he thought he held is gone.

## READ WITH

- 101:1-3: the same question, about the Crash.
- 84:7-12: the record given in the right hand, or behind the back.
- 89:17-18 and 107:3: not urging the feeding of the destitute.
- 56:77-80: a descent from the Guardian of all beings.
- "And what will make you know what … is?": the question that announces a definition: the question that announces a definition.
- The names of the Hour: each says what it does: the names of the Hour.

**IN BRIEF**

The real establishes itself despite the denials. On the Day nothing remains hidden, the one who thought he would meet his reckoning holds out his record; the other finds that his goods and his authority avail him nothing. This text comes from the Guardian of all beings.

SURA 70 · المعارج · AL-MA'ARIJ

# Created Anxious, and the Exception

> A petitioner asks for the punishment; it will come. On that Day no friend asks after his friend, and each would ransom himself with his own kin. The human being was created anxious, except those who make contact and give the petitioner his right.

## READING

"A petitioner asked for a punishment bound to fall upon those who disown" (70:1-2), coming from God, "Holder of the Ascending Ways" (70:3). To Him the Agents and the Influx ascend "in a Day whose measure is fifty thousand years" (70:4). Hence the instruction: "So be patient, with a beautiful patience." (70:5). "They see it as distant, while We see it as near." (70:6-7).

On that Day "the sky will be like molten metal, and the mountains will be like carded wool" (70:8-9), "and no warm friend will ask after a warm friend" (70:10). "The severed one would wish to ransom himself from the punishment of that Day with his sons, his consort, his brother" (70:11-12), his kin and everyone on earth. The Flame calls the one who "gathered and locked away" (70:18).

The portrait follows: "the human being was created anxious: when evil touches him, he panics; and when good touches him, he withholds it" (70:19-21). The exception is defined by deeds: "except those who make contact, constant in their Contact" (70:22-23), those in whose goods there is "a known right for the petitioner and the deprived" (70:24-25), who affirm the Day of Retribution, guard their private parts, watch over their trusts and their covenant, maintain their testimonies, and "carefully maintain their Contact" (70:34). The word of the first verse returns: the petitioner asked for punishment; here, the petitioner receives his right.

Those who disown hasten toward the messenger in groups, each aspiring to a garden. "By no means!" (70:39). The final oath puts them in their place: "We

are able to replace them with better than them" (70:40-41). Let them play until the Day they emerge from the graves, "their eyes humble, humiliation covering them." (70:44). "That is the Day which they had been promised." (70:44).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 70:19**

إِنَّ ٱلْإِنسَٰنَ خُلِقَ هَلُوعًا

"*the human being was created anxious*"
The slope, before the exception.

**EXAMPLE 70:24-25**

حَقٌّ مَّعْلُومٌ لِّلسَّآئِلِ وَٱلْمَحْرُومِ

"*a known right for the petitioner and the deprived*"
The same word as the petitioner of the first verse.

**EXAMPLE 70:34**

عَلَىٰ صَلَاتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُونَ

"*those who carefully maintain their Contact*"
The exception opens and closes on the Contact.

## READ WITH

- 51:19: the right of the petitioner and the deprived.
- 23:1-11: the same traits, elsewhere.
- 101:5: the mountains like carded wool.
- 22:47 and 32:5: a day with the Guardian.
- The human slope, and the exception that leads out of it: the human slope, and the exception that rises from it.
- The first verse gives the thread of the sura: the first verse gives the thread of the sura.

- The preposition before "their Contact" tells the relationship: the preposition before "their Contact".

**IN BRIEF**

The human being is anxious: he panics in evil and withholds in good. The exception is known by its deeds: contact maintained, a known right for the petitioner, the covenant kept. The petitioner of the first verse asked for punishment; these give to the one who asks.

SURA 71 · نوح · NUH

# The More He Calls, the More They Flee

> Nuh calls his people night and day, openly then in secret, and promises them forgiveness, rain, goods and gardens. The more he calls, the more they flee. They plot, and are drowned.

## READING

Nuh is sent with a message: "Warn your people before there comes to them a painful punishment." (71:1). He conveys it: "obey God, guard yourselves before Him, and obey me." (71:3).

Then comes his complaint to his Guardian: "I have called my people night and day, but my call has only increased them in flight." (71:5-6). Every call is evaded: "they put their fingers in their ears, covered themselves with their garments" (71:7). He spoke openly, publicly, in private, and promised: "Ask forgiveness of your Guardian; indeed, He is ever a Great Forgiver." (71:10); rain, goods, sons, gardens and rivers would follow (71:11-12).

He also shows them creation. "He has created you in successive stages" (71:14); He made "seven heavens in layers" (71:15), the moon a light, the sun a torch. "And God has caused you to grow from the earth as a growth. Then He will return you into it and bring you out a new emergence." (71:17-18).

Nothing works. They followed him "whose goods and children increased him not except in loss" (71:21): the goods that forgiveness promised (71:12) are, without it, only loss. "and they have plotted a great plot" (71:22). "Because of their sins they were drowned" (71:25). Nuh finally asks forgiveness for himself, his parents, and "whoever enters my house a believer" (71:28).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 71:6**

فَلَمْ يَزِدْهُمْ دُعَآءِىٓ إِلَّا فِرَارًا

*"but my call has only increased them in flight"*
The call produces the opposite of its aim.

**EXAMPLE 71:10**

ٱسْتَغْفِرُوا۟ رَبَّكُمْ إِنَّهُۥ كَانَ غَفَّارًا

"Ask *forgiveness of your Guardian; indeed, He is ever a Great Forgiver.*"
Forgiveness first; goods follow.

**EXAMPLE 71:21**

لَّمْ يَزِدْهُ مَالُهُۥ وَوَلَدُهُۥٓ إِلَّا خَسَارًا

"*whose goods and children increased him not except in loss*"
Goods without forgiveness: a loss.

## READ WITH

- 72:1-2: the next sura, a single hearing is enough for the Occulted.
- 11:25-49: the story of Nuh, at greater length.
- 78:13: the sun, a torch.
- 20:55: the earth, from which we come out and to which we return.
- 54:9-15: the people of Nuh and the ark.

**IN BRIEF**

The more Nuh calls, the more his people flee: the goods promised with forgiveness are, without it, only loss. Plotting saves no one; they are drowned because of their sins.

SURA 72 · الجن · AL-JINN

# An Amazing Recitation

> A group of the Occulted hear an amazing recitation once and believe at once. They acknowledge their errors and their divisions. The messenger, for his part, invokes only his Guardian; he holds for others neither harm nor rectitude, only the transmission.

## READING

The sura opens with the command to tell what has been revealed: a group of the Occulted listened, and they said: "Indeed, we have heard an amazing recitation, that guides to rectitude, so we have believed in it" (72:1-2). A single hearing was enough.

Their words follow, statement after statement. They acknowledge having been deceived: "we thought that mankind and the Occulted would never speak against God a lie." (72:5). They denounce a vain recourse: men "who took refuge in men among the Occulted, and they only increased them in burden." (72:6). They note that the sky is guarded: "whoever listens now will find a burning star lying in wait for him." (72:9). And they acknowledge their divisions: "we were of divided ways." (72:11).

They set down the rule: "whoever believes in his Guardian will fear neither loss nor burden." (72:13). The burden that taking refuge in the Occulted brought (72:6) is the one faith removes. Among them are those true to God alone and "the deviant" (72:14). Had they remained straight on the path, they would have been given abundant water (72:16).

Then comes the messenger's position. "I only invoke my Guardian and do not associate with Him anyone." (72:20). "I hold for you neither harm nor rectitude." (72:21). He has no refuge "except a transmission from God and His messages" (72:23), and does not know whether what is promised is near (72:25). God alone is "Knower of what escapes the senses" (72:26); He discloses some of it to a messenger He approves of, and surrounds him with a watch.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 72:1**

إِنَّا سَمِعْنَا قُرْءَانًا عَجَبًا

"*we have heard an amazing recitation*"
A single hearing was enough.

**EXAMPLE 72:13**

فَلَا يَخَافُ بَخْسًا وَلَا رَهَقًا

"*will fear neither loss nor burden*"
The burden faith removes (72:6).

**EXAMPLE 72:21**

لَآ أَمْلِكُ لَكُمْ ضَرًّا وَلَا رَشَدًا

"*I hold for you neither harm nor rectitude.*"
The messenger holds only the transmission.

## READ WITH

- 46:29-31: another group of the Occulted listens to the Recitation.
- 71:5-9: the neighboring sura, a call that makes people flee; here, a hearing that makes them believe.
- 3:179: God does not disclose what escapes the senses.
- The formula of refuge: the formula of refuge.
- The imperative قل at the opening of a sura: the command "Say" at the opening.
- Sura 72: the speech of the Occulted and the revealed speech: the speech of the Occulted and revealed speech.

**IN BRIEF**

A single hearing was enough for the Occulted to believe and acknowledge their errors. The messenger invokes only his Guardian; he holds neither harm nor rectitude for anyone, only the transmission; God alone knows what escapes the senses.

SURA 73 · المزمل · AL-MUZZAMMIL

# The Night and the Heavy Word

> Standing at night to recite the Recitation with care and remember the Guardian's name: a heavy word is about to be cast. Then the lightening: God knows this count cannot be kept, turns back with clemency, and asks that what is feasible be recited.

## READING

"O you who are wrapped up! Stand the night, except a little" (73:1-2), half of it, a little less or a little more, "and recite the Recitation with measured, distinct recitation." (73:4). The reason follows: "Indeed, We will cast upon you a heavy word." (73:5). The night prepares one to bear it: "the rising of the night is firmer in impact and more upright in speech." (73:6), for the day is taken up by "a long sailing [to and fro]" (73:7).

"And remember the name of your Guardian and devote yourself to Him with complete devotion." (73:8). He is the "Guardian of the East and the West" (73:9): "so take Him as a trustee." (73:9). Facing what they say: "avoid them with gracious avoidance." (73:10), and "leave Me with the deniers, those of ease" (73:11).

The reminder of Fir'awn follows: "We have sent to you a messenger as a witness upon you, just as We sent to Fir'awn a messenger." (73:15); Fir'awn disobeyed, and was seized. The coming Day "will turn children gray-haired" (73:17). Then the choice: "So whoever wills may take, toward his Guardian, a way." (73:19).

The last verse, a long one, lightens the instruction. "And God determines the night and the day." (73:20); "He knows that you will never count it, so He has turned toward you with clemency." (73:20). He knows the sick, the travelers, the fighters: "So recite what is feasible from it" (73:20), maintain the Contact, give the purifying alms, lend to God a goodly loan: "And whatever good you put forth for yourselves, you will find it with God" (73:20).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 73:5**

إِنَّا سَنُلْقِي عَلَيْكَ قَوْلًا ثَقِيلًا

"*We will cast upon you a heavy word.*"
The night prepares one to bear it.

**EXAMPLE 73:20**

وَٱللَّهُ يُقَدِّرُ ٱلَّيْلَ وَٱلنَّهَارَ

"*And God determines the night and the day.*"
He alone determines; the man of 74:18 claimed to.

**EXAMPLE 73:20**

مَا تَيَسَّرَ مِنْهُ

"*So recite what is feasible from it*"
The lightening, after the long vigil.

## READ WITH

- 74:1-2: the neighboring sura, the one covered in a cloak who must arise.
- 74:18-20: the man who "determines", facing God who determines (73:20).
- 76:25-26 and 76:29: the Guardian's name, the night, the way.
- 58:13: turning toward you with clemency.
- The address "O you who are wrapped up! Stand": the address and the command to arise.
- "Measuring": human pretended measure against divine measure: human measure against divine measure.
- The same verb for the human and for God: the same verb for the human being and for God.

**IN BRIEF**

The night prepares one to bear a heavy word: reciting with care, remembering the Guardian's name, keeping away with patience. God, who determines the night and the day, knows what each can do: He asks that what is feasible be recited.

SURA 74 · المدثر · AL-MUDDATHTHIR

# Arise and Warn

> Six commands: arise, warn, proclaim the Guardian's greatness, purify one's garments, avoid defilement, give without seeking more in return. Facing them, a man showered with goods always wants more and "determines" against the Recitation. Every Self remains a pledge for what it has earned.

## READING

"O you who are covered in a cloak! Arise and warn" (74:1-2). Short commands follow: proclaim the Guardian's greatness, purify your garments, "and defilement, avoid" (74:5), "and do not confer favor seeking more in return" (74:6), "and for your Guardian, be patient." (74:7).

Then a portrait. "Leave Me with the one I created alone, and gave him extensive goods, and sons present with him" (74:11-13); showered with all this, he still desires more. The one who warns must not give to gain more; this man has received everything and wants still more. Facing the signs, "Indeed, he thought and determined. So may he perish, how he determined!" (74:18-19). He looks, frowns, turns his back and concludes: "This is nothing but illusion passed down; this is nothing but the word of a human." (74:24-25).

Saqar is then defined: "It leaves nothing and spares nothing" (74:28); "Over it are nineteen." (74:30). This number is a trial: it makes those given the Writ certain, increases the believers in faith, and makes the others say: "What did God intend by this image?" (74:31). "And it is not but a reminder to humans." (74:31).

"Every Self is a pledge for what it has earned, except the companions of the right" (74:38-39). Asked, the people of Saqar answer themselves: "We were not of those who made contact, nor did we use to feed the destitute" (74:43-44); they indulged with the others and denied the Day. They flee the reminder "as

if they were terrified donkeys, fleeing from a lion" (74:50-51). And yet: "so whoever wills may remember it." (74:55).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 74:6**

وَلَا تَمْنُن تَسْتَكْثِرُ

"*and do not confer favor seeking more in return*"

The command, facing the man who always wants more (74:15).

**EXAMPLE 74:18**

إِنَّهُۥ فَكَّرَ وَقَدَّرَ

"*he thought and determined*"

A human measure claiming to judge the Recitation.

**EXAMPLE 74:38**

كُلُّ نَفْسٍۭ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ رَهِينَةٌ

"*Every Self is a pledge for what it has earned*"

The pledge is lifted for the companions of the right.

## READ WITH

- 73:1-2: the neighboring sura, the one wrapped up who must arise.
- 73:20: God determines the night and the day.
- 107:1-5: denying the Retribution, not feeding the destitute.
- 2:26: the same question about the image.
- The address "O you who are wrapped up! Stand": the address and the command to arise.
- « ذَرْنِي وَ... »: "Leave Me with ...": "Leave Me with ...".
- "Measuring": human pretended measure against divine measure: human measure against divine measure.
- The same verb for the human and for God: the same verb for the human being and for God.

**IN BRIEF**

The one who warns gives without seeking more; the man showered with goods always wants more and "determines" against the Recitation. Every Self remains a pledge for what it has earned; the people of Saqar say it themselves: no contact, no food for the destitute.

SURA 75 · القيامة · AL-QIYAMA

# Clear-Sighted About Himself

> The human being thinks his bones will not be assembled, and desires to persist in depravity. Yet he is clear-sighted about himself, despite his excuses. To the Guardian are the place of settlement and the drive.

## READING

"No! I swear by the Day of Appearance; and no! I swear by the self-reproaching Self." (75:1-2). Then the question: "Does the human being think that We will not assemble his bones? Yes indeed!" (75:3-4). The One able "to proportion even his phalanges" (75:4) is able to assemble him. The doubt is not ignorance: "But the human being desires to persist in depravity before him." (75:5).

The Day comes: sight dazzled, the moon eclipsed, and the human being asks: "Where is the escape?" (75:10). "By no means! There is no refuge." (75:11). "To your Guardian, that Day, will be the place of settlement." (75:12). He will be informed of what he put forward and kept back, but he already knows: "Rather, the human being is, over himself, clear-sighted, even if he presents his excuses." (75:14-15).

At the heart of the sura, an instruction about the Recitation: "Do not move your tongue with it to hasten it" (75:16); "upon Us is its assembling and its recitation." (75:17). The same verb, assemble, serves for the bones (75:3) and for the Recitation (75:17): the One who assembles the one assembles the other. Then the reproach: "you love the immediate life, and leave behind the last life." (75:20-21).

Two kinds of faces: some "radiant, looking toward their Guardian" (75:22-23), others gloomy. Then the last breath, when [the Self] reaches the collarbones: "to your Guardian, that Day, will be the drive." (75:30). The portrait of the one who refused: "For he neither affirmed, nor made contact" (75:31), "but he

denied and turned away" (75:32). And the final question: "Is that One not able to give life to the dead?" (75:40).

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 75:14**

بَلِ ٱلْإِنسَٰنُ عَلَىٰ نَفْسِهِۦ بَصِيرَةٌ

"*the human being is, over himself, clear-sighted*"

He knows, despite his excuses.

**EXAMPLE 75:17**

إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا جَمْعَهُۥ وَقُرْءَانَهُۥ

"*upon Us is its assembling and its recitation*"

The same verb as for the bones (75:3).

**EXAMPLE 75:31**

فَلَا صَدَّقَ وَلَا صَلَّىٰ

"*For he neither affirmed, nor made contact*"

The portrait of the one who refuses.

### READ WITH

- 82:5: what he put forward and kept back.
- 92:6-9: affirming or denying.
- 76:27: the immediate life.
- 79:44 and 53:42: to the Guardian, the term.
- « لَآ أُقْسِمُ »: "No! I swear": "No! I swear".
- « إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ » placed first: the end where everything arrives: "to your Guardian" at the head of the sentence.
- Affirming as true, the opposite of denying: affirming, the opposite of denying.

**IN BRIEF**

The human being knows what he does, despite his excuses; if he doubts being assembled, it is because he wants to persist. The One who assembles the Recitation assembles the bones: to the Guardian are the place of settlement and the drive.

SURA 76 · الانسان · AL-INSAN

# Feeding Without Expecting

> The human being was nothing; created to be tested, he is guided along the way, grateful or disowning. The virtuous feed the destitute, the orphan and the captive expecting nothing from people, and their effort is met with gratitude.

## READING

"Has there come upon the human being a period of time when he was not a thing worth mentioning?" (76:1). Created "from a mingled drop, to test him" (76:2), he is given hearing and sight, then the way: "Indeed, We guided him along the way, be he grateful or be he disowning." (76:3). The way is shown; the choice remains his.

The virtuous are defined by their deeds. "They fulfill their vows, and they fear a Day whose evil spreads far and wide." (76:7). They give food "despite their love for it, to the destitute, the orphan, and the captive" (76:8), and say: "we desire from you neither recompense nor gratitude" (76:9). They expect nothing from people; they only fear "a Day, austere and dreadful" (76:10).

The answer is given in the past, as already done: "So God has protected them from the evil of that Day and has granted them radiance and joy." (76:11). Then come the garden, the shades, the goblets, the spring "therein called Salsabil" (76:18), and the conclusion: "Indeed, this has been for you a recompense, and your effort has been met with gratitude." (76:22). They wanted no gratitude from people (76:9); the same word comes back to them from their Guardian.

To the messenger: "So be patient with the judgment of your Guardian" (76:24), remember His name morning and evening, prostrate at night. Those facing him "love the immediate life, and leave behind them a heavy Day" (76:27). The sura closes on the choice: "So whoever wills may take, toward his Guardian, a way." (76:29).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 76:3**

إِنَّا هَدَيْنَٰهُ ٱلسَّبِيلَ

"*We guided him along the way*"
The way is shown; the choice remains his.

**EXAMPLE 76:9**

لَا نُرِيدُ مِنكُمْ جَزَآءً وَلَا شُكُورًا

"*we desire from you neither recompense nor gratitude*"
Feeding without expecting anything from people.

**EXAMPLE 76:22**

وَكَانَ سَعْيُكُم مَّشْكُورًا

"*your effort has been met with gratitude*"
The gratitude not sought from people comes from the Guardian.

## READ WITH

- 90:10: guided along the two ways.
- 90:14-16 and 89:17-18: feeding the orphan and the destitute.
- 88:9: pleased with their effort.
- 73:19 and 78:39: taking a way, or a place of return, toward one's Guardian.
- Guiding "along" the path or guiding "to" it: guiding "along" the way.
- « فَمَن شَآءَ ٱتَّخَذَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِۦ »: the choice left to the human being: the choice left to the human being.
- Where the aspect of the verb makes the meaning: the aspect of the verb makes the meaning.

**IN BRIEF**

Guided along the way, the human being chooses to be grateful or to disown. The virtuous feed expecting nothing from people; the gratitude they did not ask for comes to them from their Guardian.

SURA 77 · المرسلات · AL-MURSALAT

# Ten Times the Same Verdict

> Ten times, the same verdict closes a proof: "Woe, that Day, to the deniers!" The former peoples annihilated, the lowly fluid measured, the earth gathering the living and the dead: all of it announces the Day of Separation, when they will not speak.

## READING

Five oaths open the sura and lead to a statement: "what you are promised will surely occur." (77:7). Four "when"s describe that moment: the stars obliterated, the sky split open, the mountains blasted away, the messengers' time set. For what Day? "For the Day of Separation." (77:13).

Then comes a refrain, ten times: "Woe, that Day, to the deniers!" (77:15). Each time, it closes a proof. History: "Did We not annihilate the former peoples?" (77:16). Birth: "Did We not create you from a lowly fluid?" (77:20), placed "until a known measure" (77:22). The earth: "Have We not made the earth a gathering place, for the living and the dead?" (77:25-26).

The deniers are sent toward what they denied: "Depart to a shadow of three branches, neither shading nor availing against the flame." (77:30-31). "This is the Day they will not speak, nor will they be permitted to make excuses." (77:35-36). Every scheme is challenged: "So if you have a scheme, then scheme against Me!" (77:39).

Facing them, those who guarded themselves are "amid shades and springs" (77:41): the shade the other shadow did not give. The rule is stated: "Thus do We recompense those who do good." (77:44). The last proof is a refused gesture: when told to bow down, "they do not bow down" (77:48). And the final question: "In what discourse, after this one, will they then believe?" (77:50).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 77:15**

وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِينَ

"*Woe, that Day, to the deniers!*"
Ten times, after each proof.

**EXAMPLE 77:31**

لَّا ظَلِيلٍ وَلَا يُغْنِي مِنَ ٱللَّهَبِ

"*neither shading nor availing against the flame*"
A shadow that is no shade.

**EXAMPLE 77:50**

فَبِأَيِّ حَدِيثٍ بَعْدَهُۥ يُؤْمِنُونَ

"*In what discourse, after this one, will they then believe?*"
The question that closes the sura.

## READ WITH

- 52:11 and 83:10: the same refrain, elsewhere.
- 78:17 and 44:40: the Day of Separation.
- 78:38: speech permitted, facing speech refused (77:35).
- 7:185: the same question about a discourse to come after.
- The refrain "Woe, that Day, to the deniers!": the refrain of the sura.
- The refrain divides the sura into stanzas: the refrain divides the sura into stanzas.

**IN BRIEF**

Ten times, the same verdict closes a proof: history, birth, the earth. On the Day of Separation the deniers will not speak; those who guarded themselves will have the shade the other shadow does not give.

SURA 78 · النبأ · AN-NABA

# The Appointed Time

> They ask one another about the great Information. The answer: the Day of Separation is an appointed time. To the blessings of the earth, sleep and rain correspond a lookout post for those who exceed all measure and a triumph for those who guard themselves.

## READING

"They are asking one another about the great Information, over which they are in disagreement." (78:2-3). The same announcement comes twice: "They will know." (78:4-5).

Before saying what this Day is, the sura lists what is already there, as questions: "Have We not made the earth a resting place, and the mountains as pegs?" (78:6-7). Then come the pairs, sleep, night, day, seven heavens, a torch, and the rain that brings forth "grain and vegetation, and intertwined gardens" (78:15-16). The One who ordered all this has also set a term: "the Day of Separation is an appointed time" (78:17).

Two destinations. "Jahannam is a lookout post — a place of return for those who exceed all measure" (78:21-22). Their fault is stated plainly: "they were not expecting a reckoning, and they denied Our signs with emphatic denial." (78:27-28); yet "everything We have enumerated in a record." (78:29). Facing them: "for those who guarded themselves is a triumph" (78:31), and it is "a recompense from your Guardian, a gift, well accounted" (78:36). The same Arabic word names the reckoning they did not expect (78:27) and the gift "well accounted" (78:36).

On that Day, none speaks "except one to whom the All-Benevolent has given permission, and who will say what is right." (78:38). Then the choice: "So whoever wills may take, toward his Guardian, a place of return." (78:39). The same word, "place of return", described Jahannam (78:22): everyone returns

somewhere, and chooses where to. The sura ends with the regret of the one who disowns: "Oh, that I were earth!" (78:40).

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 78:17**

إِنَّ يَوْمَ ٱلْفَصْلِ كَانَ مِيقَٰتًا

"*the Day of Separation is an appointed time*"
The answer to the opening question.

**EXAMPLE 78:27**

إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا۟ لَا يَرْجُونَ حِسَابًا

"*they were not expecting a reckoning*"
The same word later names the gift "well accounted" (78:36).

**EXAMPLE 78:39**

فَمَن شَآءَ ٱتَّخَذَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِۦ مَـَٔابًا

"*So whoever wills may take, toward his Guardian, a place of return.*"
Everyone has a place of return; he chooses which.

### READ WITH

- 44:40: the Day of Separation, everyone's appointed time.
- 89:14: the Guardian ever watchful, the same root as the lookout post.
- 79:27–33: creation as proof of the return.
- 76:29 and 73:19: taking a way toward one's Guardian.
- « فَمَن شَآءَ ٱتَّخَذَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِۦ »: the choice left to the human being: the choice left to the human being.
- « يَوْمُ ٱلْفَصْلِ »: the Day of Separation: the Day of Separation.

**IN BRIEF**

The Day of Separation is an appointed time. The reckoning some did not expect becomes, for others, a gift well accounted; everyone has a place of return, and may choose to take it toward his Guardian.

SURA 79 · النازعات · AN-NAZI'AT

# The Usurped Title

> People doubt they will be brought back once they have become bones. Fir'awn, for his part, seizes the title "the Most High", and exemplary punishment seizes him. The Hour has its boundary with the Guardian; the messenger is only its warner.

## READING

Five oaths open the sura, then comes the Day: "the Day the first quaking quakes, followed by the one that comes after" (79:6-7). The doubters ask: "Are we indeed to be returned to our former state, once we have become decayed bones?" (79:10-11). The answer fits in one line: "Yet it will be but a single rumbling blast, and there they are, upon the surface of the earth." (79:13-14).

The story of Moussa serves as an example. Sent to Fir'awn, who had exceeded all measure, he is to offer him: "Would you [be willing] to purify yourself, that I may guide you to your Guardian, so that you may hold Him in awe?" (79:18-19). Fir'awn sees the greatest sign, denies, turns his back striving, gathers his people and proclaims: "I am your master, the Most High." (79:24). He takes for himself the title the Recitation gives to the Guardian (87:1). "So God seized him with the exemplary punishment of the last and the first." (79:25).

The sura then asks: "Are you more difficult to create, or is the sky?" (79:27). The sky built, the night and the morning light, the earth hatching forth, its water, its pasture and the anchored mountains are "as provision for you and your livestock" (79:33). The One who made all this can bring back.

Then comes the greatest Overwhelming Event, and two refuges. For whoever exceeded all measure and preferred the present life, the Blaze (79:37-39): the verb that described Fir'awn now describes anyone. For him "who feared standing before his Guardian, and forbade the Self emotion" (79:40), the Garden. The messenger is asked about the Hour; the answer: "To your

Guardian is its final boundary." (79:44). "You are only the warner of whoever holds it in awe." (79:45).

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 79:13**

فَإِنَّمَا هِيَ زَجْرَةٌ وَٰحِدَةٌ

*"Yet it will be but a single rumbling blast"*
A single blast is enough to bring back.

**EXAMPLE 79:24**

أَنَا۠ رَبُّكُمُ ٱلْأَعْلَىٰ

*"I am your master, the Most High."*
The Guardian's title (87:1) in a man's mouth.

**EXAMPLE 79:44**

إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ مُنتَهَىٰهَآ

*"To your Guardian is its final boundary."*
The Hour is not the messenger's affair.

### READ WITH

- 87:1: the Most High, the Guardian's title.
- 37:19: a single rumbling blast.
- 80:8: coming striving, the reverse of turning one's back striving.
- 53:42: to your Guardian is the final boundary.
- The divine title in a man's mouth: the divine title in a man's mouth.

**IN BRIEF**

Fir'awn seizes the title "the Most High" and falls; the human being who doubts his return will be brought back by a single blast. The Hour has its boundary with the Guardian; the Blaze awaits whoever exceeds all measure, the Garden whoever stands before his Guardian.

SURA 80 · عبس · ABASA

# The One Who Comes Striving

> A reproach: the messenger turned away from the blind man who came striving, to go toward the one who considers himself self-sufficient. The reminder is for whoever seeks it. Then the human being who disowns the One who created him, fed him, and will awaken him.

## READING

The sura begins in the third person: "He frowned and turned away, because the blind man came to him." (80:1-2), then shifts to "you": "And what would make you know? Perhaps he might purify himself" (80:3-4).

Two men are set face to face. "As for him who considers himself self-sufficient, you give him your attention" (80:5-6). "But as for him who came to you striving, and he fears, from him you are distracted." (80:8-10). "By no means!" the text answers: the reminder is not for the one who believes he needs nothing (Seeing oneself self-sufficient, the reverse of purifying oneself).

This reminder is carried "in honored scrolls, elevated and purified, in the hands of envoys, noble and virtuous." (80:13-16).

Then the human being who disowns: "May the human being perish; how he disowns!" (80:17). The text recalls his course: he was created from a drop, given his measure, his way made easy, then made to die and buried (80:19-21); "Then, when He wills, He will awaken him." (80:22). And his food: water poured, earth split, grain, fruit (80:24-32).

When the Day comes, "a man will flee from his brother, and his mother and his father, and his companion and his sons." (80:34-36): each will have a matter that suffices him.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 80:1-2**

عَبَسَ وَتَوَلَّىٰٓ أَن جَآءَهُ ٱلْأَعْمَىٰ

*"He frowned and turned away, because the blind man came to him."*
The reproach, first in the third person.

**EXAMPLE 80:8-9**

وَأَمَّا مَن جَآءَكَ يَسْعَىٰ وَهُوَ يَخْشَىٰ

*"But as for him who came to you striving, and he fears"*
The one the reminder is for.

**EXAMPLE 80:22**

ثُمَّ إِذَا شَآءَ أَنشَرَهُۥ

*"Then, when He wills, He will awaken him."*
The last step of the course.

## READ WITH

- 96:7 and 92:8: seeing oneself self-sufficient.
- 79:22: Fir'awn turning his back, striving, the opposite of 80:8.
- 82:19: on that Day, no Self can do anything for another.
- The same gesture in both camps: the same verb "strive" for Fir'awn and for the blind man.

**IN BRIEF**

The reminder goes to the one who comes striving and fearing, not to the one who considers himself self-sufficient. The human being disowns the One who created him from a drop, fed him, made him die, and will awaken him.

SURA 81 · التكوير · AT-TAKWIR

# A Self Will Know

> Twelve "when"s undo the world, and all lead to a single finding: a Self will know what it has brought forward. The messenger kept nothing for himself; it remains for each to will to stand straight.

## READING

The sura is first a single long sentence: "When the sun is wrapped up, and when the stars scatter, and when the mountains are set in motion" (81:1-3), and so on, twelve times. Sun, stars, mountains, seas: all that seemed fixed comes undone. In the middle, a question: the girl buried alive "is asked for what offense she was killed" (81:8-9).

The series does not end in the world, but in a person: "a Self will know what it has brought forward." (81:14, The cosmic series of « إِذَا » end in the Self).

Then an oath: "No! I swear by the retreating stars, those that run their courses and hide" (81:15-16), to affirm the source of the message: "it is the word of a noble messenger" (81:19). The messenger is neither deranged nor withholding: "And he is not stingy with what escapes the senses." (81:24). He passed on what he received.

Finally, the reminder is for whoever wills: "for whoever wills among you to stand straight." (81:28); and that will itself is framed: "And you do not will except that God wills, Guardian of all beings." (81:29).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 81:1**

إِذَا ٱلشَّمْسُ كُوِّرَتْ

*"When the sun is wrapped up"*
The first of the twelve "when"s.

**EXAMPLE 81:14**

عَلِمَتْ نَفْسٌ مَّآ أَحْضَرَتْ

*"a Self will know what it has brought forward."*
The single finding the series leads to.

**EXAMPLE 81:24**

وَمَا هُوَ عَلَى ٱلْغَيْبِ بِضَنِينٍ

*"And he is not stingy with what escapes the senses."*
The messenger kept nothing for himself.

**READ WITH**

- 82:1-5: the next sura, four "when"s and a Self that knows.
- 52:6: the sea set aboil.
- 41:30 and 46:13: standing straight.
- 114:4: "the whisperer who withdraws", from the same root as "the retreating stars".

**IN BRIEF**

When all that seemed fixed comes undone, each Self will know what it has brought forward. The messenger kept nothing for himself; it remains for each to will to stand straight.

SURA 82 · الانفطار · AL-INFITAR

# What Deceived You?

> When the world comes apart, every Self will know what it has put forward and kept back. A question to the human being: what has deceived you concerning your Guardian, the Generous? His deeds are written, and on that Day no Self can do anything for another.

## READING

Four "when"s describe the upheaval: the sky breaking apart, the stars scattering, the seas gushing forth, the graves overturned. The series leads to a single being: "a Self will know what it has put forward and kept back." (82:1–5, The cosmic series of « إِذَا » end in the Self).

Then the question: "O human being! What has deceived you concerning your Guardian, the Generous, who created you, then proportioned you, then balanced you?" (82:6–7). The Guardian's generosity is no reason to forget Him.

The text answers: "you deny the Retribution, while indeed, over you are keepers, noble scribes, who know what you do." (82:9–12). Nothing escapes: deeds are written.

Two outcomes: "Indeed, the virtuous will be in bliss." (82:13); "the depraved will be in a Blaze" (82:14). The sura closes on that Day, when no Self can do anything for another: "And the command, that Day, is entirely God's." (82:19).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 82:6**

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلْإِنسَٰنُ مَا غَرَّكَ بِرَبِّكَ ٱلْكَرِيمِ

*"O human being! What has deceived you concerning your Guardian, the Generous"*

The question at the heart of the sura.

**EXAMPLE 82:10-11**

وَإِنَّ عَلَيْكُمْ لَحَٰفِظِينَ كِرَامًا كَٰتِبِينَ

*"over you are keepers, noble scribes"*
Deeds are written.

**EXAMPLE 82:19**

يَوْمَ لَا تَمْلِكُ نَفْسٌ لِّنَفْسٍ شَيْـًٔا

*"The Day no Self will possess a thing for another Self."*
Each alone, on that Day.

**READ WITH**

- 81:1-14: the previous sura, twelve "when"s and a Self that knows.
- 84:1-6: the sky splitting and the human being addressed.
- 87:2: "who created and harmonized".
- 80:34-37: each flees his own, that Day.

**IN BRIEF**

What deceives the human being about his generous Guardian is forgetting that his deeds are written. On that Day, no Self can do anything for another, and the command is God's.

SURA 83 · المطففين · AL-MUTAFFIFIN

# The Rigged Measure

> Those who cheat on the measure do not think of the Day when they themselves will be measured. Two records answer each other, and the mockers' laughter comes back to them.

## READING

"Woe to the defrauders, who, when they take a measure from people, exact full measure, and when they measure or weigh for them, cause loss." (83:1-3). The question follows: "Do they not think that they will be resurrected for a tremendous Day" (83:4-5).

Two records are set in mirror, each named then defined. "Indeed, the record of the depraved is in Sijjin." (83:7); "Indeed, the record of the virtuous is in 'Illiyyun." (83:18). For each, the same question and the same answer: "A written record." (83:9, 83:20).

What closes the hearts of the first is their own gains: "what they were earning has rusted their cores." (83:14). And "from their Guardian, that Day, they will be veiled." (83:15).

The end reverses the laughter. Those who cut themselves off "used to laugh at those who believed" (83:29); on that Day, it is the believers who laugh, and the last question asks whether the disowners have received what their own deeds bring back (83:34-36). What comes back to them is their own conduct.

## IN THE TEXT

EXAMPLE **83:1**

وَيْلٌ لِّلْمُطَفِّفِينَ

“*Woe to the defrauders*”
Those who cheat on the measure.

**EXAMPLE 83:14**

كَلَّا بَلْ رَانَ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِم مَّا كَانُوا۟ يَكْسِبُونَ

"*what they were earning has rusted their cores.*"
Their own gains cover them.

**EXAMPLE 83:29**

إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ أَجْرَمُوا۟ كَانُوا۟ مِنَ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ يَضْحَكُونَ

"*used to laugh at those who believed*"
A laughter that will change sides (83:34).

**READ WITH**

- 82:13-14: the previous sura, the virtuous and the depraved.
- 84:13: joyful among his people, then the return.
- 85:8: what the believers are reproached for.

**IN BRIEF**

The one who cheats on the measure does not think of the Day he will be measured. What he earns covers his core, and the mockers' laughter comes back to them.

SURA 84 · الانشقاق · AL-INSHIQAQ

# Toiling Toward the Guardian

> The sky and the earth listen to their Guardian. The human being labors toward his Guardian and will meet Him. The one who was joyful among his people and thought he would never return will return.

## READING

"When the sky splits open, and listens to its Guardian — and it is obligated to do so" (84:1-2). The earth does the same (84:3-5). Sky and earth listen.

Then the call: "O human being! Indeed, you are laboring toward your Guardian with great exertion and will meet Him." (84:6). All of life is an effort reaching toward that meeting.

Two outcomes. The one given his record in his right hand will "return to his people in joy" (84:9). The other "will burn in an inferno" (84:12), and the text says why: "Indeed, he had been joyful among his people." (84:13); "Indeed, he thought he would never return. But yes!" (84:14-15). The same joy, here below for one, there for the other (The same gesture in both camps).

"You will surely embark upon state after state." (84:19). And the final reproach recalls the beginning: sky and earth listen, but these, when the Recitation is read to them, do not prostrate (84:21).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 84:6**

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلْإِنسَٰنُ إِنَّكَ كَادِحٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ كَدْحًا فَمُلَٰقِيهِ

*"O human being! Indeed, you are laboring toward your Guardian with great exertion and will meet Him."*

A whole life reaching toward a meeting.

**EXAMPLE 84:13**

إِنَّهُۥ كَانَ فِىٓ أَهْلِهِۦ مَسْرُورًا

"*Indeed, he had been joyful among his people.*"
The joy of here below, which does not last.

**EXAMPLE 84:14**

إِنَّهُۥ ظَنَّ أَن لَّن يَحُورَ

"*Indeed, he thought he would never return.*"
The error that ruined him.

**READ WITH**

- 86:8: "capable of his return".
- 82:6: "O human being!", the same address.
- 88:25-26: the return and the reckoning, with God.
- The same gesture in both camps: the same joy in both camps.

**IN BRIEF**

Sky and earth listen to their Guardian; the human being labors toward Him and will meet Him. The one who thought he would never return will return.

SURA 85 · البروج · AL-BURUJ

# Their Only Fault: Belief

> Persecutors seated around a fire, witnesses to what they inflict on the believers. They reproached them for one thing only: having believed. God, Witness over all things, ever does what He wills.

## READING

After three oaths, an imprecation: "May the companions of the trench perish, of the fire richly fueled, when they sat around it, and were witnesses to what they were doing to the believers." (85:4-7). They are not only guilty: they watch what they do.

Their grievance fits in one sentence: "And they reproached them for nothing except that they believed in God, the All-Powerful, the Praiseworthy" (85:8). The same turn recurs elsewhere: believers are reproached only for their faith (5:59, 7:126).

Facing these witnesses, another Witness: "And God is Witness over all things." (85:9). Two outcomes: for those who persecuted without repenting, "the punishment of Jahannam" (85:10); for those who believed and did righteous deeds, Gardens: "That is the great triumph." (85:11).

God is then described: "Indeed, it is He who originates and remakes." (85:13); "the Glorious, ever doing what He wills." (85:15-16). The armies of Fir'awn and of Thamud recall it (85:17-18). The sura closes on the Recitation: "it is a glorious Recitation, upon a Preserved Tablet." (85:21-22).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 85:7**

وَهُمْ عَلَىٰ مَا يَفْعَلُونَ بِٱلْمُؤْمِنِينَ شُهُودٌ

*"were witnesses to what they were doing to the believers"*
The persecutors watch what they do.

**EXAMPLE 85:8**

وَمَا نَقَمُواْ مِنْهُمْ إِلَّآ أَن يُؤْمِنُواْ

"*And they reproached them for nothing except that they believed in God*"
The only grievance: faith.

**EXAMPLE 85:16**

فَعَّالٌ لِّمَا يُرِيدُ

"*ever doing what He wills.*"
An intensive form: a doing that never ceases.

**READ WITH**

- 5:59 and 7:126: the same reproach, aimed at faith.
- 11:107: "ever doing what He wills".
- 86:4: the next sura, a guardian over every Self.
- 89:6-13: Fir'awn and Thamud.

**IN BRIEF**

Persecution reproaches the believers for one thing only: having believed. The persecutors are witnesses to their own deeds; God is Witness over all, and ever does what He wills.

SURA 86 · الطارق · AT-TARIQ

# Able to Bring Back

> Every Self has a guardian. The One who created the human being from a gushing fluid is able to bring him back; on that Day, secrets will be tested. The word is decisive, and the scheme of some meets God's.

## READING

The sura opens on an oath and a question: "By the sky and the night comer! And what will make you know what the night comer is? It is the piercing star." (86:1-3). Then an affirmation: "There is no Self but has a guardian over it." (86:4). That guardian is placed by God (Sending "upon": what comes down, and the guardians).

"So let the human being observe from what he was created." (86:5). The answer: "from a gushing fluid, emerging from between the loins [of the man] and the bosom [of the woman]." (86:6-7). And the conclusion: "Indeed, He is capable of his return, the Day when secrets will be put to the test" (86:8-9). The One who brought him can bring him back.

A second oath takes up the idea of return: "By the sky which returns! And by the earth which cracks open! Indeed, it is a decisive word, and it is no frivolity." (86:11-14).

The end sets two schemes face to face: "Indeed, they scheme a scheme, and I scheme a scheme." (86:15-16). The messenger has only to wait: "respite them a little." (86:17).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 86:4**

إِن كُلُّ نَفْسٍ لَّمَّا عَلَيْهَا حَافِظٌ

"*There is no Self but has a guardian over it.*"

A guardian over every Self.

**EXAMPLE 86:8**

إِنَّهُۥ عَلَىٰ رَجْعِهِۦ لَقَادِرٌ

"*Indeed, He is capable of his return*"

The One who brought him can bring him back.

**EXAMPLE 86:15-16**

إِنَّهُمْ يَكِيدُونَ كَيْدًا وَأَكِيدُ كَيْدًا

"*Indeed, they scheme a scheme, and I scheme a scheme.*"

Two schemes face to face.

## READ WITH

- 85:13: "it is He who originates and remakes".
- 4:23: "your own loins", the same word.
- 105:2: a scheme led astray.
- The literal sense first, the reading in brackets: the brackets of 86:7, read with 4:23.

**IN BRIEF**

The One who created the human being from a gushing fluid is able to bring him back; on that Day secrets are tested, and the scheme meets God's.

SURA 87 · الاعلى · AL-A'LA

# Create, Measure, Guide

> Glorifying the Guardian, who creates, harmonizes, measures and guides; He will make His messenger read and ease his way. The reminder benefits the one who fears; success is to purify oneself and make contact.

## READING

"Glorify the name of your Guardian, the Most High" (87:1). The Guardian is described by His acts: "who created and harmonized, and who measured and guided, and who brought forth the pasture, and then made it dark stubble." (87:2-5). Creating, adjusting, setting the measure, directing, making grow, making wither: all that lives passes through these acts.

To the messenger, two promises: "We will make you read so you shall not forget, except what God wills." (87:6-7); "And We will ease you toward ease." (87:8). The same ease is promised in 92:7.

The reminder has two audiences: "He who fears will remember, and the most wretched will avoid it" (87:10-11).

Then success, defined by three acts: "He has certainly succeeded who purifies himself, and remembers the name of his Guardian, and makes contact." (87:14-15). And the finding: "you prefer the present life, while the last life is better and more enduring." (87:16-17). This reminder is not new: "this is in the former scrolls, the scrolls of Ibrahim and Moussa." (87:18-19).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 87:2-3**

ٱلَّذِى خَلَقَ فَسَوَّىٰ وَٱلَّذِى قَدَّرَ فَهَدَىٰ

*"who created and harmonized, and who measured and guided"*
The Guardian defined by His acts.

**EXAMPLE 87:14**

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَن تَزَكَّىٰ

"*He has certainly succeeded who purifies himself*"
Success, in three acts.

**EXAMPLE 87:17**

وَٱلْـَٔاخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَىٰٓ

"*the last life is better and more enduring.*"
The finding that follows.

**READ WITH**

- 91:7–10: a Self harmonized, and the success of the one who purifies it.
- 92:7: the way toward ease.
- 96:1: "Read, in the name of your Guardian who created".
- The divine title in a man's mouth: "the Most High", the title Fir'awn claims (79:24).

**IN BRIEF**

The Guardian creates, measures, guides and makes wither; the reminder benefits the one who fears; success is to purify oneself and make contact.

SURA 88 · الغاشية · AL-GHASHIYA

# Effort and Its Fruit

> On that Day, two groups of faces: some exhausted by their toil, others pleased with their effort. All have toiled; only effort rightly directed satisfies. The messenger reminds; he does not compel.

## READING

"Has there come to you the account of the Enveloping Event?" (88:1). The sura describes two groups of faces.

The first are "downcast, toiling, exhausted" (88:2-3); their only food is a bitter thorny plant, "which neither fattens nor avails against hunger" (88:7). The second are "radiant, pleased with their effort, in an elevated garden" (88:8-10). Both groups have worked; the difference is not the effort, but what it yields (The same gesture in both camps).

Then four gazes are offered: "Do they not look at the camels, how they were created? And at the sky, how it was raised? And at the mountains, how they were set up? And at the earth, how it was spread out?" (88:17-20).

Finally the messenger's task: "So remind; you are only a reminder." (88:21); "You have no power to compel them." (88:22). The return and the reckoning are not his: "To Us is their return, then upon Us is their reckoning." (88:25-26).

## IN THE TEXT

EXAMPLE **88:3**

عَامِلَةٌ نَّاصِبَةٌ

*"toiling, exhausted"*

The first group: effort without fruit.

**EXAMPLE 88:9**

لِّسَعْيِهَا رَاضِيَةٌ

“*pleased with their effort*”
The second group: the same effort, another fruit.

**EXAMPLE 88:22**

لَّسْتَ عَلَيْهِم بِمُصَيْطِرٍ

“*You have no power to compel them.*”
Reminding, without compelling.

**READ WITH**

- 92:4: "Your efforts are indeed diverse".
- 69:22: "an elevated garden".
- 111:2 and 92:11: what avails nothing.
- 85:17: the same question, "Has there reached you the account".
- The same gesture in both camps: two groups, one effort, two fruits.

**IN BRIEF**

All toil; only effort rightly directed satisfies. The messenger reminds without compelling; the return and the reckoning belong to God.

SURA 89 · الفجر · AL-FAJR

# The Trial Read Backwards

> The human being reads the trial backwards: honored, he thinks himself chosen; restricted, he thinks himself humiliated. The text judges him on what he does for the orphan and the destitute. At the end, only the reassured Self returns, well-pleased.

## READING

The sura opens on oaths: "By the dawn! By ten nights!" (89:1-2). It then recalls three peoples "who exceeded all measure in the lands" (89:11): Aad, Thamud and Fir'awn. "Indeed, your Guardian is ever watchful." (89:14).

Then comes the human being and his way of reading what happens to him. When his Guardian tests him by blessing him, he concludes he has been honored; when He tests him by restricting his provision, he concludes he has been humiliated (89:15-16). Both are trials; he sees in them only a verdict on his own person.

"By no means!" the text answers, and moves the question to deeds: "you do not honor the orphan, and you do not urge one another to feed the destitute, and you consume the inheritance with voracious greed, and you love goods with immense love." (89:17-20). Being honored is not measured by what one receives, but by how one honors others (The text defines by deeds).

When the Day comes, the human being will remember, too late: "Oh, if only I had sent [something] ahead for my life!" (89:24). True life is the one after. The sura closes on a call: "O reassured Self! Return to your Guardian, well-pleased and pleasing." (89:27-28).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 89:15**

فَيَقُولُ رَبِّيٓ أَكۡرَمَنِ

*"he says, "My Guardian has honored me.""*
Blessed, he thinks himself chosen.

**EXAMPLE 89:17**

بَل لَّا تُكۡرِمُونَ ٱلۡيَتِيمَ

"*But rather, you do not honor the orphan*"
The text's answer: deeds.

**EXAMPLE 89:27**

يَٰٓأَيَّتُهَا ٱلنَّفۡسُ ٱلۡمُطۡمَئِنَّةُ

"O *reassured Self!*"
The only one who returns, well-pleased and pleasing.

## READ WITH

- 89:6 and 105:1: the same question about what the Guardian did.
- 107:2-3: the orphan repelled and the destitute not fed.
- 90: the next sura, the steep path: freeing, feeding.
- The literal sense first, the reading in brackets: the even and the odd, read in brackets (89:3).

**IN BRIEF**

The human being reads the trial backwards; the text judges him on what he does for the orphan and the destitute. At the end, only the reassured Self returns, well-pleased and pleasing.

SURA 90 · البلد · AL-BALAD

# The Steep Path

> The human being, created in hardship and given the means to discern, has not plunged into the steep path. The text says what it is: freeing, feeding, then believing and enjoining one another to patience and benevolence.

## READING

"No! I swear by this city" (90:1): the oath begins by setting aside an idea, then swears. It leads to a finding: "We have certainly created the human being in hardship." (90:4).

Facing this condition, a man believes himself out of reach: "Does he think that no one will ever have power over him?" (90:5). He boasts: "I have squandered vast goods!" (90:6), and thinks that no one has seen him (90:7).

The text recalls what he received: "two eyes, a tongue, and two lips", and he was guided "along the two paths" (90:8-10). "But he has not plunged into the steep path." (90:11).

The usual question follows: "And what will make you know what the steep path is?" (90:12). The answer is no exploit: "It is freeing someone from a crushing debt, or feeding, on a day of hunger, an orphan near of kin, or a destitute person in privation." (90:13-16). Then "being of those who have believed and enjoined one another to patience, and enjoined one another to benevolence." (90:17). The path is defined by deeds (The text defines by deeds).

Two groups part ways: "the companions of the right side" (90:18), and those of the left, over whom closes "a fire locked shut" (90:19-20).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 90:10**

وَهَدَيْنَٰهُ ٱلنَّجْدَيْنِ

"*guided him along the two paths?*"
What he received: the means to discern.

**EXAMPLE 90:11**

فَلَا ٱقْتَحَمَ ٱلْعَقَبَةَ

"*But he has not plunged into the steep path.*"
The finding, before the definition.

**EXAMPLE 90:13**

فَكُّ رَقَبَةٍ

"*It is freeing someone from a crushing debt*"
The steep path, defined by deeds.

## READ WITH

- 89:17-20: the previous sura, the orphan and the destitute neglected.
- 103:3: the same reciprocal form, for truth and patience.
- 56:8-9: the companions of the right side and of the left side.
- 104:8: a fire "locked shut", the same word.

**IN BRIEF**

The human being is created in hardship and given the means to discern; the steep path is no exploit but a giving: freeing, feeding, then believing and enjoining one another to patience and benevolence.

SURA 91 · الشمس · ASH-SHAMS

# Purify or Bury

> Eleven oaths lead to the Self: it has received both ways; to succeed is to purify it, to fail is to bury it. The people of Thamud are the example.

## READING

The sura heaps up oaths: the sun and the moon, the day and the night, the sky and the earth, then "By a Self, and what proportioned it" (91:7). All creation leads to the inside of the human being.

This Self has received both ways at once: it has been inspired with what takes it beyond its limits and with what protects it (91:8). Nothing is hidden: both paths are known from within.

The sentence follows: "He has succeeded who purifies it, and he has failed who buries it." (91:9-10). The word "bury" is found only here: the Self is hidden as something is buried. Sura 87 says likewise: "He has certainly succeeded who purifies himself" (87:14).

The account of Thamud shows the failure: "The Depleters [Thamud] denied, in their excess" (91:11). The messenger asks them to let the she-camel drink; they hamstring her, and their Guardian destroys them (91:13-14). Sura 54 tells the same scene (54:27-29).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 91:9-10**

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَن زَكَّىٰهَا وَقَدْ خَابَ مَن دَسَّىٰهَا

*"He has succeeded who purifies it, and he has failed who buries it."*

The sentence the oaths lead to.

**EXAMPLE 91:7**

وَنَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّىٰهَا

"*By a Self, and what proportioned it*"
The last oath: the Self.

**EXAMPLE 91:11**

كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُودُ بِطَغْوَىٰهَآ

"*The Depleters [Thamud] denied, in their excess*"
The account that shows the failure.

**READ WITH**

- 87:14: "He has certainly succeeded who purifies himself".
- 54:27-29 and 7:73: the she-camel of Thamud.
- 92: the next sura, two mirrored portraits.
- Seeing oneself self-sufficient, the reverse of purifying oneself: purifying oneself, against the one who sees himself self-sufficient (80:5-7, 92:8).

**IN BRIEF**

The Self has received both ways; to succeed is to purify it, to fail is to bury it. Thamud are the example.

SURA 92 · اللَّيْل · AL-LAYL

# Diverging Efforts

> Two mirrored portraits: the one who gives and the one who withholds. Each is eased along the way he has chosen; and the one who gives seeks nothing in return.

## READING

Three oaths, the night, the day, the male and the female, lead to a finding: "Your efforts are indeed diverse." (92:4).

Two portraits answer each other trait for trait. "As for the one who gives, and guards himself, and affirms the best — We will ease him toward ease." (92:5-7). "But as for the one who withholds, and considers himself self-sufficient, and denies the best - We will ease him toward hardship." (92:8-10). The same verb, "ease", holds for both: each is helped along the way he has taken (The same gesture in both camps).

The second relies on his goods, but "his goods will not avail him when he falls." (92:11). Seeing oneself self-sufficient is the reverse of purifying oneself (Seeing oneself self-sufficient, the reverse of purifying oneself).

The end describes the most guarded, the one "who gives his goods to purify himself" (92:18), expecting nothing from anyone, and the sura closes on a promise: "And he will surely soon be satisfied." (92:21).

## IN THE TEXT

EXAMPLE **92:4**

إِنَّ سَعْيَكُمْ لَشَتَّىٰ

*"Your efforts are indeed diverse."*

The finding that opens the two portraits.

**EXAMPLE 92:5**

فَأَمَّا مَنْ أَعْطَىٰ وَٱتَّقَىٰ

"As *for the one who gives, and guards himself, and affirms the best*"

The first portrait.

**EXAMPLE 92:8**

وَأَمَّا مَنۢ بَخِلَ وَٱسْتَغْنَىٰ

"*But as for the one who withholds, and considers himself self-sufficient, and denies the best*"

The reverse portrait, trait for trait.

**READ WITH**

- 96:7 and 80:5: seeing oneself self-sufficient.
- 93:5: the same promise, "you will be satisfied".
- 94:5-6: ease beside hardship.
- 4:95 and 10:26: "the best", the same word.
- The same gesture in both camps: the same verb "ease" for both portraits.

**IN BRIEF**

Efforts diverge, and each is helped along the way he has taken; the most guarded gives to purify himself, expecting nothing in return.

SURA 93 · الضحى · AD-DUHA

# What He Did for You

> The Guardian has not forsaken His messenger: He sheltered him, guided him, enriched him. What He did for him becomes what he must do for others.

## READING

Two oaths, the morning brightness and the night that grows still, open an assurance: "Your Guardian has not forsaken you, nor has He taken you in aversion." (93:3). Then a promise: "And your Guardian will surely give you, and you will be satisfied." (93:5).

Three questions recall what was done: "Did He not find you an orphan and give you shelter? Did He not find you astray and guide you? Did He not find you in need and enrich you?" (93:6-8). "Astray" here means one who had not yet found the way, not one who had done wrong.

Three commands answer them, one by one: "So as for the orphan, do not oppress him." (93:9); "And as for the seeker, do not rebuke him harshly." (93:10); "And as for the blessing of your Guardian, proclaim it." (93:11). The orphan who was sheltered does not oppress the orphan; the one who was guided does not rebuke the one who asks; the one who was enriched says where what he has comes from.

The next sura continues with three more questions of the same kind (94:1-4).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 93:3**

مَا وَدَّعَكَ رَبُّكَ وَمَا قَلَىٰ

*"Your Guardian has not forsaken you, nor has He taken you in aversion."*
The assurance that opens the sura.

**EXAMPLE 93:6**

أَلَمْ يَجِدْكَ يَتِيمًا فَـَٔاوَىٰ

"*Did He not find you an orphan and give you shelter?*"
The first blessing recalled.

**EXAMPLE 93:9**

فَأَمَّا ٱلْيَتِيمَ فَلَا تَقْهَرْ

"*So as for the orphan, do not oppress him.*"
The command that answers the first blessing.

**READ WITH**

- 94:1-4: the next sura, three other blessings recalled.
- 107:2: the one who repels the orphan, the opposite of 93:9.
- 92:5-8: giving or withholding.
- The text defines by deeds: what one does to the orphan says who one is (107:1-3).

**IN BRIEF**

The Guardian has not forsaken; what He did for you becomes what you must do for others.

SURA 94 · الانشراح · ASH-SHARH

# With Hardship, Ease

> Three things done for the Prophet ground a promise said twice: with hardship comes ease. Hence two commands: direct your effort, and turn your longing to the Guardian.

## READING

The sura opens on three questions recalling what was done (94:1-4): the chest opened, the burden removed, the one "which weighed upon your back", the renown raised. As in sura 93, each blessing is recalled by a question.

Then the promise, said twice: "So indeed, with hardship comes ease." (94:5-6). The text does not say "after" but "with": ease is already there, beside hardship. Sura 92 has already named the two ways, toward ease and toward hardship (92:7, 92:10).

Finally two commands: "As soon as you are freed, direct your effort, and to your Guardian turn your longing." (94:7-8). What was received does not exempt from effort; it gives it its direction.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 94:5**

فَإِنَّ مَعَ ٱلْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا

*“So indeed, with hardship comes ease.”*
"With", not "after": ease is already there.

**EXAMPLE 94:7**

فَإِذَا فَرَغْتَ فَٱنصَبْ

*“As soon as you are freed, direct your effort”*
The first of the two commands.

**EXAMPLE 92:7**

فَسَنُيَسِّرُهُۥ لِلۡيُسۡرَىٰ

"*We will ease him toward ease.*"
The same ease, in sura 92.

**READ WITH**

- 93:6-8: the previous sura, three other blessings recalled by questions.
- 92:7 and 92:10: the way toward ease and the way toward hardship.
- 20:25 and 26:13: Moussa, the chest that opens or tightens.

**IN BRIEF**

What was done grounds the promise: hardship never comes alone. Hence the command to direct one's effort and turn one's longing to the Guardian.

SURA 95 · التين · AT-TIN

# From the Best to the Lowest

> Created in the best of stature, the human being is reduced to the lowest of the low; only an exception brings him out, and it is made of deeds.

## READING

The sura opens on four oaths: "By the fig and the olive! And by Mount Sinai! And by this secure city!" (95:1-3).

Then the finding, in two steps: "We have certainly created the human being in the best of stature, then We reduced him to the lowest of the low" (95:4-5). The starting point is the best; the slope leads to the lowest.

The exception follows at once: "except those who have believed and done righteous deeds: for them is a reward never interrupted." (95:6). The same exception, in the same words, brings the human being out of loss in sura 103 (The human slope, and the exception that leads out of it). "A reward never interrupted" returns identically in 41:8, 68:3 and 84:25.

The sura closes on two questions. The first: "So what causes you to deny, after this, the Retribution?" (95:7). The second asks whether God is not, among all judges, the One who judges best (95:8).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 95:4**

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا ٱلْإِنسَٰنَ فِىٓ أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ

*"We have certainly created the human being in the best of stature"*

The starting point: the best.

**EXAMPLE 95:5**

ثُمَّ رَدَدْنَٰهُ أَسْفَلَ سَٰفِلِينَ

*"then We reduced him to the lowest of the low"*

The slope.

**EXAMPLE 95:6**

إِلَّا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ وَعَمِلُواْ ٱلصَّٰلِحَٰتِ فَلَهُمْ أَجْرٌ غَيْرُ مَمْنُونٍ

*"except those who have believed and done righteous deeds: for them is a reward never interrupted."*

The exception, made of deeds.

**READ WITH**

- 103:2-3: the same exception, which brings out of loss.
- 41:8, 68:3, 84:25: "a reward never interrupted".
- 11:45: the other occurrence of the question about the best of judges.
- The human slope, and the exception that leads out of it: the same pattern in suras 103, 70 and 100.

**IN BRIEF**

Created at the best, the human being falls; only the exception, made of faith and righteous deeds, brings him out, with a reward never interrupted.

SURA 96 · العلق · AL-ALAQ

# Read and Draw Near

> The sura begins with "Read" and ends with "draw near". Between the two, the human being who believes himself self-sufficient, and the one who prevents another from making contact.

## READING

"Read, in the name of your Guardian who created, who created the human being from a clinging thing." (96:1-2). Then again: "Read! And your Guardian is the Most Noble, who taught by the pen, taught the human being what he did not know." (96:3-5). All the human being knows has been taught to him.

And yet: "The human being truly exceeds all measure, as soon as he sees himself self-sufficient." (96:6-7). He "sees" himself so; the sura answers him further on: "Does he not know that God sees?" (96:14). Two gazes: man's upon himself, God's upon man (Seeing oneself self-sufficient, the reverse of purifying oneself).

Three questions describe a man who "forbids an obedient one when he makes contact" (96:9-10), who denies and turns away. The threat is concrete: "We will seize him violently by the forelock" (96:15), the forelock by which God holds every living creature (11:56).

The conclusion is a command: "Do not obey him, but prostrate and draw near." (96:19). One does not follow the one who prevents contact; one draws near to the One he would have forgotten.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 96:6-7**

إِنَّ ٱلْإِنسَٰنَ لَيَطْغَىٰٓ أَن رَّءَاهُ ٱسْتَغْنَىٰٓ

*"The human being truly exceeds all measure, as soon as he sees himself self-sufficient."*
Man "sees" himself self-sufficient.

**EXAMPLE 96:14**

أَلَمْ يَعْلَم بِأَنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَرَىٰ

*"Does he not know that God sees?"*
God sees.

**EXAMPLE 96:19**

لَا تُطِعْهُ وَٱسْجُدْ وَٱقْتَرِب

*"Do not obey him, but prostrate and draw near."*
The last word of the sura: drawing near.

## READ WITH

- 80:5-7 and 64:6: seeing oneself self-sufficient, and the One who is Self-Sufficient.
- 11:56: the forelock of every living creature, which God holds.
- 75:31 and 87:15: "make contact", the same verb used on its own.
- Seeing oneself self-sufficient, the reverse of purifying oneself: suras 80 and 92 draw the same portrait.

**IN BRIEF**

Reading and knowledge come from the Guardian; the human being exceeds all measure once he deems himself self-sufficient; the answer to the one who prevents contact is not to obey him, and to draw near.

SURA 97 · القدر · AL-QADR

# Better Than a Thousand Months

> A night in which the Recitation came down, more precious than a thousand months, in which the Agents and the Influx descend; and peace until dawn.

## READING

"We sent it down during the Night of Measure." (97:1). The pronoun refers to the Recitation; sura 44 says so too: "We sent it down in a blessed night" (44:3).

The name of this night returns three times instead of a pronoun, and the sura asks its question: "And what will make you know what the Night of Measure is?" (97:2). The answer: "The Night of Measure is better than a thousand months." (97:3).

The word "Measure" names what is fixed, apportioned, determined: it is the night in which things receive their measure. "During it descend the Agents and the Influx, by the permission of their Guardian, for every command." (97:4).

The sura closes on peace, and on its limit: "It is peace, until the emergence of dawn." (97:5).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 97:1**

إِنَّآ أَنزَلْنَٰهُ فِى لَيْلَةِ ٱلْقَدْرِ

*"We sent it down during the Night of Measure."*
The sending down of the Recitation.

**EXAMPLE 97:3**

لَيْلَةُ ٱلْقَدْرِ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ

*"The Night of Measure is better than a thousand months."*
The answer to the question of verse 2.

**EXAMPLE 97:5**

سَلَٰمٌ هِىَ حَتَّىٰ مَطْلَعِ ٱلْفَجْرِ

*"It is peace, until the emergence of dawn."*
Peace, and its limit.

## READ WITH

- 44:3: "a blessed night", the same sending down.
- 2:185: the month in which the Recitation was revealed.
- 98: the next sura, the Proof that comes to the People of the Scripture.

**IN BRIEF**

A Night of Measure, better than a thousand months, in which the Recitation descends with the Agents and the Influx; peace, until dawn.

SURA 98 · البينة · AL-BAYYINA

# Divided After the Proof

> Those given the Scripture did not divide for lack of knowledge, but after the Proof came to them. And what they had been commanded was simple.

## READING

The sura opens on a waiting: those who disowned, among the People of the Scripture and the associators, "were not to separate until the Clear Proof came to them" (98:1). The Proof is defined at once: "a messenger from God, reciting purified pages, containing upright writings." (98:2-3).

Then the finding: "And those who were given the Scripture did not become divided except after the Clear Proof came to them." (98:4). Division does not come from ignorance; it comes after clarity.

What they had been asked fits in one sentence: "to obey God, devoting to Him exclusively their Law, in true uprightness, and to maintain the Contact and give the purifying alms." (98:5). And the text adds: this is "the Law of the upright". The word "upright" already described the writings of verse 3: the Law asked of them is the very one those writings contained.

Two outcomes answer each other. Those who disowned are "the worst of creation" (98:6); "Those who have believed and done righteous deeds, those are the best of creation." (98:7). The sura closes on a mutual satisfaction: "God is satisfied with them, and they are satisfied with Him." (98:8).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 98:4**

وَمَا تَفَرَّقَ ٱلَّذِينَ أُوتُواْ ٱلۡكِتَٰبَ

*"And those who were given the Scripture did not become divided except after the Clear Proof came to them."*

Division, after clarity.

**EXAMPLE 98:5**

وَمَآ أُمِرُوٓاْ إِلَّا لِيَعۡبُدُواْ ٱللَّهَ مُخۡلِصِينَ لَهُ ٱلدِّينَ

*"And they were not commanded except to obey God, devoting to Him exclusively their Law"*

The command received, in one sentence.

**EXAMPLE 98:8**

رَّضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنۡهُمۡ وَرَضُواْ عَنۡهُ

*"God is satisfied with them, and they are satisfied with Him."*

Satisfaction in both directions.

## READ WITH

- 109:6: "To you your Law, and to me my Law".
- 103:3 and 95:6: the formula "those who have believed and done righteous deeds".
- 97: the previous sura, the sending down of the Recitation.
- 99: the next sura, each before his deeds.

**IN BRIEF**

Division came after the Proof, not for lack of knowledge; the command received was simple: obey God, devoting the Law to Him, maintain the Contact, give the alms.

SURA 99 · الزلزلة · AZ-ZALZALA

# A Grain's Weight

> On the Day the earth quakes, it brings forth what it carries and recounts what it knows, inspired by its Guardian. Each will then see his deeds, down to a grain's weight.

## READING

The sura opens on "When": "When the earth is shaken with its quaking" (99:1). The quaking is not a hypothesis; it will come.

"the earth brings forth its burdens" (99:2), and the human being wonders what is happening to it (99:3). The answer is that it speaks: "that Day it will recount its news, for your Guardian will have inspired it." (99:4-5). It is the same verb as for the bee: "your Guardian inspired the bee" (16:68). The earth does not speak of itself; it speaks because it has been inspired (Reveal or inspire: according to who receives). Elsewhere it is the skins that bear witness: "Why did you testify against us?" (41:21).

"That Day, the people will emerge separately, to be shown their deeds." (99:6). Each alone, before his own deeds.

The sura closes on two symmetrical sentences: "So whoever does a grain's weight of good will see it" (99:7); "And whoever does a grain's weight of evil will see it." (99:8). Nothing is too small to be seen, and "God does no injustice, even the weight of a grain." (4:40).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 99:4-5**

يَوْمَئِذٍ تُحَدِّثُ أَخْبَارَهَا بِأَنَّ رَبَّكَ أَوْحَىٰ لَهَا

*"that Day it will recount its news, for your Guardian will have inspired it."*
The earth speaks, by inspiration.

**EXAMPLE 99:7**

فَمَن يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُۥ

"So *whoever does a grain's weight of good will see it*,"
Good, down to the smallest.

**EXAMPLE 99:8**

وَمَن يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُۥ

"*And whoever does a grain's weight of evil will see it*."
Evil, in the same measure.

**READ WITH**

- 16:68: the bee, inspired by the same verb as the earth.
- 41:21: the skins that bear witness.
- 4:40 and 34:3: a grain's weight, which nothing lets escape.
- 100: the next sura, what is in the graves and in the breasts brought to light.

**IN BRIEF**

On the Day of the quaking, even the earth bears witness, inspired by its Guardian; each sees his deeds, down to a grain's weight.

SURA 100 · العاديات · AL-ADIYAT

# The Ungrateful, Witness Against Himself

> An oath on chargers launched at the assault, then a finding about the human being: ungrateful toward his Guardian, witness to his own ingratitude, fierce in the love of the good. What he hides will be drawn out.

## READING

The sura opens on an oath in five movements: "By those that cross the limits, panting, that strike the spark through their clashes, that launch the assault at dawn, stirring up the dust, and plunging thereby into the heart of a gathering!" (100:1-5). Each gesture follows from the one before. Several suras open this way on "those that", without naming who they are (37:1-3, 51:1-4, 77:1-5, 79:1-5).

The oath leads to the human being: "The human being is, toward his Guardian, rebelliously ungrateful, and he is himself a witness to that, and for the love of the good he is fierce." (100:6-8). Three traits: ingratitude, witness against oneself, attachment to goods. "The love of the good" is the very expression Sulayman accuses himself of: "I have preferred the love of the good over the remembrance of my Guardian" (38:32).

The sura ends on a question: "Does he not know that when what is in the graves is overturned, and what is in the breasts is drawn out, their Guardian, that Day, will be Informed about them?" (100:9-11). What is buried and what is hidden deep within will be brought to light.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 100:6**

إِنَّ ٱلْإِنسَٰنَ لِرَبِّهِۦ لَكَنُودٌ

*"The human being is, toward his Guardian, rebelliously ungrateful"*
The finding the oath leads to.

**EXAMPLE 100:8**

وَإِنَّهُۥ لِحُبِّ ٱلْخَيْرِ لَشَدِيدٌ

"*for the love of the good he is fierce.*"
The very expression of 38:32.

**EXAMPLE 100:10**

وَحُصِّلَ مَا فِى ٱلصُّدُورِ

"*what is in the breasts is drawn out*"
What is hidden deep within will be brought to light.

**READ WITH**

- 37:1-3, 51:1-4, 77:1-5, 79:1-5: other oaths on "those that".
- 38:32: "the love of the good", the same expression.
- 99: the previous sura, the earth bringing forth its burdens.
- The human slope, and the exception that leads out of it: the same finding about the human being in suras 95, 103 and 70.

**IN BRIEF**

The human being is ungrateful toward his Guardian, a witness against himself, and fierce in the love of the good; what he hides will be drawn out.

SURA 101 · القارعة · AL-QARI'A

# What Weighs

> On the Day of the Crash, people are scattered like moths, the mountains like wool, and only the weight of deeds counts: a satisfying life, or the Abyss for abode.

## READING

The sura opens on a name, taken up as a question: "The Crash. What is the Crash?" (101:1-2), then "And what will make you know what the Crash is?" (101:3). The text does not answer with a definition: it describes the Day.

"The Day when people will be like scattered moths, and the mountains will be like carded wool." (101:4-5). What was heavy and stable, the mountains, becomes light. The same image returns in sura 70: "the mountains will be like carded wool" (70:9).

On that Day, only weight counts. Two outcomes answer each other: the one whose weights are heavy will be in a satisfying life; the one whose weights are light will have the Abyss for abode (101:6-9). The same sentences return in 7:8-9 and 23:102-103, and "a satisfying life" in 69:21.

For the Abyss, the text takes up its question again: "And what will make you know what it is?" (101:10), and this time answers in two words: "A blazing fire." (101:11).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 101:1-2**

ٱلْقَارِعَةُ مَا ٱلْقَارِعَةُ

*"The Crash. What is the Crash?"*

A name, taken up as a question.

**EXAMPLE 101:4**

يَوْمَ يَكُونُ ٱلنَّاسُ كَٱلْفَرَاشِ ٱلْمَبْثُوثِ

*"The Day when people will be like scattered moths, and the mountains will be like carded wool."*

What was stable becomes light.

**EXAMPLE 101:11**

نَارٌ حَامِيَةٌۢ

"A *blazing fire*."

The answer, in two words, to the question about the Abyss.

**READ WITH**

- 7:8-9 and 23:102-103: heavy and light weights, in the same terms.
- 69:21: "a satisfying life".
- 70:9: the mountains like carded wool.
- 99: the previous sura, where each sees the weight of his deeds.

**IN BRIEF**

On the Day of the Crash, all that seemed solid is scattered, and only the weight of deeds counts: a satisfying life for the one who weighs, the Abyss for the one who is light.

SURA 102 · التكاثر · AT-TAKATHUR

# Distracted Until the Grave

> Rivalry in accumulation distracts until the grave. Certainty will come, first through knowledge, then through sight, and finally the question about the bliss received.

## READING

"Rivalry in accumulation has distracted you, until you visited the graves." (102:1-2). Both verbs are in the perfect: the finding is made, the distraction lasted a whole life (Where the aspect of the verb makes the meaning). The graves are "visited": one passes through them, as one passes by someone's house.

Three times the text answers "By no means!" (102:3-5), then it describes the degrees of certainty. Knowledge: "If only you knew with certain knowledge." (102:5). Sight: "You will most surely see the Blaze. Then you will most surely see it with the eye of certainty." (102:6-7). Finally the question: "you will surely be questioned, that Day, about the bliss." (102:8).

The word "accumulation" shares the root of "the Abundance" in sura 108: on one side what is piled up and distracts, on the other what is given (A root passes the baton from one sura to the next). And the last question concerns the bliss: what was accumulated was already a gift, and it will have to be answered for.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 102:1-2**

أَلْهَىٰكُمُ ٱلتَّكَاثُرُ حَتَّىٰ زُرْتُمُ ٱلْمَقَابِرَ

*"Rivalry in accumulation has distracted you, until you visited the graves."*
Two perfects: a finding about a whole life.

**EXAMPLE 102:7**

ثُمَّ لَتَرَوُنَّهَا عَيْنَ ٱلْيَقِينِ

*"Then you will most surely see it with the eye of certainty."*
After certain knowledge, certainty by sight.

**EXAMPLE 102:8**

ثُمَّ لَتُسْـَٔلُنَّ يَوْمَئِذٍ عَنِ ٱلنَّعِيمِ

*"you will surely be questioned, that Day, about the bliss."*
The last question concerns what was received.

**READ WITH**

- 108:1: "the Abundance", from the same root as "accumulation".
- 104: the one who gathers and counts, and believes himself eternal.
- 57:20: the present life, "rivalry in accumulation of goods and children".
- Where the aspect of the verb makes the meaning: "has distracted you", a perfect that states a finding.

**IN BRIEF**

Accumulation distracts until the grave; certainty will come through knowledge, then through sight; finally will come the question about the bliss.

SURA 103 · العصر · AL-ASR

# Out of Loss

> A single sentence: an oath, a finding about the human being, and an exception made of four deeds, two of which are done only with others.

## READING

"By Time! The human being is certainly in loss" (103:1-2). The finding is general: it holds for all, by default (The human slope, and the exception that leads out of it).

Then the exception: "except those who have believed, done righteous deeds, and enjoined one another to truth, and enjoined one another to patience." (103:3). Four deeds, all in the perfect: the way out of loss is described as already accomplished by those who leave it.

The first two form a formula that recurs very often in the Qur'an: "Those who have believed and done righteous deeds" (98:7, "Those who have believed and done righteous deeds"). The last two have a reciprocal form: one does not enjoin truth on oneself alone; people enjoin it on one another. The same form returns in sura 90: "enjoined one another to patience, and enjoined one another to benevolence." (90:17).

The Arabic word for "loss" is the one that closes the account of the city that defied the command of its Guardian (65:9).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 103:2**

إِنَّ ٱلْإِنسَٰنَ لَفِى خُسْرٍ

*"The human being is certainly in loss"*
The general finding.

**EXAMPLE 103:3**

وَتَوَاصَوْا بِٱلْحَقِّ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِٱلصَّبْرِ

"*enjoined one another to truth, and enjoined one another to patience.*"
The reciprocal form: a way out taken together.

**EXAMPLE 90:17**

وَتَوَاصَوْا بِٱلصَّبْرِ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِٱلْمَرْحَمَةِ

"*enjoined one another to patience, and enjoined one another to benevolence.*"
The same form in sura 90.

**READ WITH**

- 95:4-6: the human being reduced, except those who have believed and done righteous deeds.
- 90:17: the same reciprocal form, for patience and benevolence.
- 98:7: the formula "those who have believed and done righteous deeds".
- The human slope, and the exception that leads out of it: the same pattern in suras 95, 70 and 100.

**IN BRIEF**

The only way out of loss is already accomplished by those who leave it, and it is collective: having believed, acted righteously, and enjoined one another to truth and patience.

SURA 104 · الهمزة · AL-HUMAZA

# The Illusion of Eternity

> The one who disparages others and counts his goods believes his goods have already made him eternal. The answer reaches him to the depths of himself.

## READING

The sura opens on a woe: "Woe to every stinging slanderer, insinuating disparager" (104:1). Both words have an intensive form: this is not a lapse of one day, it is a habit.

The same man is the one "who gathers goods and counts them, thinking that his goods have made him eternal." (104:2-3). The verb is in the perfect: in his mind, it is already done (Where the aspect of the verb makes the meaning). The text answers in a word: "By no means!"

"He will surely be cast away into the Crusher." (104:4). The name is set down, then questioned: "And what will make you know what the Crusher is?" (104:5), then defined: "The fire of God, ablaze, which rises up to the Consciences." (104:6-7). What reaches him is not only his body: it is the inside, where he thought himself safe.

Finally: "It is locked shut upon them, in extended pillars." (104:8-9). The word "pillars" is the one the Qur'an uses for the heavens, raised "without pillars that you can see" (13:2). The one who thought his goods eternal is shut in.

The sura is read with sura 102, where accumulation distracts until the grave, and with 111:2, where goods avail nothing.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 104:3**

يَحْسَبُ أَنَّ مَالَهُۥٓ أَخْلَدَهُۥ

"*thinking that his goods have made him eternal*"
The perfect: in his mind, eternity is acquired.

**EXAMPLE 104:6-7**

نَارُ ٱللَّهِ ٱلْمُوقَدَةُ ٱلَّتِى تَطَّلِعُ عَلَى ٱلْأَفْـِٔدَةِ

"*The fire of God, ablaze, which rises up to the Consciences.*"
The answer reaches the inside.

**EXAMPLE 104:8-9**

إِنَّهَا عَلَيْهِم مُّؤْصَدَةٌ فِى عَمَدٍ مُّمَدَّدَةٍۭ

"*It is locked shut upon them, in extended pillars.*"
The pillars of the heavens (13:2), here closed upon them.

## READ WITH

- 102: the accumulation that distracts until the grave.
- 111:2: goods that avail nothing.
- 13:2 and 31:10: "pillars", the same word, for the heavens.
- Where the aspect of the verb makes the meaning: "have made him eternal", a perfect that states the illusion of something acquired.

**IN BRIEF**

The one who gathers and counts believes his goods have already made him eternal; the answer reaches him to the Consciences, and closes upon him.

SURA 105 · الفيل · AL-FIL

# The People Without Reason

> A question about what the Guardian did to people deprived of reason: their scheme led astray, stones of hardened clay, and they themselves reduced to residue. The Qur'an makes these stones fall only on the people of Lut.

## READING

The sura opens on a question: "Have you not seen how your Guardian dealt with the companions of unreason?" (105:1). The same formula opens, in 89:6, the recalling of punished peoples: Aad, Thamud, Fir'awn.

Those targeted are not named: they are defined by the absence of reason. It is the very reproach Lut addresses to his people: "is there not among you a reasonable man?" (11:78). The man without reason and the reasonable man answer each other from one account to the other.

"Did He not lead their scheme astray?" (105:2). The account of Lut says how: his aggressors "will never reach you" (11:81); "We blinded their eyes" (54:37). The scheme is led off its path and does not reach its aim.

Then come "stones of hardened clay" (105:4). This word returns in the Qur'an only for the people of Lut: "rained upon it stones of hardened clay" (11:82), and again in 15:74. The rare word links the passages, which tell of the same punishment (A unique word is read through its construction).

The end shows them reduced "to the state of eaten husk" (105:5). In the account of Lut, the city is overturned: "We made the top [of their city] its bottom" (11:82). Only residue remains.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 105:1**

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ فَعَلَ رَبُّكَ بِأَصْحَٰبِ ٱلْفِيلِ

"*Have you not seen how your Guardian dealt with the companions of unreason?*"

People defined by the absence of reason.

**EXAMPLE 11:78**

أَلَيْسَ مِنكُمْ رَجُلٌ رَّشِيدٌ

"*is there not among you a reasonable man?*"

Lut's reproach to his people.

**EXAMPLE 11:82**

حِجَارَةً مِّن سِجِّيلٍ

"*stones of hardened clay*"

The same stones as in 105:4, upon Lut's city.

## READ WITH

- 11:77-83: the account of Lut, his people without reason, the stones of hardened clay.
- 15:73-74: the same punishment, in the same terms.
- 54:37: the blinded eyes, the scheme that does not reach its aim.
- 89:6: the same question, for Aad, Thamud and Fir'awn.
- 106: the next sura, the Guardian who feeds and secures.

**IN BRIEF**

People without reason see their scheme led astray and end as residue, under stones the Qur'an makes fall only on the people of Lut: the sura recalls that punishment.

SURA 106 · قريش · QURAYSH

# Fed and Secured

> A single sentence: what the Guardian did for the Quraysh, feeding them and making them secure, is the reason to obey Him.

## READING

The sentence begins with its cause: "For the harmony of the Quraysh, their harmony of the journey of winter and summer" (106:1-2). The word "harmony" is repeated: it is the accord that makes the journeys of the two seasons possible, the cycle of the whole year.

Then comes the consequence, the only command in suras 105 to 107: "let them obey the Guardian of this House" (106:3). The formula "the Guardian of this place" returns only once elsewhere: "obey the Guardian of this land" (27:91).

Finally the reason: the Guardian is defined by what He did, the One "who fed them against hunger and secured them against fear." (106:4). Hunger and fear are joined only twice more in the Qur'an: once as a trial (2:155), once as a sanction, for a city that had received everything and disowned it: "God made it taste the garment of hunger and fear" (16:112). The Quraysh are the exact reverse of that city: fed and secured, it remains for them to obey.

The sura is framed by two questions that begin with "see" (105:1, 107:1), and food passes from one to the other (A root passes the baton from one sura to the next).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 106:1**

لِإِيلَٰفِ قُرَيْشٍ

*"For the harmony of the Quraysh, their harmony of the journey of winter and summer"*

The cause, set at the head of the sentence.

**EXAMPLE 106:4**

ٱلَّذِىٓ أَطْعَمَهُم مِّن جُوعٍ وَءَامَنَهُم مِّنْ خَوْفٍۭ

*"who fed them against hunger and secured them against fear."*

The Guardian defined by what He did.

**COUNTER-EXAMPLE 16:112**

فَأَذَٰقَهَا ٱللَّهُ لِبَاسَ ٱلْجُوعِ وَٱلْخَوْفِ

*"God made it taste the garment of hunger and fear"*

The city that disowned: the exact reverse of sura 106.

## READ WITH

- 16:112: the city that received everything and disowned it, the exact reverse of this sura.
- 2:155: hunger and fear as a trial.
- 27:91: "the Guardian of this land", the same formula.
- 105 and 107: the two neighbouring suras, which open on "see".

**IN BRIEF**

What the Guardian did, feeding and securing, is the reason to obey Him. The Quraysh are the reverse of the city of 16:112, which received the same blessings and disowned them.

SURA 107 · الماعون · AL-MA'UN

# Denial in Deeds

> Who denies the Retribution? The text answers with deeds: repelling the orphan, not urging the feeding of the destitute, making contact without being present, to be seen, and refusing the smallest help.

## READING

The sura asks a question and answers it at once: "Have you seen the one who denies the Retribution? He is the one who harshly repels the orphan, and does not urge the feeding of the destitute." (107:1-3). Denial is not an opinion: it shows in how the weak are treated (The text defines by deeds).

Those of the Fire make the same confession, in reverse order: "We were not of those who made contact, nor did we use to feed the destitute" (74:43-44), then "we used to deny the Day of Retribution" (74:46). The same three words, contact, the destitute, the Retribution, in both passages.

Then comes a "woe" addressed not to those who neglect contact, but to those who make it: "So woe to those who make contact, yet are absent-minded about their Contact" (107:4-5). The text does not condemn the Contact; it condemns being there without being there. Sura 70 uses the same turn for the opposite attitude: "constant in their Contact" (70:23). A single preposition separates constancy from absence (The preposition before "their Contact" tells the relationship).

These people "seek to be seen, and withhold assistance" (107:6-7). The last word of the sura names the smallest help, the kind lent between neighbours: even that is refused.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 107:1**

أَرَءَيْتَ ٱلَّذِى يُكَذِّبُ بِٱلدِّينِ

"*Have you seen the one who denies the Retribution?*"

The question, whose answer follows in deeds.

**EXAMPLE 107:4-5**

فَوَيْلٌ لِّلْمُصَلِّينَ ٱلَّذِينَ هُمْ عَن صَلَاتِهِمْ سَاهُونَ

"*So woe to those who make contact, yet are absent-minded about their Contact*"

The preposition of distance: present without being present.

**COUNTER-EXAMPLE 70:23**

ٱلَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَىٰ صَلَاتِهِمْ دَآئِمُونَ

"*constant in their Contact*"

The same turn with the preposition of constancy.

## READ WITH

- 74:43-46: the same three words, in the confession of those of the Fire.
- 70:22-23: "constant in their Contact", the opposite attitude.
- 8:35: a Contact emptied of its meaning, near the House.
- 69:34 and 89:18: the same urging to feed the destitute.
- 106: the previous sura, the Guardian who fed.
- 108: the next sura, contact dedicated to the Guardian.

**IN BRIEF**

The one who denies the Retribution is defined by his deeds. The Contact is not condemned: what is condemned is making it without being present, to be seen, while refusing the smallest help.

SURA 108 · الكوثر · AL-KAWTHAR

# The Gift and the Cutting-Off

> A gift without limit, two commands, and a reversal: the cutting-off falls back on the one who hates.

## READING

The sura opens on "We" and on a gift: "We have granted you the Abundance." (108:1). The verb is that of a gift nothing restricts: "your Guardian's gift is never restricted." (17:20); "a gift that will never be cut off." (11:108). "The Abundance" renders a word the Qur'an uses only here, built on the root of number and multitude.

Two commands follow: "So make contact for your Guardian, and fulfil it completely." (108:2). The verb "make contact", used on its own, is that of 87:15 and 96:10; only here is it followed by "for your Guardian": the contact is dedicated. The second verb has no object: it asks to go to the end of what has just been asked.

Then the reversal: "it is he who hates you who is himself the Cut-Off One." (108:3). The word for hatred is that of the hatred that makes one swerve: "let not the hatred of a people drive you to not be just." (5:8). And "the Cut-Off One", another unique word, is the exact opposite of "the Abundance": the one who wanted to cut off is cut off (A unique word is read through its construction).

The root of "the Abundance" also opens sura 102: "Rivalry in accumulation has distracted you" (102:1). On one side abundance given, on the other accumulation that distracts.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 108:1-2**

إِنَّآ أَعْطَيْنَٰكَ ٱلْكَوْثَرَ فَصَلِّ لِرَبِّكَ وَٱنْحَرْ

*"We have granted you the Abundance. So make contact for your Guardian, and fulfil it completely."*

A gift, then two commands: contact dedicated, and fulfilled to the end.

**EXAMPLE 108:3**

إِنَّ شَانِئَكَ هُوَ ٱلْأَبْتَرُ

*"it is he who hates you who is himself the Cut-Off One."*

"The Cut-Off One", the exact opposite of "the Abundance".

**EXAMPLE 17:20**

وَمَا كَانَ عَطَآءُ رَبِّكَ مَحْظُورًا

*"and your Guardian's gift is never restricted."*

The same verb of giving, without limit.

## READ WITH

- 17:20 and 11:108: the Guardian's gift, never restricted, never cut off.
- 87:15 and 96:10: "make contact", the same verb used on its own.
- 5:2 and 5:8: the hatred that makes one swerve, the same word as in 108:3.
- 102:1: the same root as "the Abundance", in the accumulation that distracts.
- 107: the previous sura, contact made without being present.

**IN BRIEF**

The gift is without limit; the response asked for is a contact dedicated to the Guardian and fulfilled completely; the cutting-off falls back on the one who hates.

SURA 109 · الكافرون · AL-KAFIRUN

# To Each His Law

> An answer to those who disown: a refusal that holds for the present and the past, an opposing position that does not move, and a conclusion without constraint.

## READING

The sura opens on "Say" and speaks directly: "O you who disown!" (109:1).

The heart of the text is a single verb, "obey", which returns eight times in five verses. What changes is its form, and that form carries the meaning (Where the aspect of the verb makes the meaning).

"I do not obey what you obey" (109:2): a refusal in the present, what I do. "Nor am I one who obeys what you have obeyed" (109:4): a refusal of the state, what I am, against what they did in the past. The refusal covers the act and the state, the present and the past.

Opposite, one sentence returns twice identically: "nor are you ones who obey what I obey" (109:3 and 109:5). Their position does not move; the text repeats it as it is.

The conclusion is a separation: "To you your Law, and to me my Law." (109:6). The word rendered "Law" names a set of rules that are followed: sura 12 uses it for the law of the king of Egypt (12:76). There is neither threat nor constraint: two Laws, each to whoever follows it.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 109:2**

لَآ أَعْبُدُ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ

*"I do not obey what you obey"*

The refusal in the present: the act.

**EXAMPLE 109:4**

وَلَآ أَنَا۠ عَابِدٌ مَّا عَبَدتُّمْ

"*Nor am I one who obeys what you have obeyed*"
The refusal of the state, facing their past.

**EXAMPLE 109:6**

لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِىَ دِينِ

"*To you your Law, and to me my Law.*"
Two Laws apart, without constraint.

**READ WITH**

- 12:76: "the king's law", the same word as "Law" in 109:6.
- 7:70: a people refusing to abandon what their ancestors used to obey.
- 110:2: the Law of God, which the crowd of the next sura enters.
- Where the aspect of the verb makes the meaning: the forms of the verb "obey" are the textbook case.

**IN BRIEF**

The refusal covers the present and the past; the opposing position does not move; the conclusion separates two Laws, without constraint.

SURA 110 · النصر · AN-NASR

# The Crowd That Enters

> The promised help comes: a crowd enters the Law of God, and the victory is received with praise and a plea for forgiveness.

## READING

The sura is a single conditional sentence, followed by a short conclusion.

It opens on "When", not "if": the coming of help is not a hypothesis, it is certain. It answers a question asked elsewhere by the believers under trial: "When, then, is the help of God?" (2:214). The answer takes up the same words: "When the help of God comes, and the victory" (110:1). Help and victory are joined this way only in 61:13 and at the start of sura 48.

The Arabic word rendered here "in crowds" appears five times in the Qur'an. Four times it names groups gathered for the Day or thrown into the Fire (27:83, 38:59, 67:8, 78:18). Only here does the crowd enter the Law of God (110:2).

The response asked for is not pride: it is to glorify, to praise, and to seek forgiveness (110:3). Sura 48 likewise ties victory to forgiveness: "We have granted you a manifest victory, so that God may forgive you" (48:1-2).

The conclusion says who God is before this return: "He is, in truth, the Accepter of repentance." (110:3).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 2:214**

مَتَىٰ نَصْرُ ٱللَّهِ

*"When, then, is the help of God?"*
The question that sura 110 answers.

**EXAMPLE 110:2**

وَرَأَيْتَ ٱلنَّاسَ يَدْخُلُونَ فِى دِينِ ٱللَّهِ أَفْوَاجًا

"*you see the people entering the Law of God in crowds*"
The only crowd in the Qur'an that enters the Law of God.

**EXAMPLE 110:3**

إِنَّهُۥ كَانَ تَوَّابًۢا

"*He is, in truth, the Accepter of repentance.*"
The intensive form: an acceptance that never ceases.

**READ WITH**

- 2:214: the question the sura answers.
- 61:13 and 48:1-3: help and victory, joined.
- 27:83, 38:59, 67:8, 78:18: the four other crowds, all turned toward the Day or the Fire.
- 40:55: glorify and seek forgiveness, the same instruction.
- 111: the neighbouring sura, a man who perishes.
- The Qur'an answers its own questions: the question of 2:214 and its answer in 110:1 are one example.

**IN BRIEF**

The promised help comes, a crowd enters the Law of God, and the victory is received with praise and a plea for forgiveness. Facing the lone man of sura 111, a collective gain.

SURA 111 · المسد · AL-MASAD

# The Man Who Perishes

> A man and his wife oppose the message. The text does not address them: it states. The man's means perish, his goods avail him nothing, and his own name becomes his sentence.

## READING

No one is addressed: neither "say" nor "you". The sura is a statement in four movements: a sentence, a reckoning, an announcement, a portrait.

The sentence: "Perish the hands of the Father of the Flame, and he himself has perished." (111:1). The same verb returns twice: first the hands, that is, the means of acting, then the man himself. The same root elsewhere states what Fir'awn's scheming was worth: "Fir'awn's scheming was nothing but ruin." (40:37).

The reckoning: "His goods and what he acquired have availed him nothing." (111:2). This formula recurs in the Qur'an, always at the moment of account: "his goods will not avail him when he falls" (92:11); "My goods have not availed me" (69:28).

The announcement: "He will burn in a fire of flame" (111:3). The man's name, "Father of the Flame", becomes the place of his punishment. The word "flame" returns only once elsewhere, with the same idea of what avails nothing: a shadow "neither shading nor availing against the flame" (77:31).

The portrait: his wife, "the one who ceaselessly carries the firewood, a rope of twisted fiber around her throat" (111:4-5). She carries the fuel of the fire that awaits her; elsewhere, the deviant "became firewood for Jahannam" (72:15). The throat, place of adornment, receives a coarse rope.

The sura faces the one before it: there, a crowd enters the Law of God; here, a single man perishes with all he had (Reading a sura with its neighbours).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 111:1**

تَبَّتْ يَدَآ أَبِى لَهَبٍ وَتَبَّ

"*Perish the hands of the Father of the Flame, and he himself has perished.*"
The same verb twice: the means of acting, then the man.

**EXAMPLE 111:2**

مَآ أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُ مَالُهُۥ وَمَا كَسَبَ

"*His goods and what he acquired have availed him nothing.*"
The formula of the reckoning, as in 92:11 and 69:28.

**EXAMPLE 40:37**

وَمَا كَيْدُ فِرْعَوْنَ إِلَّا فِى تَبَابٍ

"*Fir'awn's scheming was nothing but ruin.*"
The same root as "perish".

## READ WITH

- 40:37: Fir'awn's scheming, from the same root as "perish".
- 92:11 and 69:28: the same formula, goods that avail nothing.
- 77:31: the only other "flame" in the Qur'an.
- 72:15: the firewood of Jahannam.
- 110: the neighbouring sura, a crowd that enters.
- 112: the next sura, the only One who needs nothing.

**IN BRIEF**

A man perishes with his means: his goods avail him nothing, his name becomes his punishment, and his wife carries the fuel of his own fire. Facing the crowd of sura 110, an individual loss.

SURA 112 · الاخلاص · AL-IKHLAS

# The One Without Equal

> Four short sentences that say who God is, above all by what He is not: the One, without origin, without offspring, without counterpart.

## READING

The sura is made of four statements, one per verse. The first affirms: "He is God, the Absolute Singularity." (112:1). The second names: "God, the Impenetrable." (112:2). The last two deny: "He begets not, and is not begotten." (112:3); "And none is His counterpart." (112:4).

The same word, أحد, opens and closes the sura. At the start it is affirmed of God: "Absolute Singularity". At the end it is denied of everything else: "none". It is not the "one" that is counted, as in "one deity" (2:163, واحد): it is a oneness that admits no second.

"The Impenetrable" renders a word the Qur'an uses only here. Its meaning is given by what follows: nothing issues from Him, He issues from no one, nothing equals Him. What has no origin, no offspring and no counterpart needs nothing.

The verb "beget" is first active, then passive: it is the only passive form in the sura. The same negative turn recurs in another praise: "Praise be to God, who has not taken a child, who has no associate in sovereignty" (17:111).

The sura follows that of the man who relied on his goods: "His goods and what he acquired have availed him nothing." (111:2). Facing the one who believed himself self-sufficient, here is the only One who needs nothing.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 112:1**

قُلْ هُوَ ٱللَّهُ أَحَدٌ

"*He is God, the Absolute Singularity.*"
The word أحد, affirmed of God.

**EXAMPLE 112:4**

وَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُۥ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌۢ

"*And none is His counterpart.*"
The same word, denied of all else: it closes the sura.

**EXAMPLE 17:111**

ٱلْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ ٱلَّذِى لَمْ يَتَّخِذْ وَلَدًا

"*Praise be to God, who has not taken a child*"
The same negative turn, in a praise.

## READ WITH

- 2:163 and 16:22: "one deity", the other word for oneness.
- 17:111 and 25:2: the same negative turn in praise.
- 111:2: the goods that availed nothing, just before.
- A unique word is read through its construction: "the Impenetrable", a unique word read through the negations that follow it.

**IN BRIEF**

God defined by subtraction: the One, without origin, without offspring, without counterpart. After sura 111, where wealth availed nothing, here is the only One who needs nothing.

SURA 113 · الفلق · AL-FALAQ

# The Evils Without

> Seeking refuge in the Guardian of the Breakthrough against the evils of the outside world: not against things themselves, but against the moment they act.

## READING

Like the sura that follows it, it is a single sentence opened by "I take refuge". It moves from the general to the particular: first "the evil of what He has created" (113:2), then three cases.

The One in whom refuge is sought is "the Guardian of the Breakthrough" (113:1). The same root elsewhere names God's act of splitting open and bringing forth: "God is He who splits open the seed and the kernel." (6:95); "He who splits open the dawn" (6:96); the sea that split before Moussa (26:63). Refuge is sought in the One who opens what is closed.

The text does not say that what is created is evil: it says that evil may come from it. The three cases make this precise. Darkness is not evil in itself: evil comes from it "when it penetrates" (113:3). Nor is the envier: evil comes from him "when he envies" (113:5). Each time, "when" marks the moment evil acts.

Between the two, "those who blow insistently into the knots" (113:4) have no "when": their very name states a repeated act. They are defined by what they do.

The word "evil" returns four times; the refuge is one: the Guardian of the Breakthrough.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 113:1-2**

قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ ٱلْفَلَقِ مِن شَرِّ مَا خَلَقَ

"*I take refuge in the Guardian of the Breakthrough, from the evil of what He has created*"

The refuge, then evil in general: what comes from creation, not creation itself.

**EXAMPLE 113:3**

وَمِن شَرِّ غَاسِقٍ إِذَا وَقَبَ

"*from the evil of a darkness when it penetrates*"

"When": the evil lies in the moment it acts.

**EXAMPLE 6:96**

فَالِقُ ٱلْإِصْبَاحِ

"*He who splits open the dawn*"

The same root as "the Breakthrough": God who opens.

## READ WITH

- 6:95-96: the One who splits open the seed, the kernel and the dawn.
- 26:63: the sea splitting before Moussa.
- 17:78: "the darkness of night", the same word as in 113:3.
- 2:109: envy arising after the truth has become clear.
- 114: the neighbouring sura, the evil within.

**IN BRIEF**

Refuge against the evils without, which harm only when they act; in the One whose proper act is to open.

SURA 114 · الناس · AN-NAS

# The Evil Within

> A single sentence seeking refuge in the Guardian, the Sovereign and the Deity of mankind, against an evil that does not come from outside: the one that whispers within, wherever it comes from.

## READING

The sura is a single sentence. Everything starts from "I take refuge", and everything hangs on it down to the last word.

The One in whom refuge is sought receives three titles: "the Guardian of mankind, the Sovereign of mankind, the Deity of mankind" (114:1-3). The word "mankind" is repeated with each title instead of being replaced by a pronoun: it returns five times in six verses. It is mankind that is at stake, their protection and what happens within them.

Against what? Against a single evil: "the whisperer who withdraws, who whispers into the breasts of mankind" (114:4-5). It does not strike; it speaks low, then withdraws. The same root elsewhere names the stars that vanish at the horizon (81:15): present, then hidden.

Where does it come from? "whether of the Occulted or of mankind" (114:6). Elsewhere the Qur'an names a third source, the closest: "We know what his [own] Self whispers to him" (50:16). Refuge therefore also holds against what one tells oneself.

The Book opens on "Guardian of all beings" (1:2); it closes on "Guardian of mankind" (114:1).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 114:1-3**

بِرَبِّ ٱلنَّاسِ مَلِكِ ٱلنَّاسِ إِلَٰهِ ٱلنَّاسِ

"*I take refuge in the Guardian of mankind, the Sovereign of mankind, the Deity of mankind*"

Three titles, each time with the same word: "mankind".

**EXAMPLE 114:4-5**

ٱلْوَسْوَاسِ ٱلْخَنَّاسِ ٱلَّذِى يُوَسْوِسُ فِى صُدُورِ ٱلنَّاسِ

"*the whisperer who withdraws, who whispers into the breasts of mankind*"

A single evil, and it works within.

**EXAMPLE 50:16**

وَنَعْلَمُ مَا تُوَسْوِسُ بِهِۦ نَفْسُهُۥ

"*We know what his [own] Self whispers to him*"

The same verb: the whispering may come from oneself.

## READ WITH

- 1:1-4: the opening of the Book, "Guardian of all beings".
- 50:16: the Self that whispers, the closest source of inner evil.
- 81:15: the retreating stars, the same root as "the whisperer who withdraws".
- 7:20 and 20:120: the Diverter whispering to Adam and his wife.
- 113: the neighbouring sura, the evils without.

**IN BRIEF**

Refuge against the evil that creeps in from within, wherever it comes from: the Occulted, mankind, or the Self itself.

# The reading rules

*The Qur'an has its regularities: one construction always says the same thing, a rare word is never there by chance, a formula returns identically. Each page states a rule, shows it in the text, and says what it changes for the reading. Hypotheses the text does not confirm are published too, with the reason they were set aside.*

# God and oneness

*How the text says what God is, and above all what He is not.*

ESTABLISHED RULE

# The double negation « لم ... ولم يكن له »

To say what God is not, the Qur'an uses a fixed formula in two steps: « لَمْ » + verb (what He has not done), then « وَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُۥ » + noun (what He does not have). The first step denies a child, the second denies any partner: an associate in sovereignty, or an equal.

The formula occurs three times:

- 17:111 and 25:2, word for word: « لَمْ يَتَّخِذْ وَلَدًا وَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُۥ شَرِيكٌ فِى ٱلْمُلْكِ »: no child, no associate in sovereignty;
- 112:3-4: « لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ وَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُۥ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌۢ »: no begetting, in either direction, and no equal.

In sura 112 the second term is not شَرِيك but كُفُوًا ("counterpart"): the formula always denies, first, filiation, then any partner on an equal footing, whether associate or counterpart.

For translation, since 17:111 and 25:2 are identical in Arabic, they are rendered identically, and the expression اتخذ ولدا is rendered "to take a child" throughout the corpus.

## IN THE TEXT

EXAMPLE 17:111

لَمْ يَتَّخِذْ وَلَدًا وَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُۥ شَرِيكٌ فِى ٱلْمُلْكِ

*"who has not taken a child, who has no associate in sovereignty"*
First step: the child; second step: the associate.

EXAMPLE 25:2

وَلَمْ يَتَّخِذْ وَلَدًا وَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُۥ شَرِيكٌ فِى ٱلْمُلْكِ

*"who has taken no child and has no associate in the dominion"*
Word for word the same formula as in 17:111.

**EXAMPLE 112:3-4**

لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ وَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُۥ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌۢ

"*He begets not, and is not begotten. … And none is His counterpart.*"

Same pattern, but the second term is كُفُوًا ("counterpart"): this is what required correcting the statement.

**IN BRIEF**

Established. Three occurrences, all within the pattern, and rendered the same way.

ESTABLISHED RULE

# Proof by subtraction

> A word that occurs only once can be defined without any point of comparison, when a series of negations surrounds it: each negation removes a possible meaning, and what remains after all the subtractions is its meaning.

The founding case is ٱلصَّمَدُ, which occurs only once in the Qur'an (112:2). No other occurrence allows comparison. But the verses that follow are three negations: « لَمْ يَلِدْ » (He begets not), « وَلَمْ يُولَدْ » (He is not begotten), « وَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُۥ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌۢ » (none is His counterpart). The first rules out that anything comes out of Him, the second that He came out of anything, the third that anything stands facing Him. What remains is a being into which nothing enters and out of which nothing comes: "the Impenetrable".

The formula of oneness, « لَآ إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ », rests on the same mechanism: لَا denies everything, إِلَّا isolates the exception, هُوَ receives what remains. This mechanism is detailed in No deity but Him: three pieces, one mechanism.

The rule is a tool: before declaring a rare word undetermined, one checks whether it is framed by negations that delimit its meaning.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 112:2-4**

ٱللَّهُ ٱلصَّمَدُ لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ وَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُۥ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌۢ

*"God, the Impenetrable. … He begets not, and is not begotten. … And none is His counterpart."*

A hapax followed by three negations: what remains after them is the meaning of ٱلصَّمَد.

**IN BRIEF**

Established. It also sheds light on the formula of oneness.

ESTABLISHED RULE

# No deity but Him: three pieces, one mechanism

> The formula لَآ إِلٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ works in three steps: لا negates every deity, إلا withdraws a single exception from that negation, and هو designates what remains. It is proof by subtraction applied to oneness.

First step, the particle لا: a total negation, emptying the category "deity" of all it could contain.

Second step, the particle إلا: an exception, subtracting a single element from that negation.

Third step, the pronoun هو: it receives what remains, and refers back to God named just before. "God, there is no deity but Him, the Living, the Self-Subsisting" (2:255).

The formula does not affirm first; it denies everything, then lets only one remain. This is exactly the mechanism described in Proof by subtraction. The corpus uses the construction لا إله إلا in 37 phrases.

## IN THE TEXT

EXAMPLE **2:255**

ٱللَّهُ لَآ إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ٱلْحَىُّ ٱلْقَيُّومُ

*"God, there is no deity but Him, … the Living, the Self-Subsisting."*

Negation, exception, pronoun: the subtraction leaves only God.

**IN BRIEF**

Established. See also Proof by subtraction.

ESTABLISHED RULE

# "Besides God": a recourse always denied or denounced

> The construction من دون الله always designates something or someone taken as a recourse besides God: what is invoked, what is obeyed, an ally, a helper. This recourse is always denounced, or denied.

The corpus uses the formula 71 times, and in three situations only.

It denounces an obedience or an invocation: "They obey, besides God, what neither harms nor benefits them" (10:18).

It sets a shared refusal: "that none of us take others as masters besides God" (3:64).

It denies that any recourse exists at all: "and will find, besides God, neither protector nor helper" (4:123).

The formula never introduces an approved recourse. That is why the translation renders it everywhere in the same way, in all six languages: "besides God".

It is sometimes paired with لَآ إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ, as its negative face; that pairing illuminates the reading but is not itself a rule.

## IN THE TEXT

EXAMPLE 10:18

وَيَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ ٱللَّهِ مَا لَا يَضُرُّهُمْ

*"They obey, besides God, what neither harms nor benefits them"*

A denounced recourse.

**EXAMPLE 3:64**

أَرْبَابًا مِّن دُونِ ٱللَّهِ

"*that none of us take others as masters besides God*"
A recourse refused by common accord.

**EXAMPLE 4:123**

وَلَا يَجِدْ لَهُۥ مِن دُونِ ٱللَّهِ وَلِيًّا

"*and will find, besides God, neither protector nor helper*"
A recourse whose existence is denied.

**IN BRIEF**

Established. Verified on all 71 phrases; a single rendering in all six languages.

ESTABLISHED RULE

# The formula of refuge

> Whenever the Qur'an speaks of refuge ("take refuge", form I; "seek refuge", form X), the sentence has the same shape: a verb from the root عوذ, then بـ before the One in whom refuge is sought, then the threat. The threat takes one of two forms: من with a noun when the source of evil is named, أن with a verb when what is feared is an event.

The root عوذ occurs 17 times in the corpus. Every time the verb takes a complement, the one in whom refuge is sought is introduced by بـ: « بربّ الفلق », « بالله », « بك », « بربّي وربّكم ».

The threat is expressed in two ways, never a third:

- the form من + noun when the evil has a source that can be named: « من شرّ ما خلق »; « من همزات الشياطين », « من كلّ متكبّر »
- the form أن + verb when what is feared is an event: « أن أكون من الجاهلين », « أن يحضرون », « أن ترجمون ».

The one in whom refuge is sought is God in every case but one: in 72:6, men take refuge in other men among the Occulted, and the text immediately says it only increased their burden. The single exception is presented as a mistake.

One variant of form confirms the rule rather than breaking it: the verbal noun مَعَاذَ ٱللَّهِ (12:23, 12:79) attaches God by annexation instead of بـ; it is the fixed exclamation "May God preserve me from that!".

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 113:1-2**

أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ ٱلْفَلَقِ مِن شَرِّ مَا خَلَقَ

"*I take refuge in the Guardian of the Breakthrough, from the evil of what He has created*"

Here, بـ before the Guardian, من before the source of evil.

**EXAMPLE 23:97-98**

أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ هَمَزَٰتِ ٱلشَّيَٰطِينِ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ رَبِّ أَن يَحْضُرُونِ

"*I take refuge with You from the incitements of the Diverters, and I take refuge with You, my Guardian, against their being present with me*"

Both forms of the threat in one prayer: من + noun (the incitements), then أن + verb (their being present).

**EXAMPLE 2:67**

أَعُوذُ بِٱللَّهِ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ ٱلْجَٰهِلِينَ

"*I take refuge in God against being among the ignorant*"

Here, أن + verb: what Moussa fears is an event, becoming ignorant.

**EXCEPTION 72:6**

يَعُوذُونَ بِرِجَالٍ مِّنَ ٱلْجِنِّ فَزَادُوهُمْ رَهَقًا

"*who took refuge in men among the Occulted, and they only increased them in burden*"

The only occurrence where refuge is sought in someone other than God; the verse gives the outcome at once: greater burden.

**EXAMPLE 12:23**

مَعَاذَ ٱللَّهِ

"*May God preserve me from that!*"
Fixed nominal form (12:23): God is attached by annexation, without بـ.

**IN BRIEF**

Established. All 17 occurrences were reread: none departs from the pattern, and the only exception concerning the one invoked (72:6) is condemned by the text itself.

ESTABLISHED RULE

# The two "We": God and a human group

> The pronoun نَحْنُ ("we") has two uses that nothing distinguishes in form: God speaking of Himself in the plural, and a truly plural human group. Only the identity of the speaker and the nature of the act decide.

The two uses:

- God: « إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا ٱلذِّكْرَ », "It is indeed We who have sent down the Reminder" (15:9): the act (sending down revelation) belongs to God alone;
- humans: « إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ », "We are only setting things right" (2:11): it is the hypocrites speaking.

No morphological mark separates these two نَحْنُ. The reader relies on context: who is speaking, and what is he doing? Creating, sending down, raising are divine acts; justifying oneself, plotting, claiming are human acts.

The translation makes the distinction visible with the capital letter: "We" when God speaks, "we" when humans do.

## IN THE TEXT

EXAMPLE 15:9

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا ٱلذِّكْرَ

*"It is indeed We who have sent down the Reminder"*
The act is divine: "We".

EXAMPLE 2:11

إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ

*"We are only setting things right."*
The hypocrites speak: the same pronoun denotes a human group.

**IN BRIEF**

Established. The form is identical; speaker and act decide, and the capital letter makes it visible in translation.

ESTABLISHED RULE

# "Has glorified" and "glorifies": the aspect of the openings in سبّح

> Five neighbouring suras open with the glorification of God by all that is in the heavens and on the earth. Three use the perfect سَبَّحَ (57, 59, 61), two the imperfect يُسَبِّحُ (62, 64). The translation keeps the difference: "has glorified" for the perfect, "glorifies" for the imperfect.

The five openings are so alike that one could think them identical; they are not. « سَبَّحَ لِلَّهِ مَا فِى ٱلسَّمٰوٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ » (57:1) states a glorification accomplished, established; « يُسَبِّحُ لِلَّهِ مَا فِى ٱلسَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ » (62:1) states a glorification ongoing, continuous.

The translation therefore renders the perfect with the present perfect: "a glorifié", "has glorified", "ha glorificado", "ha glorificato", "telah bertasbih", "восславило". Rendered in the present, it would erase the difference intended by the text.

This rule is one of the demonstrated cases where verbal aspect carries meaning (see also Where the aspect of the verb makes the meaning); on this precise point it replaces the over-general statement of Verbal aspect carries meaning (rejected).

## IN THE TEXT

EXAMPLE 57:1

سَبَّحَ لِلَّهِ مَا فِى ٱلسَّمٰوٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ

*"All that is in the heavens and the earth has glorified God."*

Perfect سَبَّحَ: "has glorified".

**EXAMPLE 62:1**

يُسَبِّحُ لِلَّهِ مَا فِى ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَمَا فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ

*“Whatever is in the heavens and on the earth glorifies God”*
Imperfect يُسَبِّحُ: "glorifies".

**IN BRIEF**

Established. Five openings, and the aspect is rendered in every language.

# Time, condition, question

*When, if, if only; the questions that dismantle a claim; the moment when it is too late.*

ESTABLISHED RULE

# When, if, if only: the three conditions

> The Qur'an has three conditional particles, and each says how real the condition is: إذا sets what will happen ("when"), إن sets an open hypothesis ("if"), لو sets what is not and will not be ("if ...", counterfactual).

The particle إذا does not cast doubt on the event; it fixes its moment: "When the help of God comes, and the victory" (110:1). The help is not a hypothesis; it is announced.

The particle إن opens a possibility without settling it: "And if you are in doubt about what We have sent down" (2:23). The doubt is considered, not asserted.

The particle لو sets a situation that reality has already refuted: "And were they sent back, they would certainly return to what they had been forbidden" (6:28). They will not be sent back; the verse describes what they would do in a world that does not exist.

Two neighbouring uses do not contradict the system:

- the concessive form وَلَوْ ("even if", "even though") stays in the counterfactual or the extreme: "even against yourselves" (4:135);
- the form فَإِذَا of sudden appearance ("and behold") states a sudden fact, therefore a real one: Moussa's staff becomes a serpent (7:107).

For the translator the consequence is simple: إذا is not rendered by "if", and لو is not rendered by a future.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 110:1**

إِذَا جَآءَ نَصْرُ ٱللَّهِ

"*When the help of God comes, and the victory*"

The particle إذا: the event is certain; only its moment is at stake.

**EXAMPLE 2:23**

وَإِن كُنتُمْ فِى رَيْبٍ

"*And if you are in doubt*"

The particle إن: an open hypothesis, neither asserted nor excluded.

**EXAMPLE 6:28**

وَلَوْ رُدُّوا۟ لَعَادُوا۟

"*And were they sent back, they would certainly return to what they had been forbidden*"

The particle لو: a return that will not happen, and what it would reveal.

**EXCEPTION 7:107**

فَإِذَا هِىَ ثُعْبَانٌ مُّبِينٌ

"*and behold, it was a manifest serpent*"

The form فَإِذَا of sudden appearance: a sudden fact, not a condition.

**EXAMPLE 76:28**

وَإِذَا شِئْنَا بَدَّلْنَآ

"*and when We will it, We will replace them entirely with their likenesses*"

The particle إذا: the replacement is announced, not supposed.

**IN BRIEF**

Established. The distinction is known to Arabic grammar; the corpus applies it without exception.

ESTABLISHED RULE

# The particle إذا for what will happen, إن for a hypothesis

> The particle إِذَا introduces an event the text holds as certain ("when"); إِنْ introduces a mere hypothesis ("if"). The choice of particle tells whether the thing will happen or only might.

Sura 113 gives two examples in the same list: « غَاسِقٍ إِذَا وَقَبَ » (a darkness when it penetrates) and « حَاسِدٍ إِذَا حَسَدَ » (an envier when he envies). Night falls every day, the envier envies: the text is not positing a hypothesis, it describes what happens.

Conversely, « (2:23) « وَإِن كُنتُمْ فِى رَيْبٍ and « (44:21) « وَإِن لَّمْ تُؤْمِنُوا لِى consider a situation that may or may not arise: "if you are in doubt", "if you do not give me credit".

The translation follows the particle: "when" for إذا, "if" for إن. This rule is a particular case of the complete system إذا / إن / لو, fixed under the code When, if, if only: the three conditions, which absorbs it.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 113:3**

غَاسِقٍ إِذَا وَقَبَ

*"of a darkness when it penetrates"*
Here, إذا: night will fall; this is no hypothesis.

**EXAMPLE 110:1**

إِذَا جَآءَ نَصْرُ ٱللَّهِ

*"When the help of God comes"*
Here, إذا: the help is announced as certain.

**EXAMPLE 2:23**

وَإِن كُنتُمْ فِى رَيْبٍ

"*And if you are in doubt*"
Here, إن: doubt is considered, not asserted.

**EXAMPLE 44:21**

وَإِن لَّمْ تُؤْمِنُواْ لِى فَٱعْتَزِلُونِ

"*and if you do not give me credit, then keep away from me*"
Here, إن: Moussa considers their refusal without taking it for granted.

**IN BRIEF**

Established. It belongs to a wider system, described in When, if, if only: the three conditions.

ESTABLISHED RULE

# The cosmic series of « إِذَا » end in the Self

> Three suras open with a series of clauses in إِذَا describing the upheaval of the world (the sun, the stars, the seas, the graves). The series never ends in the world, but in a being: "a Self will know what it has ..." (81:14, 82:5), or "O human being!" (84:6).

Sura 81 lines up twelve clauses in إِذَا, from the sun wrapped up to the Garden brought near, and the answer takes three words: « عَلِمَتْ نَفْسٌ مَّآ أَحْضَرَتْ », "a Self will know what it has brought forward". Sura 82 does the same in four clauses: « عَلِمَتْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ وَأَخَّرَتْ », "a Self will know what it has put forward and kept back". Sura 84 describes the sky splitting and the earth spread out, then addresses man directly: « يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلْإِنسَٰنُ », "O human being!".

The cosmic upheaval is thus never described for its own sake: everything converges on what an individual will discover of his own deeds. The clauses in إِذَا are rendered in the future ("When the sun is wrapped up"), following the rule of the system إذا / إن / لو. The answer عَلِمَتْ نَفْسٌ is rendered identically in both suras: "a Self will know".

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 81:14**

عَلِمَتْ نَفْسٌ مَّآ أَحْضَرَتْ

*"a Self will know what it has brought forward"*

Twelve clauses in (13–81:1) إِذَا, a single answer.

**EXAMPLE 82:5**

عَلِمَتْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ وَأَخَّرَتْ

*"a Self will know what it has put forward and kept back"*

Same answer, same rendering.

**EXAMPLE 84:6**

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلْإِنسَٰنُ إِنَّكَ كَادِحٌ

“O *human being*! *Indeed, you are laboring toward your Guardian*”

Variant: the series ends in a direct address.

**IN BRIEF**

Established. Three series, all ending in the individual; the shared answer has a single rendering in all six languages.

ESTABLISHED RULE

# The question أَلَمْ covers every verb that follows it

> When a question begins with أَلَمْ ("Did … not …?") and other verbs are coordinated with it by وَ or فَ, the question does not stop at the first verb: it covers each of them. The translation therefore repeats the question before each verb.

Arabic writes أَلَمْ only once, at the head; the following verbs are linked by وَ. But they remain under the question. In 93:6-8: « أَلَمْ يَجِدْكَ يَتِيمًا فَـَٔاوَىٰ وَوَجَدَكَ ضَآلًّا فَهَدَىٰ وَوَجَدَكَ عَآئِلًا فَأَغْنَىٰ ». The second and third وَجَدَكَ are not separate statements: the text asks three times "did He not find you …?".

English and the other languages lack this mechanism: if the question is not repeated, the following verbs become statements, or the question fades. The translation therefore repeats the question before each verb: "Did He not find you an orphan …? Did He not find you astray …? Did He not find you in need …?".

The rule holds for the three series where it occurs in the short suras (93:6-8, 94:1-3, 105:2-5).

## IN THE TEXT

EXAMPLE **93:6-8**

أَلَمْ يَجِدْكَ يَتِيمًا فَـَٔاوَىٰ وَوَجَدَكَ ضَآلًّا فَهَدَىٰ وَوَجَدَكَ عَآئِلًا فَأَغْنَىٰ

*"Did He not find you an orphan and give you shelter? Did He not find you astray and guide you? Did He not find you in need and enrich you?"*
A single أَلَمْ in Arabic, three questions in the translation.

**EXAMPLE 94:1-2**

أَلَمْ نَشْرَحْ لَكَ صَدْرَكَ وَوَضَعْنَا عَنكَ وِزْرَكَ

*"Did We not open your chest for you? Did We not remove your burden from you"*

Here, وَوَضَعْنَا remains under the question of أَلَمْ نَشْرَحْ.

**IN BRIEF**

Established. The question is repeated before each verb in all three series and in all six languages.

ESTABLISHED RULE

# « أَلَمْ تَرَ »: "Have you not seen"

> The question « أَلَمْ تَرَ » is in the perfect: it is always translated "Have you not seen", whether followed by أَنَّ (a fact: "Have you not seen that ...") or by إِلَىٰ (a group of people: "Have you not seen those ...").

The question in لَمْ bears on the past: it does not ask "Do you not see?", but "Have you not seen?": the reader is referred to what he has already had before his eyes.

It is construed in two ways:

- with أَنَّ, about a fact: « أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِى ٱلسَّمَٰوٰتِ », "Have you not seen that God knows what is in the heavens" (58:7);
- with إِلَىٰ, about a group: « أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى ٱلَّذِينَ نُهُوا۟ عَنِ ٱلنَّجْوَىٰ », "Have you not seen those who were forbidden secret talk" (58:8).

In sura 58 the question opens several blocks in succession (58:7, 58:8, 58:14): it structures the sura. The 33 sentences concerned are rendered the same way.

## IN THE TEXT

EXAMPLE 58:7

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِى ٱلسَّمَٰوٰتِ

"*Have you not seen that God knows what is in the heavens*"
With أَنَّ: a fact.

EXAMPLE 58:8

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى ٱلَّذِينَ نُهُوا۟ عَنِ ٱلنَّجْوَىٰ

"*Have you not seen those who were forbidden secret talk*"
With إِلَىٰ: a group of people.

**IN BRIEF**

Established. 33 sentences, one rendering in all six languages.

ESTABLISHED RULE

# "And what will make you know what … is?": the question that announces a definition

> The formula « وَمَآ أَدْرَىٰكَ مَا … » asks about a word the reader thinks he knows, to tell him he does not know it yet. In most cases the answer follows at once: the next verse defines the word. The formula is translated everywhere "And what will make you know what … is?".

The formula occurs 13 times, in 12 sentences. Ten times out of thirteen, the definition follows immediately:

- « وَمَآ أَدْرَىٰكَ مَا ٱلْحُطَمَةُ », the Crusher? « نَارُ ٱللَّهِ ٱلْمُوقَدَةُ », the fire of God, ablaze (104:5-6);
- « وَمَآ أَدْرَىٰكَ مَا لَيْلَةُ ٱلْقَدْرِ », the Night of Measure? « لَيْلَةُ ٱلْقَدْرِ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ », better than a thousand months (97:2-3);
- likewise for سَقَر (30-74:27) and for القارعة (101:3, then 101:4-5).

In the other three cases the definition is not immediate; in 69:3 the question about "that which establishes the real" is followed by the account of the peoples who denied it (69:4).

The verb أَدْرَىٰ (form IV of درى) means "to make known", according to the root file: the question does not ask "what do you know?" but "what will make you know?". The rendering is fixed in all six languages: "qui te fera savoir", "what will make you know", "quién te hará saber", "chi ti farà sapere", "tahukah engkau", "откуда тебе знать".

## IN THE TEXT

EXAMPLE **104:5-6**

وَمَآ أَدْرَىٰكَ مَا ٱلْحُطَمَةُ نَارُ ٱللَّهِ ٱلْمُوقَدَةُ

*"And what will make you know what the Crusher is? … The fire of God, ablaze"*
The question, then the definition in the next verse.

**EXAMPLE 97:2-3**

وَمَآ أَدۡرَىٰكَ مَا لَيۡلَةُ ٱلۡقَدۡرِ لَيۡلَةُ ٱلۡقَدۡرِ خَيۡرٞ مِّنۡ أَلۡفِ شَهۡرٖ

*"And what will make you know what the Night of Measure is? … The Night of Measure is better than a thousand months."*

The definition takes up the word itself.

**EXCEPTION 69:3**

وَمَآ أَدۡرَىٰكَ مَا ٱلۡحَآقَّةُ

*"And what will make you know what that which establishes the real is?"*

No immediate definition: the text moves on to those who denied it (69:4).

**IN BRIEF**

Established. 13 occurrences, one rendering per language; immediate definition in 10 cases out of 13.

ESTABLISHED RULE

# The series in أم: "Or … ?"

When the Qur'an strings together questions opened by أم, each one dismantles a claim of the addressee. Each أم that opens a question is rendered "Or … ?", always in the same way, so that the series remains visible.

The particle أم of rupture does not join the two terms of a choice: it opens a new hypothesis, once the previous one has fallen. The series of 52:29-43 contains about a dozen, which review every escape route: a poet's speech, reason, invention, creation, treasuries, a ladder to the sky, daughters attributed to God, a wage, what escapes the senses, a scheme, another deity. Examples: "Or were they created out of nothing, or are they themselves the creators?" (52:35); "Or do they have another deity besides God?" (52:43).

When one question contains two أم, the second offers the other branch of the alternative and is rendered simply "or" (52:35, 52:37).

The same form recurs in 68:37-47 ("Or do they have partners?", 68:41) and in 67:16-21.

## IN THE TEXT

EXAMPLE 52:30

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ شَاعِرٌ

*"Or do they say"*

The first question of the series.

EXAMPLE 52:35

أَمْ خُلِقُوا۟ مِنْ غَيْرِ شَىْءٍ

*"Or were they created out of nothing, or are they themselves the creators?"*

Two أم: the first opens the question ("Or"), the second offers the alternative ("or").

**EXAMPLE 52:43**

أَمْ لَهُمْ إِلَٰهٌ غَيْرُ ٱللَّهِ

"*Or do they have another deity besides God?*"
The last hypothesis of the series.

**EXAMPLE 68:41**

أَمْ لَهُمْ شُرَكَآءُ

"*Or do they have partners?*"
The same series, in surah 68.

**IN BRIEF**

Established. Each أم that opens a question is rendered "Or … ?".

ESTABLISHED RULE

# "Is it you who … or are We …?": the same root on both sides

In sura 56, four questions confront the human being with what he believes he does himself: « أَأَنتُمْ تَـ X أَمْ نَحْنُ آلـ X-ونَ ». The verb attributed to man and the agent noun given to God come from the same root; the translation keeps that shared root on both sides.

The four pairs, in 56:58-72:

- the seed: « ءَأَنتُمْ تَخْلُقُونَهُۥٓ أَمْ نَحْنُ ٱلْخَٰلِقُونَ », "Is it you who create it, or are We the Creator?";
- the field: « ءَأَنتُمْ تَزْرَعُونَهُۥٓ أَمْ نَحْنُ ٱلزَّٰرِعُونَ », "Is it you who sow it, or are We the Sower?";
- the water: « أَنزَلْتُمُوهُ … أَمْ نَحْنُ ٱلْمُنزِلُونَ », "Is it you who sent it down from the clouds, or are We the Sender?";
- the fire: « أَنشَأْتُمْ شَجَرَتَهَآ أَمْ نَحْنُ ٱلْمُنشِـُٔونَ », "Is it you who brought its tree into being, or are We the One who brings it into being?".

The question's force comes from the same verb returning in the answer: man sows, but who is the Sower? If the translation used two different words ("make sprout" / "the Sower"), the opposition would blur. That is why زرع and نشأ each keep their own word, in every language.

## IN THE TEXT

EXAMPLE **56:64**

ءَأَنتُمْ تَزْرَعُونَهُۥٓ أَمْ نَحْنُ ٱلزَّٰرِعُونَ

*"Is it you who sow it, or are We the Sower?"*

Here, زرع on both sides: "sow" / "the Sower".

**EXAMPLE 56:59**

ءَأَنتُمْ تَخْلُقُونَهُۥٓ أَمْ نَحْنُ ٱلْخَٰلِقُونَ

*"Is it you who create it, or are We the Creator?"*

Here, خلق: "create" / "the Creator".

**EXAMPLE 56:72**

ءَأَنتُمْ أَنشَأْتُمْ شَجَرَتَهَآ أَمْ نَحْنُ ٱلْمُنشِـُٔونَ

*"Is it you who brought its tree into being, or are We the One who brings it into being?"*

Here, نشأ: "bring into being", distinct from زرع.

**IN BRIEF**

Established. A series unique in the corpus; four pairs, each with the same root on both sides, in all six languages.

ESTABLISHED RULE

# "Now?!": faith declared too late

> The formula « ءَآلْـٰٔنَ وَقَدْ ... », "Now?! when ...", refuses a faith declared at the moment punishment arrives. It is spoken twice in sura 10 and receives the same rendering; the people of Younes are the exception, because their faith came before.

The interrogative hamza placed on the word "now" (آلْـَٰٔنَ) turns the question into a reproach: it is too late. The two occurrences:

- 10:51, to those who asked for the punishment to be hastened: « ءَآلْـٰٔنَ وَقَدْ كُنتُم بِهِۦ تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ », "Now?! when you used to seek to hasten it!";
- 10:91, to Fir'awn, drowning and declaring his belief: « ءَآلْـٰٔنَ وَقَدْ عَصَيْتَ قَبْلُ », "Now?! when you disobeyed before".

The same sura gives the exception: « إِلَّا قَوْمَ يُونُسَ لَمَّآ ءَامَنُوا », the people of Younes, whose faith, coming before the execution, benefited them (10:98).

The principle recurs outside sura 10, without the formula: « فَلَمْ يَكُ يَنفَعُهُمْ إِيمَٰنُهُمْ لَمَّا رَأَوْا بَأْسَنَا », "their faith did not benefit them once they saw Our rigor" (40:85). See also "Now?!": the question that reproaches the delay, which describes the grammatical device.

## IN THE TEXT

EXAMPLE 10:91

ءَآلْـَٰٔنَ وَقَدْ عَصَيْتَ قَبْلُ

“*Now?! when you disobeyed before*”

To Fir'awn, drowning.

**EXAMPLE 10:51**

ءَآلْـَٰٔنَ وَقَدْ كُنتُم بِهِۦ تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ

"*Now?! when you used to seek to hasten it!*"
Same formula, same rendering.

**EXCEPTION 10:98**

إِلَّا قَوْمَ يُونُسَ لَمَّآ ءَامَنُوا۟

"*except the people of Younes! When they believed*"
The exception: a faith that came before the punishment.

**EXAMPLE 40:85**

فَلَمْ يَكُ يَنفَعُهُمْ إِيمَٰنُهُمْ لَمَّا رَأَوْا۟ بَأْسَنَا

"*But their faith did not benefit them once they saw Our rigor*"
The principle outside sura 10, without the formula.

**IN BRIEF**

Established. Two identical occurrences, an exception in the same sura, and the principle confirmed in 40:84-85.

ESTABLISHED RULE

# "Now?!": the question that reproaches the delay

> When the interrogative hamza is placed on a word of time, such as ثُمَّ ("then") or ٱلْـَٔـٰنَ ("now"), the question asks nothing: it reproaches the belated moment at which a belief is finally declared.

The device appears twice in 10:51, for those who hastened the punishment: "Is it then only once it has happened that you will believe in it? Now?! when you used to seek to hasten it!" The question أَثُمَّ bears on "then", the question ءَآلْـَٔـٰنَ on "now".

It returns in 10:91, addressed to Fir'awn as he drowns and finally declares his faith: "Now?! when you disobeyed before".

In both cases it is not faith that is questioned, but its hour: declared in the face of punishment, it no longer avails. The translation keeps the interrogative form and the mark of indignation ("?!").

The application of this device to surah 10, with the exception of the people of Yunus (10:98), is the subject of "Now?!": faith declared too late.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 10:51**

أَثُمَّ إِذَا مَا وَقَعَ ءَامَنتُم بِهِۦٓ ءَآلْـَٔـٰنَ

*"Is it then only once it has happened that you will believe in it? … Now?! when you used to seek to hasten it!"*

Two words of time under the hamza in one verse: أَثُمَّ then ءَآلْـَٔـٰنَ.

**EXAMPLE 10:91**

ءَآلْـَٔـٰنَ وَقَدْ عَصَيْتَ قَبْلُ

*"Now?! when you disobeyed before"*

Addressed to Fir'awn: faith declared at the moment of drowning.

**IN BRIEF**

Established. See also "Now?!": faith declared too late.

## One word, one meaning

*No synonyms: each word, each preposition carries a nuance the translation must keep.*

ESTABLISHED RULE

# No synonyms: the rare word has a reason

> When the Qur'an has a common word for a thing and chooses, at a precise point, a rare word, the choice is never a mere matter of style: the rare word carries a nuance that the contrast with the common word makes it possible to demonstrate.

The founding case is that of the neck. The common word is عُنُق (plural أَعْنَاق), and the corpus always uses it for the neck as a place of constraint or submission: the yokes on the necks (13:5, 34:33, 36:8), the hand chained to the neck (17:29), the necks bowed before a sign (26:4). In 111:5, for the wife of Abu Lahab, the text uses another word, unique in the corpus: « فِى جِيدِهَا حَبْ□□□ مِّن □□□مَّسَ ». The جِيد is the neck as a place of adornment, where the necklace is worn; the text places a rope of fibre there. The choice of the rare word makes the punishment an adornment turned inside out.

The rule is a tool: faced with a rare word, one looks for the common word that could have been used, and reads the difference.

The translation keeps the distinction: عُنُق is rendered "neck", جِيد "throat" (in French « cou » / « col »).

## IN THE TEXT

EXAMPLE 111:5

فِي جِيدِهَا حَبْلٌ مِّن مَّسَدٍ

*“a rope of twisted fiber around her throat”*

The rare word جِيد, rendered "throat": the adorned neck, where the necklace is worn.

**EXAMPLE 17:29**

وَلَا تَجْعَلْ يَدَكَ مَغْلُولَةً إِلَىٰ عُنُقِكَ

“*Do not keep your hand chained to your neck*”

The common word عُنُق: the neck as a place of constraint.

**IN BRIEF**

Established. The translation keeps the distinction: "neck" for عُنُق, "throat" for جِيد.

ESTABLISHED RULE

# One Arabic term, one word per language

> Each Arabic term receives a single rendering in each language, and two distinct roots never share the same word. No compound doublet ("deny-disown") for a single Arabic word, no word shared by two different roots.

The Qur'an does not treat its words as interchangeable: when it uses مَكَرَ and not كَادَ, or ٱلرَّحْمَٰن and ٱلرَّحِيم side by side, the difference matters. If the translation gives the same word to two roots, the reader can no longer see which one is used; if it gives two words to one root, he believes in a difference that does not exist.

The rule has two sides:

- one term, one rendering: ٱلرَّحْمَٰن is always "the All-Benevolent", ٱلرَّحِيم always "the Benevolent", and never the other way round;
- two roots, two words: in the system "testing", ابتلى ("test"), فتنة ("trial"), بلاء ("a testing") and امتحن ("examine") share no word, in any of the six languages. In 21:35 two of these roots follow each other: « وَنَبْلُوكُم بِٱلشَّرِّ وَٱلْخَيْرِ فِتْنَةً », "We test you with bad and with good, as a trial".

The principle holds throughout the Qur'an: each Arabic word keeps its own word, and two neighbouring roots never share one (كفر / كذّب, مكر / كيد, ذنب / خطيئة, قسط / عدل / ...). See also The system "testing": four roots, four words, which details one application, and The names of the Hour: each says what it does.

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 1:1**

ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

"*the All-Benevolent, the Benevolent*"

Two words from the same root, two fixed renderings that never swap.

**EXAMPLE 21:35**

وَنَبۡلُوكُم بِٱلشَّرِّ وَٱلۡخَيۡرِ فِتۡنَةً

"*and We test you with bad and with good, as a trial*"

Two roots in one sentence (بلو, فتن), two distinct words.

**EXAMPLE 3:54**

وَمَكَرُواْ وَمَكَرَ ٱللَّهُ

"*They plotted, and God plotted [in return]*"

Here, مكر has its word ("plot"); كيد has its own: the pair was separated in five languages.

**IN BRIEF**

Established as a norm of the translation system. One known departure remains open (The names of the Hour: each says what it does).

ESTABLISHED RULE

# The system "testing": four roots, four words

> Four roots express testing in the Qur'an: ابتلى ("test"), فتنة ("trial", "put to trial"), بلاء ("a testing") and امتحن ("examine"). In each of the six languages they receive four distinct words, and no word is shared. It is a detailed application of One Arabic term, one word per language.

The four roots do not say the same thing:

- with ابتلى, God tests in order to reveal: « وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُم بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ ٱلْخَوْفِ », "We will certainly test you with some fear" (2:155);
- with فتنة, the trial that sorts and can make one fall: « وَهُمْ لَا يُفْتَنُونَ », "without being put to the trial" (29:2);
- with امتحن, the examination carried out by humans: « فَٱمْتَحِنُوهُنَّ », "examine them" (60:10).

The fixed renderings: éprouver / test / probar / provare / menguji / испытывать for ابتلى; mettre à l'épreuve, épreuve / put to trial, trial / poner a prueba, prueba / mettere alla prova, prova / mencoba, cobaan / подвергать искусу, искус for فتنة; ce qui éprouve / a testing / lo que prueba / ciò che prova / ujian / испытание for بلاء; examiner / examine / examinar / esaminare / memeriksa / проверять for امتحن.

A consequence of the rule: a word reserved for one root is not used for another. In Spanish, ذاق ("taste") is rendered "gustar", because "probar" belongs to ابتلى. The same principle separates other pairs (خزي / ذلّ, دمّر / أهلك, جزاء / أجر, جحد / كفر, قسط / عدل, لعب / لهو, مآب / مأوى).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 2:155**

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُم بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ ٱلْخَوْفِ

“*We will certainly test you with some fear*”

Here, ابتلى: "test".

**EXAMPLE 29:2**

أَحَسِبَ ٱلنَّاسُ أَن يُتْرَكُوٓاْ أَن يَقُولُوٓاْ ءَامَنَّا وَهُمْ لَا يُفْتَنُونَ

“*without being put to the trial*”

Here, فتنة: "put to the trial".

**EXAMPLE 60:10**

فَٱمْتَحِنُوهُنَّ

“*examine them*”

Here, امتحن: "examine".

**IN BRIEF**

Established, an application of One Arabic term, one word per language. Four roots, four words, in all six languages.

ESTABLISHED RULE

# The names of the Hour: each says what it does

> The Qur'an names the Hour with feminine active participles used on their own: الحاقة, القارعة, الواقعة, الطامة, الصاخة, الغاشية. Each designates it by what it does, and each keeps its own rendering, never shared with another.

Six names, six actions:

- the form الحاقة, "That which establishes the real" (69:1-3);
- the form القارعة, "the Crash", what strikes suddenly (69:4, 101:1-3);
- the form الواقعة, "the Event", what occurs (56:1, 69:15);
- the form الطامة, "the greatest Overwhelming Event" (79:34);
- the form الصاخة, "the Deafening Blast", what deafens (80:33);
- the form الغاشية, "the Enveloping Event", what covers over (88:1).

A rule of non-synonymy follows: two different names do not share one word. That is why الصاخة is "the Deafening Blast" and القارعة "the Crash": the two never share a word (in French « l'Assourdissante » and « le Fracas »).

The same pattern, used indefinitely or for something other than the Hour, falls outside the rule: in 13:31, قَارِعَةٌ is "a sudden calamity" striking people before the promise; in 69:5, ٱلطَّاغِيَة names the punishment of Thamud.

## IN THE TEXT

EXAMPLE **69:1-2**

ٱلْحَآقَّةُ مَا ٱلْحَآقَّةُ

*"That which establishes the real! What is that which establishes the real?"*
The name الحاقة: "That which establishes the real".

**EXAMPLE 101:1-2**

ٱلْقَارِعَةُ مَا ٱلْقَارِعَةُ

“*The Crash. What is the Crash?*”
The name القارعة: "the Crash", reserved for this name alone.

**EXAMPLE 80:33**

فَإِذَا جَآءَتِ ٱلصَّآخَّةُ

“*when the Deafening Blast comes*”
The name الصاخة: "the Deafening Blast".

**EXAMPLE 88:1**

هَلْ أَتَىٰكَ حَدِيثُ ٱلْغَٰشِيَةِ

“*Has there come to you the account of the Enveloping Event?*”
The name الغاشية: French « l'Enveloppante », the model for الصاخة.

**EXCEPTION 13:31**

تُصِيبُهُم بِمَا صَنَعُوا۟ قَارِعَةٌ

“*by a sudden calamity*”
The same pattern, indefinite: a calamity, not a name of the Hour.

**IN BRIEF**

Established. Six names, six distinct renderings.

ESTABLISHED RULE

# "That is because they are a people who do not ...": a faculty named

> The formula « ذٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَّا + verb » traces a behaviour back to an absent faculty. Three verbs enter it, each with its own rendering: لَا يَعْقِلُونَ "do not reason", لَا يَفْقَهُونَ "do not understand", لَا يَعْلَمُونَ "do not know".

The six occurrences:

- the verb يَعْقِلُونَ (reason): 5:58, those who mock the call to the Contact; 59:14, the hypocrites whose unity is only apparent;
- the verb يَفْقَهُونَ (understand): 8:65, 9:127, 59:13;
- the verb يَعْلَمُونَ (know): 9:6, the associator who asks for protection in order to hear the word of God.

Sura 59 shows that the choice of verb is not indifferent: one verse apart, the hypocrites' fear of the believers is traced to what they do not understand (59:13), and their false unity to their not reasoning (59:14). Two behaviours, two faculties.

So that the difference stays visible, each verb keeps its own rendering, and the formula itself is rendered one way: "That is because they are a people who do not ...".

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 59:13**

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَّا يَفْقَهُونَ

*"That is because they are a people who do not understand."*
Here, يَفْقَهُونَ: "understand".

**EXAMPLE 59:14**

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَّا يَعْقِلُونَ

*"That is because they are a people who do not reason."*
The next verse: يَعْقِلُونَ, "reason". Two behaviours, two faculties.

**EXAMPLE 9:6**

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَّا يَعْلَمُونَ

*"That is because they are a people who do not know."*
Here, يَعْلَمُونَ: "know".

**IN BRIEF**

Established. Six occurrences, one verb per faculty.

ESTABLISHED RULE

# Affirming as true, the opposite of denying

> When the verb صدّق has as its object a word, a person or the Day, it is rendered "affirm" (declare true). It is the exact opposite of كذّب, "deny", with which the text often contrasts it.

The text sets the two verbs against each other about one man: "For he neither affirmed, nor made contact" (75:31), then "but he denied and turned away" (75:32). The same pair structures 92:6 and 92:9: the one who "affirms the best", and the one who denies it.

The rendering holds for any word or person: the Day of Retribution (70:26), the truth brought (39:33, "and affirmed it"), the messengers (37:37), and Moussa himself, who asks for Harun as a support "so that he may affirm me" (28:34), facing a people he fears will deny him.

Three uses stay outside the rule, because their construction is different:

- the participle مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا, a Scripture "confirming what precedes it" (6:92);
- in 34:20, صَدَّقَ عَلَيْهِمْ إِبْلِيسُ ظَنَّهُۥ, Iblis "had certainly confirmed his conjecture about them" (French « vérifié »);
- in 37:105, صَدَّقْتَ ٱلرُّءْيَآ: "you have indeed confirmed the vision", Ibrahim is told, having made it true by his act.

## IN THE TEXT

EXAMPLE 75:31

فَلَا صَدَّقَ وَلَا صَلَّىٰ

*"For he neither affirmed, nor made contact"*
The verb صدّق, at once set against (75:32) كذّب.

**EXAMPLE 39:33**

وَصَدَّقَ بِهِۦ

"*and affirmed it*"
The verb followed by بـ: the truth brought, affirmed.

**EXAMPLE 37:37**

وَصَدَّقَ ٱلْمُرْسَلِينَ

"*and affirmed the messengers*"
The object is persons: same rendering.

**EXCEPTION 6:92**

مُّصَدِّقُ ٱلَّذِى بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ

"*confirming what precedes it*"
The participle مُصَدِّق, a Scripture confirming another: "confirm".

**EXCEPTION 37:105**

قَدْ صَدَّقْتَ ٱلرُّءْيَآ

"*you have indeed confirmed the vision*"
A vision made true by the act: "confirm".

**IN BRIEF**

Established. The verb صدّق is rendered "affirm"; three distinct constructions keep "confirm" or "verify".

ESTABLISHED RULE

# Believing "in" and giving credit "to"

> The verb آمَنَ changes meaning with its preposition. آمَنَ بِـ is to believe in something or someone: God, the Last Day, what escapes the senses. آمَنَ لِـ is to give credit to a person: to accept his word, to take his side.

The survey finds 14 uses of آمن followed by لـ before a person. In all of them the object is not a reality one adheres to, but someone whose testimony one accepts:

- Fir'awn reproaches the magicians: « ءَامَنتُمْ لَهُۥ قَبْلَ أَنْ ءَاذَنَ لَكُمْ », "You gave him credit before I gave you permission" (20:71): they took Moussa's word;
- Youssof's brothers tell their father: « وَمَآ أَنتَ بِمُؤْمِنٍ لَّنَا », "you will not give us credit" (12:17): he will not believe their story;
- in 9:61 the two constructions follow each other in one sentence: « يُؤْمِنُ بِٱللَّهِ وَيُؤْمِنُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ », "he believes in God, gives credit to the believers".

That verse is the clearest proof: if both constructions meant the same, the second would be a repetition; the text distinguishes them by placing them side by side.

It refutes the hypothesis that آمن is only ever construed with بـ (see The verb آمن has more than one preposition). The rendering is fixed in each language: "faire crédit à" (FR), "give credit to" (EN), "dar crédito a" (ES), "dare credito a" (IT), "percaya" (ID, reserved for this use), "поверить" as against "уверовать" (RU).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 9:61**

يُؤْمِنُ بِٱللَّهِ وَيُؤْمِنُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

"*he believes in God, gives credit to the believers*"

Both constructions side by side: proof that they do not say the same thing.

**EXAMPLE 20:71**

ءَامَنتُمْ لَهُۥ قَبْلَ أَنْ ءَاذَنَ لَكُمْ

"*You gave him credit before I gave you permission!*"

Fir'awn does not blame the magicians for a faith, but for taking Moussa's side.

**EXAMPLE 12:17**

وَمَآ أَنتَ بِمُؤْمِنٍ لَّنَا

"*But you will not give us credit, even if we speak the truth.*"

It is about believing a story, not a religious belief.

**EXAMPLE 2:3**

ٱلَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِٱلْغَيْبِ

"*who believe in God even though He escapes their senses*"

With بـ: adherence to a reality, here what escapes the senses.

**IN BRIEF**

Established. 14 occurrences, all meaning "to give credit"; the juxtaposition in 9:61 proves the two constructions are distinct.

ESTABLISHED RULE

# Guiding "along" the path or guiding "to" it

The verb هَدَى is construed in two ways with "the path" (صِرَاط). With a direct object (« ٱهْدِنَا ٱلصِّرَٰطَ »), it means leading someone along the path itself: the translation says "guide along / on". With إِلَىٰ (« هَدَيْنَٰهُمْ إِلَىٰ صِرَٰطٍ »), it means pointing him in its direction: the translation says "guide to".

The survey covers the 14 sentences where هدى and صراط meet. Six have the direct object: 1:6, 4:68, 19:43, 37:118, 48:2 and 48:20. The other eight have إلى.

The difference is that between two acts. Guiding along the path means setting the one guided on it and moving him forward; guiding to the path means showing him its direction. The prayer of the Fatiha asks for the first: « ٱهْدِنَا ٱلصِّرَٰطَ ٱلْمُسْتَقِيمَ », "Guide us on the straight path". In 42:52, the messenger "guides to a straight path": he shows the way, he does not make one walk it.

The one who guides is not always God: in 19:43 it is Ibrahim who tells his father « أَهْدِكَ صِرَٰطًا سَوِيًّا », "I will guide you along an even path". The rule concerns the construction, not the subject.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 1:6**

ٱهْدِنَا ٱلصِّرَٰطَ ٱلْمُسْتَقِيمَ

*"Guide us on the straight path"*

Direct object: the prayer asks to be led along the path itself.

**EXAMPLE 37:118**

وَهَدَيْنَٰهُمَا ٱلصِّرَٰطَ ٱلْمُسْتَقِيمَ

*"and We guided them both along the straight path"*

Moussa and Haroun: direct object, "guide along".

**EXAMPLE 6:87**

وَهَدَيْنَٰهُمْ إِلَىٰ صِرَٰطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ

"*We guided them to a straight path*"

With إلى: orientation toward the path.

**COUNTER-EXAMPLE 19:43**

أَهْدِكَ صِرَٰطًا سَوِيًّا

"*I will guide you along an even path*"

Direct object, but the subject is Ibrahim: it refutes the old clause "subject always God", not the rule of construction.

**IN BRIEF**

Established. The distinction holds in all 14 sentences, and the translation respects it throughout.

ESTABLISHED RULE

# The Contact: making it, maintaining it, being in contact with

> The root صلو is always rendered with "contact", but the construction decides the verb: the verb صلّى used alone is rendered "make contact"; the phrase أقام الصلاة is rendered "maintain the Contact"; the verb followed by على and a person is rendered "be in contact with".

Three constructions, three renderings, without exception.

The verb used alone states the act: the one who "remembers the name of his Guardian, and makes contact" (87:15); Zakariya, called "while he was making contact in the oratory" (3:39). The participle follows the verb: "those who make contact" (70:22, 107:4).

The phrase أقام الصلاة states duration: "And maintain the Contact" (2:43), with the capital of the noun.

With على and a person, the verb states the relation: "and be in contact with them" (9:103). The same construction, negated, forbids the relation: "And never be in contact with any of them who dies" (9:84). God Himself is "in contact" with the believers (33:43) and with the Prophet (33:56).

## IN THE TEXT

EXAMPLE **87:15**

وَذَكَرَ ٱسْمَ رَبِّهِۦ فَصَلَّىٰ

*"and remembers the name of his Guardian, and makes contact"*

The verb alone: "make contact".

**EXAMPLE 2:43**

وَأَقِيمُواْ ٱلصَّلَوٰةَ وَءَاتُواْ ٱلزَّكَوٰةَ وَٱرۡكَعُواْ

"*And maintain the Contact*"
The phrase أقام الصلاة: "maintain the Contact".

**EXAMPLE 9:103**

وَصَلِّ عَلَيۡهِمۡ

"*and be in contact with them*"
With على and a person: "be in contact with".

**EXAMPLE 9:84**

وَلَا تُصَلِّ عَلَىٰٓ أَحَدٖ مِّنۡهُم

"*And never be in contact with any of them who dies*"
The same construction, negated.

**EXAMPLE 3:39**

وَهُوَ قَآئِمٞ يُصَلِّي

"*while he was making contact in the oratory*"
The verb alone, imperfective.

**IN BRIEF**

Established. Three constructions, three renderings, throughout the Qur'an.

ESTABLISHED RULE

# The preposition before "their Contact" tells the relationship

> In the phrase « اَلَّذِينَ هُمْ ... صَلَاتِهِمْ » ("those who, toward their Contact, ..."), the preposition before صَلَاتِهِمْ tells what relationship the person has with the Contact: عَلَىٰ marks constancy, فِى inward humility within the Contact, عَنْ distance, the mind absent from it.

The word صَلَاتِهِمْ (or صَلَوٰتِهِمْ) occurs seven times in the corpus. Six times it follows « اَلَّذِينَ هُمْ » and a preposition; the seventh (8:35) is another construction: صَلَاتُهُمْ is the subject of كَانَ, without « اَلَّذِينَ هُمْ ».

In the six occurrences of the pattern, three prepositions share the uses, each with a clear meaning:

- with عَلَىٰ (6:92, 23:9, 70:23, 70:34): standing on the Contact, holding to it: "constant in their Contact", "they guard their Contact";
- with فِى (23:2): being inside the Contact: "in their Contact, they are humble";
- with عَنْ (107:5): being away from it, the mind elsewhere: "absent-minded about their Contact".

The same person can thus perform the Contact (107:4 speaks of "those who make contact") and be absent from it (107:5): the preposition alone carries the reproach. In each language, the translation keeps the nuance of each preposition.

## IN THE TEXT

EXAMPLE **70:23**

اَلَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَىٰ صَلَاتِهِمْ دَآئِمُونَ

*"constant in their Contact"*

Here, عَلَىٰ: constancy.

**EXAMPLE 23:2**

ٱلَّذِينَ هُمْ فِى صَلَاتِهِمْ خَٰشِعُونَ

"*those who, in their Contact, are humble*"

Here, فِى: inside the Contact.

**EXAMPLE 107:5**

ٱلَّذِينَ هُمْ عَن صَلَاتِهِمْ سَاهُونَ

"*are absent-minded about their Contact*"

Here, عَنْ: distance. They make contact (107:4) but are absent from it.

**EXCEPTION 8:35**

وَمَا كَانَ صَلَاتُهُمْ عِندَ ٱلْبَيْتِ

"*And their Contact, near the House*"

Outside the pattern: صَلَاتُهُمْ is the subject of كَانَ, with neither « ٱلَّذِينَ هُمْ » nor preposition.

**IN BRIEF**

Established. Six occurrences within the pattern, without exception; the seventh (8:35) belongs to another construction.

ESTABLISHED RULE

# Sending "upon": what comes down, and the guardians

> Construed with عَلَىٰ, the verb أَرْسَلَ ("to send") describes something coming down upon a target: rain, a wind, a cry, stones. With the same construction, guardians are sent "upon" human beings by God alone; whenever it is a matter of sending the Prophet or human beings as guardians over others, the sentence is negated.

The survey counts 24 occurrences of أَرْسَلَ followed by عَلَىٰ within three words.

Nineteen concern something falling from above: rain (« يُرْسِلِ ٱلسَّمَآءَ عَلَيْكُم », 71:11), the icy wind (54:19), the cry (54:31), the birds and their stones (105:3), the flood and the locusts (7:133). The preposition gives the direction: from above onto the target.

The other five concern guardians, and the division is clear:

- affirmed once only, with God as subject: « وَيُرْسِلُ عَلَيْكُمْ حَفَظَةً », "He sends upon you guardians" (6:61);
- negated four times when it concerns the Prophet (4:80, 17:54, 42:48: « فَمَآ أَرْسَلْنَٰكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيظًا ») or human beings (83:33: « وَمَآ أُرْسِلُوا۟ عَلَيْهِمْ حَٰفِظِينَ »).

No occurrence departs from this division. The translation renders عَلَىٰ as "upon" throughout.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 71:11**

يُرْسِلِ ٱلسَّمَآءَ عَلَيْكُم مِّدْرَارًا

"*He will send rain from the sky upon you in abundance*"

What comes down: rain.

**EXAMPLE 105:3**

وَأَرْسَلَ عَلَيْهِمْ طَيْرًا أَبَابِيلَ

"*And did He not send upon them massive birds*"

What comes down: the birds and their stones.

**EXAMPLE 6:61**

وَيُرْسِلُ عَلَيْكُمْ حَفَظَةً

"*and He sends upon you guardians*"

The only affirmed sending of guardians "upon": the subject is God.

**COUNTER-EXAMPLE 42:48**

فَمَآ أَرْسَلْنَٰكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيظًا

"*We have not sent you as a guardian over them*"

The Prophet is not sent as a guardian: the sentence is negated.

**COUNTER-EXAMPLE 83:33**

وَمَآ أُرْسِلُوا۟ عَلَيْهِمْ حَٰفِظِينَ

"*while they had not been sent as guardians over them*"

Human beings setting themselves up as judges of the believers: likewise negated.

**IN BRIEF**

Established. 24 occurrences, without exception.

ESTABLISHED RULE

# The verb تَوَلَّىٰ: turning away, or taking as an ally

> The verb تَوَلَّىٰ (form V of the root ولي) has two meanings, and the construction decides. Without a complement it means "to turn away"; with a direct object (a noun or an attached pronoun) it means "to take as an ally".

The root ولي expresses nearness, the one who is next to. Form V draws two opposite movements from it: turning one's back on someone, or placing oneself at his side. Arabic distinguishes them only by construction:

- intransitive: « وَمَن يَتَوَلَّ فَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ هُوَ ٱلْغَنِىُّ ٱلْحَمِيدُ », "And whoever turns away — indeed God is the Self-Sufficient" (60:6);
- transitive: « أَن تَوَلَّوْهُمْ », "from taking them as allies" (60:9); « وَمَن يَتَوَلَّهُم مِّنكُمْ فَإِنَّهُۥ مِنْهُمْ », "whoever among you takes them as allies is then of them" (5:51).

Sura 60 places both meanings three verses apart without any confusion. The survey of the whole corpus counts 84 occurrences of form V: 65 intransitive, all "turn away", and 9 transitive, all "take as an ally".

The few apparent departures come from another form of the verb: form II وَلَّىٰ, which takes two objects. In 8:15, « فَلَا تُوَلُّوهُمُ ٱلْأَدْبَارَ » means "do not turn your backs to them": it is وَلَّىٰ + ٱلْأَدْبَار, outside the scope of the rule.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 60:6**

وَمَن يَتَوَلَّ فَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ هُوَ ٱلْغَنِىُّ ٱلْحَمِيدُ

*“And whoever turns away”*

No object: "turn away".

**EXAMPLE 5:51**

وَمَن يَتَوَلَّهُم مِّنكُمْ فَإِنَّهُۥ مِنْهُمْ

"*And whoever among you takes them as allies is then of them.*"
With the attached pronoun ـهُم: "take as an ally".

**EXCEPTION 8:15**

فَلَا تُوَلُّوهُمُ ٱلْأَدْبَارَ

"*do not turn your backs to them*"
Form II (وَلَّىٰ) with two objects: outside the rule.

**IN BRIEF**

Established. 84 occurrences of form V, without exception; the apparent departures belong to form II.

ESTABLISHED RULE

# Same spelling, different words

> Several words of the Qur'an share the same skeleton of letters yet have neither the same meaning nor the same function. Only vocalisation and context tell them apart; reader and translator must therefore always identify them before rendering them.

The clearest case is the skeleton كلا, which carries three words:

- the form كُلَا, "eat", an imperative addressed to two persons: Adam and his spouse, "and eat from it, at your ease" (2:35);
- the form كُلًّا, "each, all": "To all, We grant" (17:20);
- the form كَلَّا, "by no means!", which rejects what has just been said: "By no means! We will record what he says" (19:79).

The skeleton اذا carries two words: إِذَا, "when", and إِذًا, "then", which draws a consequence: "you would then indeed be among the unjust" (2:145). The corpus counts 31 of them.

The skeleton اما carries إِمَّا, "if" ("if guidance comes to you from Me", 2:38), and أَمَّا, "as for" (2:26).

This is not an isolated curiosity but a constant principle of the script: before translating, one identifies the word, not just the letters.

### IN THE TEXT

EXAMPLE **2:35**

وَكُلَا مِنْهَا رَغَدًا

*"and eat from it, at your ease"*

The skeleton كلا read كُلَا: "eat", dual imperative.

**EXAMPLE 17:20**

كُلًّا نُّمِدُّ هَٰٓؤُلَآءِ

*“To all, We grant”*
The same skeleton read كُلًّا: "all, each".

**EXAMPLE 19:79**

كَلَّا سَنَكْتُبُ

*“By no means!”*
The same skeleton read كَلَّا: a rejection.

**EXAMPLE 2:145**

إِنَّكَ إِذًا لَّمِنَ ٱلظَّٰلِمِينَ

*“you would then indeed be among the unjust”*
The word إِذًا, "then", not to be confused with إِذَا, "when".

**IN BRIEF**

Established, as a principle of reading: each group is told apart by its vocalisation and its context.

# Pronouns, gender and number

*What pronouns and agreement say, and what they do not.*

ESTABLISHED RULE

# The feminine pronoun follows the gender of the word, not sex

The pronouns هِيَ ("she / it") and هُنَّ ("they", feminine) refer as much to women as to things whose noun is grammatically feminine: a cow, a staff, verses, idols. Agreement follows the gender of the word referred to, never an idea of sex.

The examples:

- « يُبَيِّن لَّنَا مَا هِىَ », "that He make clear to us what it is" (2:68, 2:70): هِيَ refers to the cow (بَقَرَة);
- « هِىَ عَصَاىَ », "It is my staff" (20:18): عَصًا is feminine;
- « هُنَّ أُمُّ ٱلْكِتَٰبِ », "which are the foundation of the Scripture" (3:7): هُنَّ refers to the verses (آيَات);
- « هَلْ هُنَّ كَٰشِفَٰتُ ضُرِّهِۦٓ », "could they remove His harm?" (39:38): هُنَّ refers to the idols invoked.

The same pronoun is used for women: « هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَّكُمْ », "they are a garment for you" (2:187). No mark distinguishes the two uses; only context does.

For translation the consequence is simple: rendering هي as "she" when the noun referred to is a thing makes the reader think of a person. In English, "it" renders the thing, as in 2:68 and 2:70, "what it is".

## IN THE TEXT

EXAMPLE 20:18

قَالَ هِىَ عَصَاىَ

*"It is my staff"*
Here, هِيَ for an object: the staff.

**EXAMPLE 2:68**

ٱدْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّن لَّنَا مَا هِىَ

“*that He make clear to us what it is*”
Here, هِيَ for the cow (2:68; same formula in 2:70).

**EXAMPLE 3:7**

هُنَّ أُمُّ ٱلْكِتَٰبِ

“*which are the foundation of the Scripture*”
Here, هُنَّ for verses.

**COUNTER-EXAMPLE 2:187**

هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَّكُمْ وَأَنتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَّهُنَّ

“*they are a garment for you*”
The same pronoun for women: only context tells them apart.

**IN BRIEF**

Established. Known to Arabic grammar, it holds for the examples in the Qur'an.

ESTABLISHED RULE

# The dual pronoun does not mark gender

The dual pronoun هُمَا ("the two of them") is the same whether the two persons are two men, two women, or a man and a woman. In the plural, by contrast, Arabic distinguishes هُمْ (masculine or mixed) and هُنَّ (feminine).

Two examples side by side:

- 46:17: « وَهُمَا يَسْتَغِيثَانِ ٱللَّهَ », "while they both cry out to God for help": هُمَا is the father and the mother, a mixed pair;
- 9:40: « إِذْ هُمَا فِى ٱلْغَارِ », "when they were both in the cave": هُمَا is two men.

The form does not change. In the plural the distinction exists: « هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَّكُمْ », "they are a garment for you" (2:187).

The rule concerns pronouns only. The dual verb keeps gender: قَالَا ("the two of them [m.] said") against قَالَتَا ("the two of them [f.] said"). For translation, the gender of a pair is therefore read from the verb or the context, not from the pronoun.

## IN THE TEXT

EXAMPLE **46:17**

وَهُمَا يَسْتَغِيثَانِ ٱللَّهَ

*"while they both cry out to God for help"*
Here, هُمَا: the father and the mother.

EXAMPLE **9:40**

إِذْ هُمَا فِى ٱلْغَارِ

*"when they were both in the cave"*
Here, هُمَا: two men. Same form.

**IN BRIEF**

Established for pronouns. The dual verb keeps gender.

ESTABLISHED RULE

# Demonstrative and address pronoun fused: ذٰلِكُمْ, تِلْكُمْ, تِلْكُمَا

The demonstrative of distance (ذٰلِكَ, تِلْكَ) can agree, through its suffix, with the people being addressed: ذٰلِكُمْ ("that, O you [pl.]"), تِلْكُمْ (feminine, to several), تِلْكُمَا (feminine, to two). The gender of the demonstrative follows the thing pointed at; the suffix follows the addressees.

The suffix كَ of ذٰلِكَ is not an object pronoun: it is a mark of address, telling to whom the thing is being shown. The corpus varies it with the number of addressees:

- la forme ذٰلِكُمْ, 47 times, when several are addressed: « ذٰلِكُمْ أَزْكَىٰ لَكُمْ وَأَطْهَرُ », "That is more pure for you, and cleaner" (2:232);
- the form تِلْكُمْ, once, a feminine thing shown to several: « أَن تِلْكُمُ ٱلْجَنَّةُ », "This is the Garden" (7:43);
- the form تِلْكُمَا, once, a feminine thing shown to two: Adam and his wife, « أَلَمْ أَنْهَكُمَا عَن تِلْكُمَا ٱلشَّجَرَةِ », "Did I not forbid you this tree?" (7:22).

The device is systematic: the base varies with the thing (ذا / تي), the suffix with the addressees (كَ / كُمْ / كُمَا). Translation has no equivalent; it renders the demonstrative and lets the context say who is addressed ("you two" in 7:22).

## IN THE TEXT

EXAMPLE 7:22

أَلَمْ أَنْهَكُمَا عَن تِلْكُمَا ٱلشَّجَرَةِ

*"Did I not forbid you this tree"*

Here, تِلْكُمَا: the tree (feminine) shown to two.

**EXAMPLE 7:43**

أَن تِلْكُمُ ٱلْجَنَّةُ

"*This is the Garden*"
Here, تِلْكُمْ: the Garden (feminine) shown to several.

**EXAMPLE 2:232**

ذَٰلِكُمْ أَزْكَىٰ لَكُمْ وَأَطْهَرُ

"*That is more pure for you, and cleaner.*"
Here, ذَٰلِكُمْ, the most frequent form (47 occurrences).

**IN BRIEF**

Established. The device is systematic.

# Formulas and refrains

*Words that return identically, and why the translation renders them identically.*

ESTABLISHED RULE

# The repeated formula: same Arabic, same translation

> Some formulas return word for word, or nearly, from one sura to another. This return is an intended refrain, not a coincidence of style; the translation makes it visible by giving the formula the same rendering everywhere.

Founding examples:

- « قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ » opens suras 113 and 114 identically;
- « وَمَا ٱلْحَيَوٰةُ ٱلدُّنْيَآ إِلَّا لَعِبٌ وَلَهْوٌ », "the present life is nothing but play and distraction", recurs in six suras (6:32, 6:70, 7:51, 29:64, 47:36, 57:20);
- « يَبْدَؤُا۟ ٱلْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُۥ », "He initiates creation then repeats it", recurs in five suras (10:4, 10:34, 27:64, 30:11, 30:27, 85:13).

This phenomenon is not grammatical in the classical sense: it is a fact of the composition of the text itself, invisible to one who reads root by root, and revealed only by comparative reading.

It is one of the rules that most guide the translation. The formulas that call for their own demonstration each have their own page, under the theme "Formulas and refrains".

## IN THE TEXT

EXAMPLE 6:32

وَمَا ٱلْحَيَوٰةُ ٱلدُّنْيَآ إِلَّا لَعِبٌ وَلَهْوٌ

*"The present life is nothing but play and distraction"*

One of the six occurrences of the formula.

**EXAMPLE 57:20**

أَنَّمَا ٱلْحَيَوٰةُ ٱلدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَلَهْوٌ

"*the present life is but play, distraction*"

The same formula, extended: "play, distraction, adornment…".

**IN BRIEF**

Established. Formulas repeated identically are rendered identically.

ESTABLISHED RULE

# The imperative قل at the opening of a sura

> Five suras open with the imperative قُلْ ("Say"): 72, 109, 112, 113 and 114. Everything that follows is speech the reciter must utter himself; the translation therefore always keeps "Say:" at the head.

The test covered all 114 suras: only these five begin with قل. In each, the text does not speak to the reader, it gives him the words to say: "Say: He is God, the Absolute Singularity" (112), "Say: I seek refuge…" (113, 114), "Say: O you who disown!" (109), "Say: It has been revealed to me…" (72).

Dropping قل in translation would turn these suras into God's statement about Himself, or into a narrative; keeping it gives the reader his place: he is the one who speaks. All six languages keep it: « Dis : », « Say: », « Di: », « Di': », « Katakanlah: », « Скажи: ».

Sura 72 confirms it from within: four more قل divide its ending (72:20, 72:21, 72:22, 72:25), each introducing a new utterance.

## IN THE TEXT

EXAMPLE 112:1

قُلْ هُوَ ٱللَّهُ أَحَدٌ

*"Say: He is God, the Absolute Singularity."*

Without "Say" the sentence would become God's declaration; with it, the reciter is the one affirming it.

EXAMPLE 109:1

قُلْ يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلْكَٰفِرُونَ

*"Say: O you who disown!"*

The words are put in the reciter's mouth; he himself addresses those who disown.

**EXAMPLE 72:1**

قُلْ أُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ

*"Say, "It has been revealed to me"*

The only long sura of the group; four more قل divide its ending.

**IN BRIEF**

Established. Of the 114 suras, five open this way, and the translation renders them all the same way.

ESTABLISHED RULE

# Oaths on feminine participles: "by those that ..."

> Five suras open with a series of oaths on feminine plural participles standing without a noun: وَٱلْعَٰدِيَٰتِ, وَٱلْمُرْسَلَٰتِ, وَٱلنَّٰزِعَٰتِ, وَٱلذَّٰرِيَٰتِ, وَٱلصَّٰٓفَّٰتِ. The text does not say who they are; the translation keeps the feminine where the language allows and does not fill the gap: "By those that ...".

The five openings are 37:1-3, 51:1-4, 77:1-5, 79:1-5 and 100:1-5. Each time the participle is feminine plural and has no noun to carry it: « وَٱلْعَٰدِيَٰتِ ضَبْحًا », "by those that cross the limits, panting". The reader knows what they do, not what they are.

Commentaries propose identities (horses, winds, angels), but the text names none of them. Translating "By the horses ..." or "By the angels ..." would add to the text what it chose to leave unsaid. The translation therefore keeps the form: a pronoun and a relative clause, "those that".

French, Spanish and Italian mark the feminine ("celles qui", "las que", "quelle che"); English has no gender ("those that / those who").

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 100:1**

وَٱلْعَٰدِيَٰتِ ضَبْحًا

"*By those that cross the limits, panting*"
The feminine "celles qui" in French, as in the other openings.

**EXAMPLE 37:1**

وَٱلصَّٰٓفَّٰتِ صَفًّا

"*By those that range themselves in ranks*"
The feminine participle alone, with no noun added.

**EXAMPLE 77:1**

وَٱلْمُرْسَلَٰتِ عُرْفًا

"*By those sent forth in succession*"
The text says what they do, not what they are.

**EXAMPLE 79:1**

وَٱلنَّٰزِعَٰتِ غَرْقًا

"*By those who tear away, submerging*"
Same form, same rendering.

**IN BRIEF**

Established. All five openings are rendered "those that" (French « celles qui »).

ESTABLISHED RULE

# « لَآ أُقْسِمُ »: "No! I swear"

> The formula « لَآ أُقْسِمُ » opens an oath by first rejecting what the opponents say. It does not mean "I do not swear": the لَا is a "No!" dismissing their claim, and then comes the oath. It is rendered everywhere "No! I swear by ...".

The formula occurs eight times, in seven sentences (56:75, 69:38, 70:40, 75:1, 75:2, 81:15, 84:16, 90:1).

The text itself shows that it is indeed an oath, not its refusal. In 56:75-76, after « فَلَآ أُقْسِمُ بِمَوَٰقِعِ ٱلنُّجُومِ », it adds at once: « وَإِنَّهُۥ لَقَسَمٌ لَّوْ تَعْلَمُونَ عَظِيمٌ », "and indeed, it is a great oath, if you but knew". If لَا negated the oath, that sentence would make no sense.

The لَا is therefore a reply: it rejects the opposing claim (the denial of the Day, of the Recitation, of the Return), and then the oath establishes the truth. The same construction appears in 4:65: « فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ », "But no, by your Guardian!". The translation keeps both steps, separated by the exclamation mark: "No! I swear".

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 56:75-76**

فَلَآ أُقْسِمُ بِمَوَٰقِعِ ٱلنُّجُومِ وَإِنَّهُۥ لَقَسَمٌ لَّوْ تَعْلَمُونَ عَظِيمٌ

*“No! I swear by the positions of the stars — and indeed, it is a great oath, if you but knew”*

The proof: the text at once calls what it has just said "a great oath".

**EXAMPLE 90:1**

لَآ أُقْسِمُ بِهَٰذَا ٱلْبَلَدِ

*“No! I swear by this city”*

Same formula opening a sura.

**EXAMPLE 75:1**

لَآ أُقۡسِمُ بِيَوۡمِ ٱلۡقِيَٰمَةِ

"No! I swear by the Day of Appearance"
Twice in a row in 75:1-2, same rendering.

**IN BRIEF**

Established. Eight occurrences, one rendering in all six languages; 56:76 proves the formula is indeed an oath.

ESTABLISHED RULE

# The imprecation « قُتِلَ »: "May … perish!"

When the verb قُتِلَ (passive perfect, "he was killed") opens a clause with no narrative around it, it does not report a killing: it is an imprecation. The translation renders it everywhere as "May … perish!".

The four occurrences:

- 51:10, « قُتِلَ ٱلْخَرَّٰصُونَ », "May the conjecturers perish";
- 74:19-20, « فَقُتِلَ كَيْفَ قَدَّرَ », "may he perish, how he determined!", twice in a row;
- 80:17, « قُتِلَ ٱلْإِنسَٰنُ مَآ أَكْفَرَهُۥ », "May the human being perish; how he disowns!";
- 85:4, « قُتِلَ أَصْحَٰبُ ٱلْأُخْدُودِ », "May the companions of the trench perish".

None of these verses narrates a killing: they pronounce a condemnation. The form is a perfect, but, like the perfects of wish (« رَضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ »), it expresses what the speaker pronounces, not a past event.

The rendering is the same everywhere in each language: "perish" in English; "binasalah" in Indonesian, distinct from "celakalah", reserved for ويل ("woe to"): two Arabic words, two Indonesian words.

## IN THE TEXT

EXAMPLE **80:17**

قُتِلَ ٱلْإِنسَٰنُ مَآ أَكْفَرَهُۥ

*"May the human being perish; how he disowns!"*
A condemnation, not the account of a death.

**EXAMPLE 74:19**

فَقُتِلَ كَيْفَ قَدَّرَ

"So *may he perish, how he determined!*"
Repeated twice (74:19-20).

**EXAMPLE 85:4**

قُتِلَ أَصْحَٰبُ ٱلْأُخْدُودِ

"*May the companions of the trench perish*"
Same formula in the plural.

**IN BRIEF**

Established. Four occurrences, one rendering per language.

ESTABLISHED RULE

# « نَقَمَ ... إِلَّآ أَن »: the only grievance is a blessing

The construction « مَا نَقَمَ ... إِلَّآ أَن ... » ("they reproached nothing, except ...") states a reproach whose only object is something good: having believed, or having been enriched. The reproach turns back on those who make it. It is rendered everywhere by "reproach ... except ...".

The four occurrences:

- 85:8, the men of the trench: « وَمَا نَقَمُواْ مِنْهُمْ إِلَّآ أَن يُؤْمِنُواْ بِٱللَّهِ », they reproached them for nothing except that they believed in God;
- 7:126, the magicians to Fir'awn: « وَمَا تَنقِمُ مِنَّآ إِلَّآ أَنْ ءَامَنَّا », you reproach us for nothing except that we believed;
- 5:59, to the people of the Scripture: do you reproach us for anything other than that we believed;
- 9:74, the hypocrites: « وَمَا نَقَمُوٓاْ إِلَّآ أَنْ أَغْنَىٰهُمُ ٱللَّهُ », they have nothing to reproach, except that God enriched them.

The construction is an exception after a negation: "nothing ... except". The text empties the reproach of any content, then names the only thing left, and it is a good thing. The irony is only visible if the same verb is used everywhere: "reprocher" in French, "reproach" in English, "reprochar", "rimproverare", "mencela", "упрекать".

## IN THE TEXT

EXAMPLE **85:8**

وَمَا نَقَمُواْ مِنْهُمْ إِلَّآ أَن يُؤْمِنُواْ بِٱللَّهِ

*"And they reproached them for nothing except that they believed in God"*
The only grievance: faith.

**EXAMPLE 7:126**

وَمَا تَنقِمُ مِنَّآ إِلَّآ أَنْ ءَامَنَّا

*"And you reproach us for nothing, except that we believed"*

The magicians turn the reproach back on Fir'awn.

**EXAMPLE 9:74**

وَمَا نَقَمُوٓاْ إِلَّآ أَنْ أَغْنَىٰهُمُ ٱللَّهُ

*"They have nothing to reproach, except that God and His messenger enriched them"*

Here the only grievance is a favour received.

**IN BRIEF**

Established. Four occurrences, one verb per language.

ESTABLISHED RULE

# The formula "his goods avail him nothing"

> One formula recurs six times: the verb أَغْنَىٰ عَنْ, negated, with goods (مَال, أَمْوَال) as subject: one's goods "avail nothing" to their owner, before God or on the Day of judgment. It is translated the same way everywhere.

The six occurrences:

- 111:2, « مَآ أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُ مَالُهُۥ وَمَا كَسَبَ »: his goods availed him nothing;
- 69:28, « مَآ أَغْنَىٰ عَنِّى مَالِيَهْ »: the man himself says it, on the Day of judgment;
- 92:11, « وَمَا يُغْنِى عَنْهُ مَالُهُۥٓ إِذَا تَرَدَّىٰ »: in the future, when he falls;
- 3:10, 3:116 and 58:17, « لَن تُغْنِيَ عَنْهُمْ أَمْوَٰلُهُمْ وَلَآ أَوْلَٰدُهُم مِّنَ ٱللَّهِ شَيْـًٔا »: with children, and against God.

The negation changes form (مَا for the past, لَن for the future), the subject moves from singular to plural, but the structure does not vary: goods as subject of a negated أَغْنَىٰ عَنْ. It is a formula in the sense of the rule The repeated formula: same Arabic, same translation: translation gives it one rendering, "avail nothing", in all six languages.

## IN THE TEXT

EXAMPLE 111:2

مَآ أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُ مَالُهُۥ وَمَا كَسَبَ

"*His goods and what he acquired have availed him nothing.*"
The past, with مَا.

**EXAMPLE 69:28**

مَآ أَغۡنَىٰ عَنِّي مَالِيَهۡ

"*My goods have not availed me*"
The same formula in the first person: the man acknowledges it himself.

**EXAMPLE 3:10**

لَن تُغۡنِيَ عَنۡهُمۡ أَمۡوَٰلُهُمۡ وَلَآ أَوۡلَٰدُهُم مِّنَ ٱللَّهِ شَيۡـٔٗاۖ

"*neither their goods nor their children will avail them at all against God*"
The future, with لَن; word for word in 3:10, 3:116 and 58:17.

**EXAMPLE 92:11**

وَمَا يُغۡنِي عَنۡهُ مَالُهُۥٓ إِذَا تَرَدَّىٰٓ

"*And his goods will not avail him when he falls.*"
Same structure, same rendering.

**IN BRIEF**

Established. Six occurrences, one structure, one rendering per language.

ESTABLISHED RULE

# The formula "Have you not seen how your Guardian dealt with ..."

> The formula « أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ فَعَلَ رَبُّكَ بِـ » opens two accounts of punishment (89:6, 105:1). It is translated word for word the same way in both: "Have you not seen how your Guardian dealt with ...".

The formula brings together three fixed elements: the question أَلَمْ تَرَ ("Have you not seen"), the question of manner كَيْفَ فَعَلَ ("how He dealt"), and the addressee's Guardian رَبُّكَ ("your Guardian"), followed by بِـ and the name of the people struck.

It occurs only twice, in 89:6 before the Recidivists [Aad] and in 105:1 before the companions of unreason. Two close forms (14:24, 25:45: « أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ ... ») have neither فَعَلَ nor رَبُّكَ and do not belong to the formula.

The rendering is identical in both occurrences and in all six languages, in line with the rule The repeated formula: same Arabic, same translation: same Arabic, same translation.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 89:6**

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ فَعَلَ رَبُّكَ بِعَادٍ

"*Have you not seen how your Guardian dealt with the Recidivists [Aad]*"

First occurrence.

**EXAMPLE 105:1**

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ فَعَلَ رَبُّكَ بِأَصْحَٰبِ ٱلْفِيلِ

"*Have you not seen how your Guardian dealt with the companions of unreason?*"

Same formula, same rendering.

**IN BRIEF**

Established. Two occurrences, identical rendering in all six languages.

ESTABLISHED RULE

# "Those who have believed and done righteous deeds"

> The formula « ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ وَعَمِلُواْ ٱلصَّٰلِحَٰتِ » recurs 50 times. Both its verbs are in the perfect: the translation says "those who have believed and done righteous deeds", in the present perfect, and always renders ٱلصَّٰلِحَٰت the same way in each language.

The formula joins two acts, believing (ءَامَنُوا) and doing (عَمِلُوا), and puts them in the perfect: they are acts accomplished, from which the outcome (the reward, the Garden) follows. Rendering these verbs in the present ("those who believe") would turn them into a description of a state, which the Arabic does not say.

All 50 occurrences are in the perfect, including 11:23: "Those who have believed, done righteous deeds, and found peace before their Guardian".

The noun ٱلصَّٰلِحَٰت is rendered by a single term per language: "œuvres droites", "righteous deeds", "obras rectas", "opere rette", "amal saleh", "праведные дела".

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 98:7**

إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ وَعَمِلُواْ ٱلصَّٰلِحَٰتِ أُوْلَٰٓئِكَ هُمْ خَيْرُ ٱلْبَرِيَّةِ

*"Those who have believed and done righteous deeds, those are the best of creation."*

The formula in its simplest form.

**EXAMPLE 103:3**

إِلَّا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ وَعَمِلُواْ ٱلصَّٰلِحَٰتِ

*"except those who have believed, done righteous deeds"*

The formula opens a list of four acts, all in the perfect.

**EXAMPLE 11:23**

ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ وَعَمِلُواْ ٱلصَّٰلِحَٰتِ وَأَخۡبَتُوٓاْ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمۡ

*"Those who have believed, done righteous deeds, and found peace before their Guardian"*

The only passage that was in the present; put back into the perfect.

**IN BRIEF**

Established. 50 occurrences in the perfect in all six languages, one rendering of ٱلصَّٰلِحَٰت per language.

ESTABLISHED RULE

# « إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ » placed first: the end where everything arrives

> When « إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ » ("to your Guardian") is placed at the head of the sentence, before a noun expressing an end (the place of settlement, the drive, the final boundary, the return), Arabic insists: to Him, and to no other. The translation marks this emphasis by fronting: "To your Guardian is ...".

In Arabic the usual order would put the noun before the complement; here the complement is brought forward, and that order expresses exclusivity. The five occurrences:

- 75:12, « إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ يَوْمَئِذٍ ٱلْمُسْتَقَرُّ », to your Guardian, that Day, will be the place of settlement;
- 75:30, « إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ يَوْمَئِذٍ ٱلْمَسَاقُ », the drive;
- 79:44, « إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ مُنتَهَىٰهَآ », the final boundary of the Hour;
- 53:42, « وَأَنَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ ٱلْمُنتَهَىٰ », the final boundary;
- 96:8, « إِنَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ ٱلرُّجْعَىٰٓ », the return.

All five nouns express a point of arrival. The French "C'est vers ... que" and the English fronted "To your Guardian is ..." render the exclusivity without adding a word such as "only". In 53:42, the sentence belongs to the series in « وَأَنَّ » ("and that ...") that structures the end of sura 53, and keeps that form.

## IN THE TEXT

EXAMPLE 75:12

إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ يَوْمَئِذٍ ٱلْمُسْتَقَرُّ

*"To your Guardian, that Day, will be the place of settlement."*

The complement brought forward: to Him, and to no other.

**EXAMPLE 96:8**

إِنَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ ٱلرُّجْعَىٰٓ

"*Indeed, to your Guardian is the return.*"
Same construction, noun of ending: the return.

**EXAMPLE 79:44**

إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ مُنتَهَىٰهَآ

"*To your Guardian is its final boundary.*"
The final boundary of the Hour.

**IN BRIEF**

Established. Five occurrences, all with a noun of ending, rendered with the same emphasis.

ESTABLISHED RULE

# « فَمَن شَآءَ ٱتَّخَذَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِۦ »: the choice left to the human being

> The formula « فَمَن شَآءَ ٱتَّخَذَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِۦ … » closes a reminder by leaving the choice to the reader: "So whoever wills may take, toward his Guardian, …". It recurs three times and receives the same rendering everywhere.

The three occurrences:

- 73:19 and 76:29: « فَمَن شَآءَ ٱتَّخَذَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِۦ سَبِيلًا », "a way";
- 78:39: « فَمَن شَآءَ ٱتَّخَذَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِۦ مَـَٔابًا », "a place of return".

The formula always comes after a reminder (« إِنَّ هَٰذِهِۦ تَذْكِرَةٌ », "this is a reminder" in 73:19 and 76:29): the text has said what it had to say, and it does not compel. The verb ٱتَّخَذَ ("to take for oneself") makes the act the person's own decision.

A shorter variant is found in 74:55: « فَمَن شَآءَ ذَكَرَهُۥ », "so whoever wills may remember it"; it keeps the same opening, "whoever wills". The translation follows the same structure in all six languages.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 73:19**

فَمَن شَآءَ ٱتَّخَذَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِۦ سَبِيلًا

*"So whoever wills may take, toward his Guardian, a way."*

Identical in 76:29.

**EXAMPLE 78:39**

فَمَن شَآءَ ٱتَّخَذَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِۦ مَـَٔابًا

"So *whoever wills may take, toward his Guardian, a place of return.*"
Same formula, another noun at the end.

**EXAMPLE 74:55**

فَمَن شَآءَ ذَكَرَهُۥ

"so *whoever wills may remember it.*"
Short variant, same opening.

**IN BRIEF**

Established. Three identical occurrences and one variant, rendered consistently in all six languages.

ESTABLISHED RULE

# The refrain "Woe, that Day, to the deniers!"

> The sentence « وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِينَ » recurs twelve times, ten of them in sura 77 alone. It falls like a verdict after each proof, and receives exactly the same rendering everywhere: "Woe, that Day, to the deniers!".

Sura 77 is built on this refrain. Between two occurrences the text puts forward a proof: the creation of the human being from a despised water (77:20-23), the earth that gathers the living and the dead (77:25-27), the mountains and the sweet water (77:27), the fate of earlier peoples (77:16-18). After each one, the same sentence returns (77:15, 19, 24, 28, 34, 37, 40, 45, 47, 49).

The refrain's force lies in its exact repetition: the reader must recognise, each time, the same sentence. That is why the rendering is identical in all twelve occurrences and in all six languages. Two occurrences lie outside sura 77: 52:11 and 83:10, where the refrain is followed by a description of the deniers.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 77:15**

وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِينَ

“*Woe, that Day, to the deniers!*”
First of the ten occurrences in sura 77 (77:15).

**EXAMPLE 83:10**

وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِينَ

“*Woe, that Day, to the deniers*”
Outside sura 77, same rendering.

**IN BRIEF**

Established. Twelve occurrences, one rendering per language.

ESTABLISHED RULE

# "Thus do We recompense those who do good"

> The formula « كَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِى ٱلْمُحْسِنِينَ » closes nine accounts or passages by recalling that good done receives its recompense. It is translated everywhere "Thus do We recompense those who do good".

The nine occurrences:

- in sura 37 it closes five accounts in a row: Nuh (37:80), Ibrahim (37:105, 37:110), Moussa and Haroun (37:121), Ilyas (37:131);
- it follows the praise of the prophets in 6:84, Youssof's coming of age in 12:22 and Moussa's in 28:14;
- it closes the description of those who guard themselves in 77:44.

The participle ٱلْمُحْسِنِينَ is rendered "those who do good": it describes a practice, not a rank.

Whether the formula begins with إِنَّا كَذَٰلِكَ or with وَكَذَٰلِكَ, the translation does not change: it is the same in all nine occurrences.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 37:80**

إِنَّا كَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِى ٱلْمُحْسِنِينَ

*"Thus do We recompense those who do good."*

Close of the account of Nuh (37:80), repeated at the end of four other accounts in the sura.

**EXAMPLE 12:22**

وَكَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِى ٱلْمُحْسِنِينَ

*"thus do We recompense those who do good."*

With وَ instead of إِنَّا: same rendering.

**IN BRIEF**

Established. Nine occurrences, one rendering per language.

ESTABLISHED RULE

# « يَوْمُ ٱلْفَصْلِ »: the Day of Separation

The name « يَوْمُ ٱلْفَصْلِ » recurs six times and denotes the Day when what was mixed is separated: truth from falsehood, those who believed from those who denied. It is rendered everywhere "the Day of Separation".

The six occurrences: 37:21, 44:40, 77:13, 77:14, 77:38 and 78:17.

The root فصل expresses separating, cutting between two things. The name is therefore rendered "Separation", not "Decision" or "Judgment", which are reserved for other roots (حكم, قضى); دين gives "the Day of Retribution". In 77:12-14 the text plays on this name: "for what Day were they deferred? For the Day of Separation. And what will make you know what the Day of Separation is?". The question only has force if the same word returns.

The six occurrences are rendered identically.

## IN THE TEXT

EXAMPLE 77:12-14

لِأَيِّ يَوْمٍ أُجِّلَتْ لِيَوْمِ ٱلْفَصْلِ وَمَآ أَدْرَىٰكَ مَا يَوْمُ ٱلْفَصْلِ

*"for what Day were they deferred? For the Day of Separation. … and what will make you know what the Day of Separation is?"*

The name repeated twice in a row: the question rests on the exact repetition.

EXAMPLE 78:17

إِنَّ يَوْمَ ٱلْفَصْلِ كَانَ مِيقَٰتًا

*"Indeed, the Day of Separation is an appointed time"*

Same name, same rendering in the neighbouring sura (Reading a sura with its neighbours).

**EXAMPLE 37:21**

هَٰذَا يَوْمُ ٱلْفَصْلِ

*"This is the Day of Separation"*
Outside the pair 77/78, same rendering.

**IN BRIEF**

Established. Six occurrences, one rendering per language.

ESTABLISHED RULE

# « ذَرْنِی وَ... »: "Leave Me with ..."

The formula « ذَرْنِی وَ... » ("Leave Me, and ...") is God's word to the Prophet: it lifts from him the burden of an opponent by taking it upon Himself. The وَ that follows is not "and" but "with"; the formula is rendered everywhere "Leave Me with ...".

The three occurrences:

- 74:11, « ذَرْنِی وَمَنْ خَلَقْتُ وَحِيدًا », "Leave Me with the one I created alone";
- 73:11, « وَذَرْنِی وَٱلْمُكَذِّبِينَ », "And leave Me with the deniers";
- 68:44, « فَذَرْنِی وَمَن يُكَذِّبُ بِهَٰذَا ٱلْحَدِيثِ », "So leave Me with whoever denies this discourse".

The وَ here is that of accompaniment (وَاوُ ٱلْمَعِيَّةِ): "leave me together with ...", that is, "leave him to me". Translating it as "and" ("leave me and the deniers") would distort the meaning.

The three occurrences have the same rendering, and "so" only translates the فَـ of 68:44.

## IN THE TEXT

EXAMPLE 74:11

ذَرْنِی وَمَنْ خَلَقْتُ وَحِيدًا

"*Leave Me with the one I created alone*"
The وَ of accompaniment: "with", not "and".

EXAMPLE 73:11

وَذَرْنِی وَٱلْمُكَذِّبِينَ

"*And leave Me with the deniers*"
The same formula in 73:11: "Leave Me with ...".

**EXAMPLE 68:44**

فَذَرْنِی وَمَن یُكَذِّبُ بِهَٰذَا ٱلْحَدِیثِ

“So *leave Me with whoever denies this discourse*.”
"So" renders the فَـ, specific to this occurrence.

**IN BRIEF**

Established. Three occurrences, one rendering per language.

ESTABLISHED RULE

# The refrain "And whoever guards himself toward God, He ..."

> In sura 65, each measure of divorce is followed by the same refrain: « وَمَن يَتَّقِ ٱللَّهَ », "And whoever guards himself toward God", then by what God grants him. The refrain is rendered identically in its three occurrences.

Sura 65 regulates the separation of spouses: waiting periods, lodging, maintenance, nursing. These concrete measures are interrupted three times by the same refrain, each time followed by a different promise:

- 65:2: « يَجْعَل لَّهُۥ مَخْرَجًا », He grants him a way out, and provides for him from where he does not expect;
- 65:4: « يَجْعَل لَّهُۥ مِنْ أَمْرِهِۦ يُسْرًا », He makes his affair easy for him;
- 65:5: « يُكَفِّرْ عَنْهُ سَيِّـَٔاتِهِۦ », He covers his misdeeds and increases his reward.

The refrain binds law to conscience: each rule of separation is placed under the eye of the one who "guards himself". So that the reader hears it return, it is rendered word for word the same way: "And whoever guards himself toward God, He ...".

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 65:2**

وَمَن يَتَّقِ ٱللَّهَ يَجْعَل لَّهُۥ مَخْرَجًا

*“And whoever guards himself toward God, He grants him a way out”*

First occurrence: a way out.

**EXAMPLE 65:4**

وَمَن يَتَّقِ ٱللَّهَ يَجۡعَل لَّهُۥ مِنۡ أَمۡرِهِۦ يُسۡرٗا

"*And whoever guards himself toward God, He makes his affair easy for him.*"
Second: ease.

**EXAMPLE 65:5**

وَمَن يَتَّقِ ٱللَّهَ يُكَفِّرۡ عَنۡهُ سَيِّـَٔاتِهِۦ

"*And whoever guards himself toward God, He covers his misdeeds*"
Third: misdeeds covered.

**IN BRIEF**

Established. Three occurrences, identical rendering in all six languages.

# Suras and narratives

*How narratives and suras are built: patterns, ruptures, rhymes.*

ESTABLISHED RULE

# The template of the prophets' accounts

In suras 7, 11 and 26, each account of a prophet follows the same template: the sending (« وَإِلَىٰ X أَخَاهُمْ Y »), the call (« ٱعْبُدُواْ ٱللَّهَ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ إِلَٰهٍ غَيْرُهُۥ »), the proof, the refusal of a wage, the rescue, the closing. Each element of the template is rendered identically from one account to the next.

In sura 11 the accounts of Nuh (11:25-49), Hud (11:50-60), Salih (11:61-68) and Shu'ayb (11:84-95) take up the same sentences:

- the sending: « وَإِلَىٰ عَادٍ أَخَاهُمْ هُودًا », "And to the Recidivists [Aad], their brother Hud";
- the proof: « أَرَءَيْتُمْ إِن كُنتُ عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّى », "do you see? If I rely on a clear proof from my Guardian" (11:28 = 11:63 = 11:88);
- the rescue: « وَلَمَّا جَآءَ أَمْرُنَا نَجَّيْنَا ... », "And when Our command came, We saved ..." (11:58, 11:66, 11:94);
- the closing: « أَلَا بُعْدًا لِّـ... », "Far removed be ...!" (11:44, 11:60, 11:68, 11:95).

The template holds in sura 7 (7:59-93) and in sura 26, whose refrains (« إِنِّى لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ », « فَٱتَّقُواْ ٱللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُونِ », « وَمَآ أَسْـَٔلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ ») are identical in all six languages. Each sura keeps its own elements: the refusal of a wage is missing in sura 7; sura 10 tells of Nuh and Moussa without the template.

The call « مَا لَكُم مِّنْ إِلَٰهٍ غَيْرُهُۥ » is rendered the same way in suras 7, 11 and 23.

## IN THE TEXT

EXAMPLE 7:65

وَإِلَىٰ عَادٍ أَخَاهُمْ هُودًا

*"And to the Recidivists [Aad], their brother Hud"*
The sending.

**EXAMPLE 11:28**

أَرَءَيْتُمْ إِن كُنتُ عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّى

"*do you see? If I rely on a clear proof from my Guardian*"
The proof: word for word in 11:28, 11:63 and 11:88.

**EXAMPLE 11:95**

أَلَا بُعْدًا لِّمَدْيَنَ

"*Far removed be Madyan*"
The closing, same rendering in 11:44, 11:60, 11:68.

**IN BRIEF**

Established. Template verified on suras 7, 10, 11 and 26; its elements have an identical rendering from one account to the next.

ESTABLISHED RULE

# Punishment compared to plant debris

> Four accounts of punishment follow the same three-step pattern: a sending "upon them" (a wind, a cry, birds), then the result introduced by فَـ, then a comparison of the bodies to plant debris: palm trunks, dry twigs, devoured stubble.

The four occurrences:

- the Recidivists [Aad], in 54:19-20: « إِنَّآ أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِيحًا صَرْصَرًا … تَنزِعُ النَّاسَ كَأَنَّهُمْ أَعْجَازُ نَخْلٍ مُّنقَعِرٍ », trunks of uprooted palm trees;
- the same, in 69:6-7: a wind "subjected against them", and the people lying "كَأَنَّهُمْ أَعْجَازُ نَخْلٍ خَاوِيَةٍ", like hollow trunks of palm trees;
- the Depleters [Thamud], in 54:31: « أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ صَيْحَةً وَاحِدَةً فَكَانُوا كَهَشِيمِ ٱلْمُحْتَظِرِ », like the dry twigs of a pen;
- the companions of unreason, in 105:3-5: birds sent upon them, then « فَجَعَلَهُمْ كَعَصْفٍ مَّأْكُولٍ », like eaten husk.

The comparison is not an isolated ornament: it recurs in four accounts, always in the same place, after the sending and the فَـ of the result. The people who thought themselves strong are reduced to what remains of a plant. So that the reader recognises the pattern, the same Arabic words receive the same words: أَعْجَازُ نَخْلٍ is rendered "trunks of palm trees" in 54:20 as in 69:7.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 54:20**

تَنزِعُ ٱلنَّاسَ كَأَنَّهُمْ أَعْجَازُ نَخْلٍ مُّنقَعِرٍ

*"tearing people away as if they were trunks of uprooted palm trees"*

A wind sent (54:19), then the comparison: uprooted trunks.

**EXAMPLE 69:7**

كَأَنَّهُمْ أَعْجَازُ نَخْلٍ خَاوِيَةٍ

"*as if they were hollow trunks of palm trees*"

The same أَعْجَازُ نَخْلٍ, now rendered as in 54:20.

**EXAMPLE 54:31**

إِنَّآ أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ صَيْحَةً وَٰحِدَةً فَكَانُوا۟ كَهَشِيمِ ٱلْمُحْتَظِرِ

"*We sent upon them a single cry, and they became like the dry twigs of a pen-builder.*"

All three steps in one sentence: sending, فَـ, comparison.

**EXAMPLE 105:5**

فَجَعَلَهُمْ كَعَصْفٍ مَّأْكُولٍ

"*And did He not reduce them to the state of eaten husk?*"

The pattern closes sura 105.

**IN BRIEF**

Established. Four complete occurrences, all within the pattern.

ESTABLISHED RULE

# Every order to fight has its cause and its limit

> In the Qur'an, no order to fight is given on its own. In the neighbouring sentences, the text always gives its cause (broken oaths, a first aggression, fighting suffered) and its limit or exception (a pact kept, peace offered, cessation of hostilities, reciprocity). To read an order without its frame is to make it say what the text does not say.

The observation arose from sura 9, then was checked in the other passages on fighting:

- 9:4-13: the exception of the pact kept (« إِلَّا ٱلَّذِينَ عَٰهَدتُّم … ثُمَّ لَمْ يَنقُصُوكُمْ شَيْـًٔا », "except those … who then did not fail you in anything"); protection for whoever asks it (9:6); "as long as they are upright toward you" (9:7); broken oaths and the first aggression (9:12-13);
- 2:190-193: « وَقَٰتِلُوهُمْ … ٱلَّذِينَ يُقَٰتِلُونَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوٓا », "fight … those who fight you, but do not commit aggression", then « فَإِنِ ٱنتَهَوْا۟ فَلَا عُدْوَٰنَ إِلَّا عَلَى ٱلظَّٰلِمِينَ », "if they cease, then no hostility, except toward the unjust";
- 4:89-91: the exception of those bound by a covenant, or who offer peace;
- 8:56-61: « وَإِن جَنَحُوا۟ لِلسَّلْمِ فَٱجْنَحْ لَهَا », "if they incline toward peace, incline toward it also";
- 60:8-9: the criterion is having fought and expelled; toward those who did not, God does not forbid virtue and equity.

Sura 9 is thus read as a mobilisation after the breaking of oaths, not as an unconditional order. The translation keeps these frames as they are, neither softening them nor detaching them.

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 2:190**

وَقَٰتِلُواْ فِي سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلَّذِينَ يُقَٰتِلُونَكُمۡ وَلَا تَعۡتَدُوٓاْ

"*And fight, in the way of God, those who fight you, but do not commit aggression*"

The cause ("those who fight you") and the limit ("do not commit aggression") in the same sentence.

**EXAMPLE 2:193**

فَإِنِ ٱنتَهَوۡاْ فَلَا عُدۡوَٰنَ إِلَّا عَلَى ٱلظَّٰلِمِينَ

"*and if they cease, then no hostility, except toward the unjust.*"

The end of fighting is provided for with the order itself.

**EXAMPLE 9:4**

إِلَّا ٱلَّذِينَ عَٰهَدتُّم مِّنَ ٱلۡمُشۡرِكِينَ ثُمَّ لَمۡ يَنقُصُوكُمۡ شَيۡـٔٗا

"*except those of the associators with whom you made a pact, and who then did not fail you in anything*"

In sura 9 itself, the exception immediately follows the announcement.

**EXAMPLE 8:61**

وَإِن جَنَحُواْ لِلسَّلۡمِ فَٱجۡنَحۡ لَهَا

"*And if they incline toward peace, incline toward it also*"

Peace offered stops the fighting.

**IN BRIEF**

Established. Checked on the corpus's five sets of passages on fighting; the statement, at first specific to sura 9, is extended.

ESTABLISHED RULE

# Sura 19: the rhyme of the accounts of gift, and the child attributed to God

> In sura 19, the rhyme in ـيًّا carries the accounts in which a child is given (Zakariya, Yahya, Maryam, Issa, Ibrahim, Moussa, Ismail, Idris). It breaks twice, in 19:34-40 and in 19:75-98: these are the only passages where the word وَلَد ("child") appears attributed to God or claimed for Him. Within the rhyme, the child given is called غُلَام ("boy") or صَبِيّ ("young child"), never وَلَد.

A survey of the text gives:

- 56 verses out of 81 end in ـيًّا;
- two zones of rupture: 19:34-40 (right after the account of Issa) and 19:75-98 (the end of the sura);
- the noun وَلَد appears only in those zones: 19:35, 19:79, 19:88, 19:91, 19:92; « مَا كَانَ لِلَّهِ أَن يَتَّخِذَ مِن وَلَدٍ□□□ », "It is not for God to take a child" (19:35);
- within the rhyme, the child given is غُلَام (19:7, 19:8, 19:19, 19:20) or صَبِيّ (19:12, 19:29).

The form of the text thus follows its meaning: when it tells of a gift, it rhymes; when it refutes the idea of a child of God, the rhyme breaks. It is an observation specific to this sura, fixed for the verified facts.

Numerical conjectures on the opening letters كهيعص (sums, density, windows) were examined and set aside: they depend on a spelling convention or are not significant.

The translation keeps this contrast: صَبِيّ (19:12, 19:29) is rendered "young child", وَلَد "child".

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 19:7**

يَٰزَكَرِيَّآ إِنَّا نُبَشِّرُكَ بِغُلَٰمٍ ٱسْمُهُۥ يَحْيَىٰ

*"We give you glad tidings of a boy"*

Within the rhyme: the child given is a غُلَام.

**EXAMPLE 19:35**

مَا كَانَ لِلَّهِ أَن يَتَّخِذَ مِن وَلَدٍ

*"It is not for God to take a child."*

Within the rupture (19:34-40): the word وَلَد, to deny it.

**EXAMPLE 19:29**

كَيْفَ نُكَلِّمُ مَن كَانَ فِى ٱلْمَهْدِ صَبِيًّا

*"How shall we speak to one who is a young child in the cradle?"*

The word صَبِيّ, within the rhyme; rendered "young child", distinct from وَلَد "child".

**IN BRIEF**

Established for the verified facts (rhyme, ruptures, distribution of words); numerical conjectures are set aside.

ESTABLISHED RULE

# The opening letters: an identical rasm in every tradition

> Twenty-nine suras open with isolated letters (14 combinations: الم, الر, حم, طسم, كهيعص...). In every reading tradition compared, these letters have exactly the same rasm, whereas verse numbering and added signs differ. The translation renders them letter by letter, the same way everywhere.

The comparison covered the first verse of the 29 suras in nine reading traditions (Hafs, Warsh, the Indo-Pakistani nastaliq edition, Qalun, al-Bazzi, Qunbul, al-Duri, al-Susi, Shu'ba). The 29 openings are identical in rasm; no variant reading touches the letters. The differences are limited to the writing of the hamza (Warsh ألم), the superscript alif, signs of prolongation, and verse division (Hafs counts الم, كهيعص, طه, طسم, يس, حم as verses; Warsh does not).

Even the micro-variants between openings are preserved everywhere: طس (27) against طسم (26, 28) and المص (7), الر, حم عسق (42) against الم and المر (13) against حم. These are the only places in the Qur'an where recitation spells out the letters of the rasm instead of reading them as words.

So that the reader sees the same letters return, the translation always names them the same way: one name per letter, separated by full stops, with an underdot for the emphatic letters ("Ṣad", "Ṭa", "Ḥa") and "ʿAyn" for ع; thus ح ("Ḥa") and ه ("Ha") are not confused.

One may draw a reading from this: the transmission of the rasm does not depend on its being understood, and reflection is asked of everyone (4:82, 47:24, 38:29, 54:17). This is an interpretation, not a fact established by the rule.

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 19:1**

كٓهيعٓصٓ

"*Kaf. Ha. Ya. ʿAyn. Ṣad.*"

The longest combination: five letters spelled one by one.

**EXAMPLE 42:1-2**

حٰمٓ عٓسٓقٓ

"*Ḥa. Mim. ʿAyn. Sin. Qaf.*"

Here, حم, as in 40-46, followed by عسق: the micro-variant is preserved in every tradition.

**IN BRIEF**

Established for the verified facts; the interpretation drawn from them remains a postulate.

ESTABLISHED RULE

# Sura 72: the speech of the Occulted and the revealed speech

In sura 72, a long series of sentences begins with وَأَنَّهُۥ / وَأَنَّا. The reading of Hafs has أَنَّ ("that"), which makes everything that follows the content of "It has been revealed to me that"; the reading of Warsh has إِنَّ in 72:3-14, which makes it the direct speech of the Occulted. The translation follows Warsh for 72:3-14 (without "that") and keeps "And that" for the revealed speech (72:17-19).

The sura opens with « قُلْ أُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ أَنَّهُ ٱسْتَمَعَ نَفَرٌ مِّنَ ٱلْجِنِّ », "Say: It has been revealed to me that a group of the Occulted listened". The Occulted then speak: "Indeed, we have heard an amazing recitation...".

The question is where their speech ends. With أَنَّ (Hafs), each sentence from 72:3 to 72:14 still depends on "It has been revealed to me that": the Prophet would be reporting. With إِنَّ (Warsh), these sentences are a direct statement by the Occulted: "And exalted is the majesty of our Guardian...". The "our Guardian" of 72:3 shows that it is indeed they who speak.

Here the translation follows the reading of Warsh for 72:3-14: twelve clauses rendered "And ...", without "that". From 72:17 the text returns to revealed speech, and the sentences keep "And that ...": « وَأَنَّ ٱلْمَسَٰجِدَ لِلَّهِ », "And that the places of prostration belong to God" (72:18). The series in وَأَنَّ in 53:38-54, with no divergence of reading, also keeps "And that".

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 72:3**

وَأَنَّهُۥ تَعَٰلَىٰ جَدُّ رَبِّنَا

"*And exalted is the majesty of our Guardian*"

Text quoted in Hafs (وَأَنَّهُۥ); Warsh reads وَإِنَّهُۥ, and the translation follows that reading: direct speech of the Occulted, without "that". "Our Guardian" shows who speaks.

**EXAMPLE 72:18**

وَأَنَّ ٱلْمَسَٰجِدَ لِلَّهِ

"*And that the places of prostration belong to God*"

Return to revealed speech: "And that".

**IN BRIEF**

Established. The translation distinguishes, by the presence or absence of "that", the speech of the Occulted (72:3-14) from the revealed speech (72:17-19).

# Hypotheses examined and set aside

HYPOTHESIS SET ASIDE

# The particles سوف and لن are not a pair

> The proposed rule made سوف (affirmed future) and لن (negated future) a symmetrical pair, used preferably to announce a punishment. Neither the symmetry nor the preference stands up to the corpus.

No symmetry in the numbers: the corpus counts 42 occurrences of سوف and 103 of لن. The hypothesis relied on figures (42 and 45) that the text does not confirm.

No symmetry in function: لن negates a future ("you will never do it", 2:24), but its affirmative counterpart is not سوف alone; the affirmed future is also expressed by the prefix سَ, and by many other means.

No preference for punishment: سوف also announces a gift, "And your Guardian will surely give you, and you will be satisfied" (93:5); لن serves to exhort, "You will not attain virtue unless you spend of what you love" (3:92), or to report a claim that the text demolishes, "The Fire will touch us only for a counted number of days" (2:80).

Each particle has its own meaning, and the translation renders it; joining them into a system adds nothing.

### IN THE TEXT

COUNTER-EXAMPLE **93:5**

وَلَسَوْفَ يُعْطِيكَ رَبُّكَ فَتَرْضَىٰ

*"And your Guardian will surely give you, and you will be satisfied."*
The particle سوف announces a gift, not a punishment.

**COUNTER-EXAMPLE 3:92**

لَن تَنَالُواْ ٱلۡبِرَّ

*"You will not attain virtue unless you spend of what you love."*
The particle لن exhorts: no threat.

**COUNTER-EXAMPLE 2:80**

لَن تَمَسَّنَا ٱلنَّارُ

*"The Fire will touch us only for a counted number of days."*
The particle لن in a reported claim, which the text refutes at once.

**IN BRIEF**

Set aside. Wrong counts, unfounded symmetry, unverified preference.

HYPOTHESIS SET ASIDE

# No "global modal system"

> Hypothesis examined: three sets of particles (the conditionals, the affirmed or negated future, and the pair لعل / كي) would form a single system graded by certainty. The grouping adds nothing to what is already established, and two of its three pieces do not hold.

The first piece, the three conditionals, is sound; it has its own fiche (When, if, if only: the three conditions).

The second piece, the pair سوف / لن, is rejected: neither symmetry nor any verified preference.

The third piece, لعل / كي, is not a gradation. The particle كي gives the purpose of an act: "so that it does not circulate among the wealthy among you" (59:7). The particle لعل expresses an open expectation, which the translation renders "perhaps": "perhaps you will guard yourselves" (2:21). These are not two degrees of one purpose, but two different things.

A synthesis whose pieces fall cannot be a rule.

## IN THE TEXT

COUNTER-EXAMPLE **59:7**

كَيْ لَا يَكُونَ دُولَةً

"*so that it does not circulate among the wealthy among you*"
The particle كي: the purpose of a provision, stated as such.

COUNTER-EXAMPLE **2:21**

لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

"*perhaps you will guard yourselves*"
The particle لعل: an open expectation, not a degree of the same purpose.

**IN BRIEF**

Set aside. Only the rule of the conditionals remains, with its own fiche.

HYPOTHESIS SET ASIDE

# « كَذَٰلِكَ لِـ… »: "thus it was, so that …"

> Hypothesis examined: the construction « لِـ + كَذَٰلِكَ + imperfect » would be a fixed formula, always rendered "thus it was, so that …", the final clause stating the purpose of the preceding divine act.

The survey finds only two occurrences: « كَذَٰلِكَ لِنَصْرِفَ عَنْهُ ٱلسُّوٓءَ وَٱلْفَحْشَآءَ », "thus it was, so that We might turn away from him evil and indecency" (12:24), and « كَذَٰلِكَ لِنُثَبِّتَ بِهِۦ فُؤَادَكَ », "Thus, so that We may steady your Conscience through it" (25:32). A nearby passage (12:21, « وَلِنُعَلِّمَهُۥ ») does not have the same structure.

In the two occurrences, كَذَٰلِكَ does not refer to the same thing: in 12:24, to what has just happened to Youssof; in 25:32, to the way the Recitation came down, in fragments, in answer to an objection. The translation follows these contexts and cannot reduce them to a single formula.

As for the purposive value of لِـ ("so that"), it belongs to ordinary Arabic grammar and calls for no rule specific to the corpus.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 12:24**

كَذَٰلِكَ لِنَصْرِفَ عَنْهُ ٱلسُّوٓءَ وَٱلْفَحْشَآءَ

*"thus it was, so that We might turn away from him evil and indecency"*

Here, كَذَٰلِكَ refers to what has just happened to Youssof.

**COUNTER-EXAMPLE 25:32**

كَذَٰلِكَ لِنُثَبِّتَ بِهِۦ فُؤَادَكَ

*"Thus, so that We may steady your Conscience through it"*

Here, كَذَٰلِكَ here refers to the Recitation coming down in fragments: another context, another rendering.

**IN BRIEF**

Set aside. Only two occurrences, in different contexts; the purposive value of لِـ is ordinary grammar.

HYPOTHESIS SET ASIDE

# The masculine as default form of the relative and demonstrative

> Hypothesis examined: the imbalance between masculine and feminine forms (ٱلَّذِى / ٱلَّتِى, ذَٰلِكَ / تِلْكَ) would be so strong and so regular that it proves the masculine serves as the default form for every generic use.

The hypothesis rested on two figures: 307 ٱلَّذِى against 17 ٱلَّتِى (more than 18 to 1), and 150 ذَٰلِكَ against 13 تِلْكَ.

An actual count of the words of the Qur'an gives other figures: 303 ٱلَّذِى against 68 ٱلَّتِى, a ratio of about 4.5 to 1; 424 ذَٰلِكَ against 41 تِلْكَ. The first ratio, which carried the argument, is four times weaker than claimed.

That ذَٰلِكَ is used neutrally ("that") to refer back to an idea or situation is a fact known to classical grammar; it needs no statistical demonstration, and the one proposed rested on wrong figures.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 2:232**

ذَٰلِكُمْ أَزْكَىٰ لَكُمْ وَأَطْهَرُ

*"That is more pure for you, and cleaner."*

A neutral masculine demonstrative ("that"): a known fact, which does not prove the statistical claim.

**IN BRIEF**

Set aside. Wrong figures; the real fact (neutral ذلك) is known to classical grammar and does not call for this rule.

HYPOTHESIS SET ASIDE

# A gradient of gender neutralisation by number

> Hypothesis examined: the further from the singular, the more gender fades: marked in the singular, partially neutralised in the dual, fully neutralised in the plural.

The first two degrees are right: the singular distinguishes هَٰذَا / هَٰذِهِۦٓ, ذَٰلِكَ / تِلْكَ; the dual pronoun هُمَا does not mark gender (rule The dual pronoun does not mark gender).

The third degree is wrong. The plural does not neutralise gender: it distinguishes هُمْ (masculine or mixed) and هُنَّ (feminine), and verbs have a feminine plural. The corpus gives clear examples: « هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَّكُمْ وَأَنتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَّهُنَّ », "they are a garment for you, and you are a garment for them" (2:187).

The hypothesis also contradicts the dual rule (The dual pronoun does not mark gender), which shows precisely that the plural maintains the opposition. The "gradient" does not hold.

### IN THE TEXT

COUNTER-EXAMPLE **2:187**

هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَّكُمْ وَأَنتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَّهُنَّ

*"they are a garment for you, and you are a garment for them"*

In the plural, the feminine هُنَّ is clearly distinct: no neutralisation.

**IN BRIEF**

Set aside. The plural distinguishes هم and هن; the hypothesis contradicts The dual pronoun does not mark gender.

HYPOTHESIS SET ASIDE

# The repeated noun instead of a pronoun

> Hypothesis examined: when the Qur'an repeats a noun where a pronoun would do, it would be to isolate each occurrence and give it its own weight.

The starting fact is real. In 114:1-3, "mankind" occurs three times in a row: "Guardian of mankind, Sovereign of mankind, Deity of mankind", whereas Arabic could have said « مَلِكِهِمْ » ("their Sovereign") after the first mention.

But the hypothesis does not merely state that the noun is repeated: it claims why ("to isolate each occurrence"). No examination of the text can confirm or refute that reason. One would also have to show, case by case, that a pronoun was possible at each point, which the hypothesis does not do.

What matters for translation is already covered elsewhere: a repetition in the text is kept as it is and is not replaced by a pronoun (see The repeated formula: same Arabic, same translation).

### IN THE TEXT

EXAMPLE 114:1-3

بِرَبِّ ٱلنَّاسِ مَلِكِ ٱلنَّاسِ إِلَٰهِ ٱلنَّاسِ

*"in the Guardian of mankind, the Sovereign of mankind, the Deity of mankind"*

The fact is real: الناس three times, no pronoun. It is the proposed reason that cannot be verified.

### IN BRIEF

Set aside. The fact is real, but the proposed explanation cannot be verified on the text; the consequence for translation is already fixed by another rule.

HYPOTHESIS SET ASIDE

# Verbal voice and responsibility for the act

> Hypothesis examined: the Qur'an would use the active voice to attribute an act to its author and the passive to remove that responsibility by erasing the agent.

The hypothesis arose from 1:7, where the contrast is striking: « أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ » ("You have blessed", the agent is named: God) against « ٱلْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ » ("those who incur anger", no agent named).

But the Arabic passive has many other reasons than removing responsibility: the agent may be obvious, known to all, or beside the point. In 2:183, « كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ ٱلصِّيَامُ » ("abstention is prescribed for you") is passive, yet there is no doubt about who prescribes it: here the passive removes no responsibility at all.

The announced test ("passive participles followed by عليهم or a complement") was never carried out, and the rule rests on an interpretation of motive that the text can neither confirm nor refute. The translation principle that remains, not adding an agent where the text has none, is a matter of method and needs no rule of its own.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 1:7**

أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ ٱلْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ

*"those You have blessed, not of those who incur anger"*

The contrast that gave rise to the hypothesis: agent named, then agent absent.

**COUNTER-EXAMPLE 2:183**

كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ ٱلصِّيَامُ

*"abstention is prescribed for you"*

A passive whose author is obvious: here it erases no responsibility.

**IN BRIEF**

Set aside. Based on an interpretation without support in the text, and contradicted by passives whose agent is obvious (2:183).

HYPOTHESIS SET ASIDE

# Verbal aspect carries meaning

> Hypothesis examined: in the Qur'an the finite verb would express an act, the participle a state, and the perfect always the past; the translation should therefore render every perfect by a past tense.

Part of the intuition is sound, and corrections came out of it: in 102:1-2, « أَلْهَىٰكُمُ ٱلتَّكَاثُرُ حَتَّىٰ زُرْتُمُ ٱلْمَقَابِرَ » is now rendered in the past, "Rivalry in accumulation has distracted you, until you visited the graves"; in 104:3, « مَالَهُۥٓ أَخْلَدَهُۥ », "his goods have made him eternal".

But the general statement, "perfect = past", is false in the corpus. After إِذَا, the perfect announces what will happen: « إِذَا ٱلشَّمْسُ كُوِّرَتْ », "When the sun is wrapped up" (81:1); « إِذَا ٱلسَّمَآءُ ٱنفَطَرَتْ », "When the sky breaks apart" (82:1). These series describe the end of the world, which has not yet happened; translating them in the past would be a misreading. Arabic uses the perfect here to say the event is certain, not that it is past.

The cases where aspect is demonstrated to carry meaning are fixed separately: "Has glorified" and "glorifies": the aspect of the openings in سبّح (سبّح "has glorified" against يسبّح "glorifies") and the learning Where the aspect of the verb makes the meaning.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 102:1-2**

أَلْهَىٰكُمُ ٱلتَّكَاثُرُ حَتَّىٰ زُرْتُمُ ٱلْمَقَابِرَ

*"Rivalry in accumulation has distracted you, until you visited the graves."*

What the intuition made it possible to correct: the perfect rendered in the past.

**COUNTER-EXAMPLE 81:1**

إِذَا ٱلشَّمْسُ كُوِّرَتْ

*"When the sun is wrapped up"*

Perfect after إذا: a future, certain event. Translating it in the past would be a misreading.

**COUNTER-EXAMPLE 82:1**

إِذَا ٱلسَّمَآءُ ٱنفَطَرَتْ

*"When the sky breaks apart"*

Same construction, same future value.

**IN BRIEF**

Set aside as stated: "perfect = past" is contradicted by the series in إذا (5-84:1 ,5-82:1 ,14-81:1). The demonstrated cases live in "Has glorified" and "glorifies": the aspect of the openings in سبّح and Where the aspect of the verb makes the meaning.

HYPOTHESIS SET ASIDE

# "Or" against "then" in lists of penalties

> Hypothesis examined: in series of measures, the Qur'an would use أَوْ ("or") to leave a choice between them, and ثُمَّ or وَ ("then", "and") to combine them, and this opposition would be a rule of the corpus.

The hypothesis comes from comparing two passages listing the same penalties. In 5:33, the recompense of those who wage war against God is given as alternatives: "that they be massacred, or crucified, or have their hands and feet cut off on opposite sides, or be banished". In 7:124, Fir'awn threatens the magicians with all of them at once: "I will certainly cut off your hands and feet, on opposite sides, then I will certainly crucify you".

The contrast is real and the translation respects it. But it rests on a single pair of passages, and the difference between أو (alternative) and ثمّ / و (succession, accumulation) is ordinary Arabic grammar: it calls for no rule specific to the corpus. No other series was found showing a regularity beyond this ordinary sense.

### IN THE TEXT

EXAMPLE 5:33

أَن يُقَتَّلُوٓاْ أَوۡ يُصَلَّبُوٓاْ أَوۡ تُقَطَّعَ أَيۡدِيهِمۡ وَأَرۡجُلُهُم مِّنۡ خِلَٰفٍ أَوۡ يُنفَوۡاْ مِنَ ٱلۡأَرۡضِ

*“that they be massacred, or crucified, or have their hands and feet cut off on opposite sides, or be banished from the earth”*
Here, أو: penalties as alternatives.

**EXAMPLE 7:124**

لَأُقَطِّعَنَّ أَيْدِيَكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُم مِّنْ خِلَٰفٍ ثُمَّ لَأُصَلِّبَنَّكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ

*"I will certainly cut off your hands and feet, on opposite sides, then I will certainly crucify you all together."*

Here, ثُمَّ: the penalties add up. The contrast is real, but it merely applies ordinary grammar.

**IN BRIEF**

Set aside. A single pair of passages, and a distinction that belongs to ordinary grammar.

HYPOTHESIS SET ASIDE

# The verb آمن has more than one preposition

> Hypothesis examined: the verb آمن would always be construed with ب, never with another preposition. This is false: the corpus also uses it with لِ, and the change of preposition changes the meaning.

With ب, the verb expresses adherence to what is believed: believing in God, in the Meeting, in what was sent down.

With لِ, it expresses trust granted to a person who speaks: "Lut gave him credit" (29:26), about Ibrahim. Verse 9:61 places both constructions side by side: "he believes in God, gives credit to the believers". Yusuf's brothers tell their father: "But you will not give us credit, even if we speak the truth" (12:17). And before Fir'awn: "None gave credit to Moussa except a lineage of his people" (10:83).

So the government is not fixed; what is fixed is the correspondence between preposition and meaning. That is the subject of Believing "in" and giving credit "to", already fixed.

### IN THE TEXT

**COUNTER-EXAMPLE 9:61**

وَيُؤْمِنُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

*"he believes in God, gives credit to the believers"*

Both constructions in one verse: بِ for God, لِ for the believers.

**COUNTER-EXAMPLE 29:26**

فَـَٔامَنَ لَهُۥ لُوطٌ

*"Lut gave him credit"*

Lut grants his trust to Ibrahim: آمن لـ, not آمن بـ.

**COUNTER-EXAMPLE 12:17**

وَمَآ أَنتَ بِمُؤْمِنٍ لَّنَا

“*But you will not give us credit, even if we speak the truth.*”

The father is not asked to "believe in" his sons; the question is whether he takes their word.

**IN BRIEF**

Set aside. The four occurrences of آمن لـ refute the statement; the correct rule is Believing "in" and giving credit "to" ("believe in" / "give credit to").

HYPOTHESIS SET ASIDE

# The verb ألقى: إلى for "offer", على for "cast"

> Hypothesis examined: the preposition would fix the meaning of the verb أَلْقَىٰ: with إِلَىٰ and an object, "offer"; with عَلَىٰ, "cast".

The hypothesis rested on real cases: « وَأَلْقَوْاْ إِلَيْكُمُ ٱلسَّلَمَ », "and offer you peace" (4:90), and « تُلْقُونَ إِلَيْهِم بِٱلْمَوَدَّةِ », "offering them affection" (60:1).

The test on the whole corpus shows that "offer" holds only for those objects: peace (4:90, 4:91, 4:94, 16:87) and affection (60:1). Elsewhere أَلْقَىٰ إِلَىٰ keeps its basic sense of throwing, casting or conveying: Sulayman orders « فَأَلْقِهْ إِلَيْهِمْ », "cast it to them" (27:28), about a letter; a treasure is "cast down" (25:8); the Scripture is "conveyed" (28:86).

With عَلَىٰ the meaning is not uniform either: "cast" (12:93, 12:96, 73:5), but also "place" a love (20:39) or "set" a body on a throne (38:34).

It is therefore not the preposition that fixes the meaning but the object: offering peace is a fixed expression ("casting peace toward someone"), not a rule of construction.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 4:90**

وَأَلْقَوْاْ إِلَيْكُمُ ٱلسَّلَمَ

*"and offer you peace"*

The case that gave rise to the hypothesis: the object is peace.

**COUNTER-EXAMPLE 27:28**

ٱذْهَب بِّكِتَٰبِي هَٰذَا فَأَلْقِهْ إِلَيْهِمْ

*"cast it to them"*

Here, ألقى إلى with another object (a letter): "cast", not "offer".

**COUNTER-EXAMPLE 20:39**

وَأَلْقَيْتُ عَلَيْكَ مَحَبَّةً مِّنِّي

"*I cast upon you a love from Me*"
Here, ألقى على: "place" here in French, not "throw".

**IN BRIEF**

Set aside. The general statement is contradicted by six occurrences of ألقى إلى that do not mean "offer", and by the variety of meanings with على.

HYPOTHESIS SET ASIDE

# The intensive form فَعَّال as a constant identity

> Hypothesis examined: nouns of the intensive form (فَعَّال, فَعَّالَة) would denote a constant identity, something done ceaselessly, and the translation should always mark this intensity.

The starting examples are telling: « (114:4) « ٱلْخَنَّاسِ, "who withdraws"; « حَمَّالَةَ (111:4) « ٱلْحَطَبِ, "the one who ceaselessly carries the firewood"; « « تَوَّاباً (110:3), "the Accepter of repentance".

But the hypothesis is not demonstrated on all the فعّال forms of the Qur'an, and its examples mix different forms: « (108:1) « ٱلْكَوْثَرَ is not a فعّال but a فَوْعَل.

Without a verifiable criterion, the statement remains an intuition. Intensity is read root by root, where the text allows it to be demonstrated.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 111:4**

حَمَّالَةَ ٱلْحَطَبِ

*"the one who ceaselessly carries the firewood"*
A case where intensity is rendered: but one case does not make a rule.

**COUNTER-EXAMPLE 110:3**

إِنَّهُۥ كَانَ تَوَّابًۢا

*"He is, in truth, the Accepter of repentance."*
French marks the intensity, English does not: no consistent practice to fix.

**COUNTER-EXAMPLE 108:1**

إِنَّآ أَعْطَيْنَٰكَ ٱلْكَوْثَرَ

*"We have granted you the Abundance."*
Cited as a starting example, but الكوثر is not of the فعّال form.

**IN BRIEF**

Set aside. Heterogeneous examples, no verifiable criterion, and no regularity in the text.

HYPOTHESIS SET ASIDE

# "Measuring": human pretended measure against divine measure

> Hypothesis examined: the verb قَدَّرَ ("to measure, to determine") would denote a pretended, vain measure when its subject is human, and the real measure when its subject is God.

The hypothesis arose from sura 74, where a man "thought and determined" (« فَكَّرَ وَقَدَّرَ »), and the text condemns him at once: « فَقُتِلَ كَيْفَ قَدَّرَ », "may he perish, how he determined!" (74:18-20). Against him, God "measured and guided" (« قَدَّرَ فَهَدَىٰ », 87:3).

The exhaustive test contradicts the opposition. Humans measure too, and rightly:

- God orders Dawud: « وَقَدِّرْ فِى ٱلسَّرْدِ », "measure well the links" (34:11): a just human measure, prescribed;
- the servants of the Garden carry vessels « قَدَّرُوهَا تَقْدِيرًا », "whose measure they have determined precisely" (76:16).

It is therefore not the human subject that makes the measure vain. In 74:18-20 it is the context that condemns it: the man measures in order to reject the Recitation. The verb keeps the same meaning everywhere, to measure, and the worth of each measure is read in its sentence.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 74:18-19**

إِنَّهُۥ فَكَّرَ وَقَدَّرَ فَقُتِلَ كَيْفَ قَدَّرَ

*"Indeed, he thought and determined. So may he perish, how he determined!"*

The case that gave rise to the hypothesis: the condemnation comes from the context.

**COUNTER-EXAMPLE 34:11**

وَقَدِّرْ فِى ٱلسَّرْدِ

"*and measure well the links*"
Human subject (Dawud), a just measure ordered by God.

**COUNTER-EXAMPLE 76:16**

قَدَّرُوهَا تَقْدِيرًا

"*whose measure they have determined precisely*"
Human subject, exact measure, in the Garden.

**IN BRIEF**

Set aside. 34:11 and 76:16 show human subjects whose measure is just; the condemnation in 74:18-20 comes from the context, not the subject.

HYPOTHESIS SET ASIDE

# The rare verb defined by the clause that follows it

> Hypothesis examined: when a rare verb is followed, without "and", by a clause detailing its content, that clause defines it; the translation links them with a colon.

The starting case is 79:30-31: « وَٱلْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ ذَٰلِكَ دَحَىٰهَآ أَخْرَجَ مِنْهَا مَآءَهَا وَمَرْعَىٰهَا », "And the earth, after that, He made it hatch forth: He brought forth from it its water and its pasture". The verb دَحَىٰ is rare; the next clause, without وَ, says what it consists of. The translation links them with a colon.

But no other rare verb followed by an explanatory clause is found in the Qur'an. One case, however sound, does not make a rule. The mechanism is close to that of "And what will make you know what … is?": the question that announces a definition (a question followed by its definition), but it is demonstrated only once.

## IN THE TEXT

EXAMPLE **79:30-31**

وَٱلْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ ذَٰلِكَ دَحَىٰهَآ أَخْرَجَ مِنْهَا مَآءَهَا وَمَرْعَىٰهَا

*“And the earth, after that, He made it hatch forth: He brought forth from it its water and its pasture”*

The only case; the translation links the two clauses with a colon.

**IN BRIEF**

Set aside as a rule: a single case. The translation of 79:30 keeps its colon.

HYPOTHESIS SET ASIDE

# The name that becomes a sentence

> Hypothesis examined: the Qur'an would sometimes take up a person's name and turn it into the sentence that strikes him, and this device would be a reading rule.

The case that gave rise to the hypothesis is striking. Sura 111 opens with « تَبَّتْ يَدَآ أَبِى لَهَبٍ », "Perish the hands of the Father of the Flame", and announces two verses later: « سَيَصْلَىٰ نَارًا ذَاتَ لَهَبٍ », "He will burn in a fire of flame". The word لَهَب moves from nickname to penalty.

But this device was found nowhere else in the corpus. An observation that holds for a single sura is a reading of that sura, not a rule guiding the reading of others.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 111:1**

تَبَّتْ يَدَآ أَبِى لَهَبٍ

*"Perish the hands of the Father of the Flame"*

The flame in the nickname…

**EXAMPLE 111:3**

سَيَصْلَىٰ نَارًا ذَاتَ لَهَبٍ

*"He will burn in a fire of flame"*

… then in the penalty. A real device, but unique in the corpus.

**IN BRIEF**

Set aside as a rule: a single case. The fact remains in the file of sura 111.

HYPOTHESIS SET ASIDE

# The address "O you who are wrapped up! Stand"

> Hypothesis examined: when the Qur'an addresses someone with a participle of wrapping ("O you who are wrapped up", "O you who are covered in a cloak") followed by the order « قُمْ » ("Stand / Arise"), the state named would be precisely the one to leave.

Both occurrences are real and answer each other: « يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلْمُزَّمِّلُ قُمِ ٱلَّيْلَ » (73:1–2) and « يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلْمُدَّثِّرُ قُمْ فَأَنذِرْ » (74:1–2). In both, the address names a man wrapped up, then the order makes him rise. Both participles are hapaxes (files زمل and دثر).

But two occurrences, in two consecutive suras, do not make a general rule; and the statement ("the state named is the one to leave") is a reading, not a regularity verifiable elsewhere in the corpus.

The fact has its place elsewhere: it illustrates the learning Reading a sura with its neighbours, by which neighbouring suras answer each other in pairs. It is recorded there as evidence.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 73:1-2**

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلْمُزَّمِّلُ قُمِ ٱلَّيْلَ

"O *you who are wrapped up! Stand the night*"

First sura of the pair.

**EXAMPLE 74:1-2**

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلْمُدَّثِّرُ قُمْ فَأَنذِرْ

"O *you who are covered in a cloak! Arise and warn*"

The next sura answers the first: a pair echo (Reading a sura with its neighbours), not a rule.

**IN BRIEF**

Set aside as a rule: two occurrences, interpretive reading. The fact is added as evidence for Reading a sura with its neighbours.

HYPOTHESIS SET ASIDE

# The triad Guardian / Sovereign / Deity

> Hypothesis examined: the Qur'an would present God through a fixed triad, رَبّ (Guardian), مَلِك (Sovereign), إِلٰه (Deity), in that order, and this triad would link the first sura to the last.

The triad does appear, complete and in that order, in 114:1-3: « بِرَبِّ ٱلنَّاسِ مَلِكِ ٱلنَّاسِ إِلَٰهِ ٱلنَّاسِ ».

Yet the test on the whole corpus finds no other occurrence of the same pattern:

- the Fatiha (1:2-4) has « رَبِّ ٱلْعَٰلَمِينَ » and « مَٰلِكِ يَوْمِ ٱلدِّينِ », but no إله;
- 23:116 brings the three words together in another order: ٱلْمَلِكُ, then إِلَٰه, then رَبُّ;
- 39:6 has رَبُّكُمْ, then ٱلْمُلْكُ (dominion, not the Sovereign), then إِلَٰه.

A figure that occurs only once cannot be a rule. The echo between sura 1 and sura 114 (رب and ملك in both) remains a reading observation specific to those two suras.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 114:1-3**

بِرَبِّ ٱلنَّاسِ مَلِكِ ٱلنَّاسِ إِلَٰهِ ٱلنَّاسِ

*"the Guardian of mankind, the Sovereign of mankind, the Deity of mankind"*

The only complete occurrence, in order.

**COUNTER-EXAMPLE 1:2-4**

رَبِّ ٱلْعَٰلَمِينَ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ مَٰلِكِ يَوْمِ ٱلدِّينِ

*"Guardian of all beings, the All-Benevolent, the Benevolent, Sovereign of the Day of Retribution"*

Here, رب and مالك, but no إله: the Fatiha does not contain the triad.

**COUNTER-EXAMPLE** **23:116**

فَتَعَٰلَى ٱللَّهُ ٱلْمَلِكُ ٱلْحَقُّ لَآ إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ رَبُّ ٱلْعَرْشِ ٱلْكَرِيمِ

"*Exalted be God, the Sovereign, the Truth!*"

The three terms, but in the order Sovereign, Deity, Guardian.

**IN BRIEF**

Set aside. Only one strict example (114:1-3); the other places where the three terms meet follow neither the same order nor the same forms.

# The reading lessons

*Reading the suras one by one, from the last to the first, certain ways of reading imposed themselves: rereading a sura with its neighbours, looking elsewhere in the Qur'an for the answer to a question, defining people by their deeds. Each page presents one of these learnings, shows it in the text, and says what it changes for the reading.*

## The sura and its neighbours

*A sura is read with those around it, and within the frame drawn by its opening, its close and its refrains.*

CONFIRMED PRINCIPLE

# Reading a sura with its neighbours

> A sura is not read on its own: it answers the one before it and prepares the one after it. Neighbouring suras answer each other in pairs or in blocks, with the same words, the same images, or images turned around.

The clearest case is that of suras 73 and 74. They open the same way, on a wrapped man, then on an order to rise: "O you who are wrapped up! Stand the night" (73:1-2); "O you who are covered in a cloak! Arise and warn" (74:1-2). The first turns the rising toward the night and recitation, the second toward warning.

Suras 63 and 64 answer each other on goods and children. Sura 63 warns: "Let not your goods or your children distract you from the remembrance of God" (63:9); sura 64 gives the reason: "Your goods and your children are but a trial" (64:15).

Suras 110 and 111 form a diptych: on one side, the help of God and people entering His Law in crowds (110:1-2); on the other, a single man perishing with his hands (111:1). A collective gain facing an individual loss.

The reading rule that follows is simple: before concluding on a sura, reread the end of the one before it and the beginning of the one after it.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 73:1**

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلْمُزَّمِّلُ

*"O you who are wrapped up! Stand the night"*

Opening of sura 73: the wrapped one, then the order to rise.

**EXAMPLE 74:1**

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلْمُدَّثِّرُ

"O *you who are covered in a cloak! Arise and warn*"
The neighbouring sura opens on the same image, turned toward warning.

**EXAMPLE 64:15**

إِنَّمَآ أَمْوَٰلُكُمْ وَأَوْلَٰدُكُمْ فِتْنَةٌ

"*Your goods and your children are but a trial*"
Sura 64's answer to the warning of 63:9.

**IN BRIEF**

A principle confirmed throughout the Qur'an, from sura 114 to sura 1: neighbours answer each other, and reading one sheds light on the other.

CONFIRMED PRINCIPLE

# A root passes the baton from one sura to the next

> In runs of short suras, a root often relays the discourse from one sura to the next: the word that closes one scene returns, in another form, in the neighbouring scene. Following this relay means reading the run as a single discourse.

The root of food runs through three suras in a row. Sura 105 ends with the people without reason reduced "to the state of eaten husk" (105:5, مَّأْكُولٍ). Sura 106 recalls that the Guardian of the House "fed them against hunger" (106:4, أَطْعَمَهُم). Sura 107 denounces the one who "does not urge the feeding of the destitute" (107:3, طَعَامِ). From what was eaten, to food given, then to food refused: a single chain.

The root of abundance links two suras further apart: "Rivalry in accumulation has distracted you" (102:1, ٱلتَّكَاثُرُ); "We have granted you the Abundance" (108:1, ٱلْكَوْثَرَ). The same root names the accumulation that distracts and the abundance that is given.

This relay refines the principle of reading neighbours (Reading a sura with its neighbours): comparing themes is not enough; one must follow the roots.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 106:4**

ٱلَّذِىٓ أَطْعَمَهُم مِّن جُوعٍ

*"who fed them against hunger"*
The relay of food: 105:5, then 106:4, then 107:3.

**EXAMPLE 107:3**

وَلَا يَحُضُّ عَلَىٰ طَعَامِ ٱلْمِسْكِينِ

*"does not urge the feeding of the destitute"*
The same root, now in food refused.

**EXAMPLE 102:1**

أَلۡهَىٰكُمُ ٱلتَّكَاثُرُ

*"Rivalry in accumulation has distracted you"*

The root of sura 108 ("the Abundance"), in the sense of the accumulation that distracts.

**IN BRIEF**

An observation verified on suras 114 to 85: neighbours hand on a root, and the run is read through this relay.

CONFIRMED PRINCIPLE

# The first verse gives the thread of the sura

> When a sura opens on an act of God, that act is the thread of the whole sura: what God does in the first verse, the sura then unfolds in all its forms.

Sura 58 opens on hearing: "God has certainly heard the words of the one who argues with you about her husband and complains to God; and God hears your exchange" (58:1). The verb "hear" returns three times in this single verse.

The whole sura then speaks of words that God hears: a husband's words disowning his wife (58:2), secret conferences (58:7-10), private consultations with the messenger (58:12-13), a twisted greeting (58:8), lying oaths (58:14, 58:16, 58:18). What looks like a series of separate topics is a single theme: nothing that is said escapes the One who hears.

Sura 59 follows the same principle in another way, with one formula at the opening and the close (One formula opens and closes the sura).

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 58:1**

قَدْ سَمِعَ ٱللَّهُ قَوْلَ ٱلَّتِى تُجَٰدِلُكَ

*"God has certainly heard the words of the one who argues with you"*

The opening act: hearing. The whole sura unfolds its forms.

**IN BRIEF**

An observation established on sura 58: read the first verse as the key to the sura.

CONFIRMED PRINCIPLE

# One formula opens and closes the sura

> When a sura opens and closes on the same formula, it is read within that frame. If the aspect of the verb changes between the two, from perfect to imperfect, the text says that what was established at the start continues at the end.

Sura 59 opens: "All that is in the heavens and on the earth has glorified God. He is the All-Powerful, the Wise" (59:1). It closes almost word for word: "All that is in the heavens and the earth glorifies Him. He is the All-Powerful, the Wise" (59:24).

Only one word changes: the verb passes from the perfect سَبَّحَ ("has glorified") to the imperfect يُسَبِّحُ ("glorifies"). Between the two, the sura tells of a group's expulsion, the sharing of goods, the hypocrites and the Diverter. The frame says what to retain: the glorification established at the start has not ceased; it goes on.

That is why the translation keeps the difference of tense between opening and close (see "Has glorified" and "glorifies": the aspect of the openings in سبّح).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 59:1**

سَبَّحَ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَمَا فِي ٱلْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ ٱلْعَزِيزُ ٱلْحَكِيمُ

*"All that is in the heavens and on the earth has glorified God."*
Opening, in the perfect: "has glorified".

**EXAMPLE 59:24**

يُسَبِّحُ لَهُۥ مَا فِي ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ ٱلْعَزِيزُ ٱلْحَكِيمُ

*"All that is in the heavens and the earth glorifies Him."*
Close, in the imperfect: "glorifies". The glorification continues.

**IN BRIEF**

An observation established on sura 59; it agrees with the series of openings in سبّح ("Has glorified" and "glorifies": the aspect of the openings in سبّح).

CONFIRMED PRINCIPLE

# A formula that returns with a single word changed

> When a formula returns almost identically and only one word changes, that word carries the meaning of the passage. The translation keeps everything else identical, so that the changed word stands out.

The formula "So whoever wills may take, toward his Guardian, …" returns in several suras. In 76:29 (and 73:19) it ends with "a way"; in 78:39, with "a place of return". Sura 76 speaks of the road to follow here below; sura 78 ends on the Day when everyone returns. The final word says where the discourse stands.

Sura 58 sets two parties against each other with one sentence: "the party of the Diverter — they are the losers" (58:19); "the party of God — they are the successful" (58:22). Everything is symmetrical except the name of the party and its outcome.

Likewise, "To your Guardian, that Day…" ends with "the place of settlement" (75:12), then with "the drive" (75:30): the same frame, two moments of the same journey (see « إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ » placed first: the end where everything arrives).

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 76:29**

فَمَن شَآءَ ٱتَّخَذَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِۦ سَبِيلًا

*“So whoever wills may take, toward his Guardian, a way.”*

The formula ends with "a way".

**EXAMPLE 78:39**

فَمَن شَآءَ ٱتَّخَذَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِۦ مَـَٔابًا

*“So whoever wills may take, toward his Guardian, a place of return.”*

The same formula, one word changed: "a place of return".

**EXAMPLE 58:22**

أَلَآ إِنَّ حِزْبَ ٱللَّهِ هُمُ ٱلْمُفْلِحُونَ

“*Indeed, the party of God — they are the successful.*”

The counterpart of 58:19: same sentence, another party, another outcome.

**IN BRIEF**

An observation verified in several suras: in a repeated formula, look for the word that changes.

CONFIRMED PRINCIPLE

# The refrain divides the sura into stanzas

> When a refrain returns at regular intervals, it divides the sura into stanzas: each stanza brings a proof or an account, and the refrain gives it the same verdict. That is why it is translated identically each time.

Sura 77 is built this way. After each proof (creation, the earth, the Day of Separation), the same sentence falls: "Woe, that Day, to the deniers!" (77:15, 77:19, 77:24… ten times). The reader hears the verdict return and understands that each proof leads to the same conclusion.

Sura 54 has two alternating refrains. One turns to the past: "So how were My punishment and My warnings?" (54:16, 54:18, 54:21, 54:30); the other turns to the listener: "We have indeed made the Recitation easy for remembrance: is there then anyone to take heed?" (54:17, 54:22, 54:32, 54:40). Each punished people is followed by both: what happened, and what you will make of it.

Sura 57 closes each reminder about the people of the Scripture with the same sentence: "And many of them are the oversteppers" (57:16, 57:26, 57:27).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 77:15**

وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِينَ

*"Woe, that Day, to the deniers!"*
The verdict that follows each proof in sura 77.

**EXAMPLE 54:16**

فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عَذَابِي وَنُذُرِ

*"So how were My punishment and My warnings?"*
First refrain of sura 54, turned to the past.

**EXAMPLE 54:17**

وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا ٱلْقُرْءَانَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِن مُّدَّكِرٍ

“*is there then anyone to take heed?*”
Second refrain, turned to the listener.

**IN BRIEF**

An observation verified on suras 77, 55, 54 and 57: the refrain structures the sura, and it is rendered identically everywhere (see The refrain "Woe, that Day, to the deniers!").

CONFIRMED PRINCIPLE

# The refrain that turns warning into a blessing

> When a refrain follows blessings and warnings alike, it qualifies them all in the same way: the warning too becomes a blessing. What the refrain qualifies, it qualifies entirely.

Sura 55 repeats the same question thirty-one times: "Which then of your Guardian's blessings do you both deny?" (55:13, and up to 55:77).

The question first follows creation: the human being, the two easts, the two seas. But it also follows what is frightening: "Everything upon it is perishing, and only the Face of your Guardian remains" (55:26-27); then "Upon you both will be sent a blaze of flame and a jet of molten copper" (55:35). After each of these passages the same word nonetheless returns: blessings.

The text thus says that warning is not the opposite of blessing: being warned is already a grace. Sura 54 does the same in another way: each account of punishment there is followed by "We have indeed made the Recitation easy for remembrance" (54:17, see The refrain divides the sura into stanzas).

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 55:26**

كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ

*"Everything upon it is perishing"*

A warning, followed by the refrain of blessings (55:28).

**EXAMPLE 55:35**

يُرْسَلُ عَلَيْكُمَا شُوَاظٌ مِّن نَّارٍ

*"Upon you both will be sent a blaze of flame and a jet of molten copper"*

The blaze of flame, also followed by the refrain (55:36).

**IN BRIEF**

An observation established on sura 55: read the warning within the frame the refrain gives it.

## The Qur'an explains the Qur'an

*Questions, rare words and constructions are lit up by the text's other passages.*

CONFIRMED PRINCIPLE

# The Qur'an answers its own questions

> When the text asks a question, the answer is often found elsewhere in the Qur'an: further on in the same sura, or in another one. Before looking for an answer outside the text, one looks in the text for the matching question or answer.

In sura 2, the believers under trial ask: "When, then, is the help of God?" (2:214). Sura 110 opens on the answer, with the same words: "When the help of God comes, and the victory" (110:1).

The man of sura 75 asks: "When is the Day of Appearance?" (75:6). Sura 79 takes up the question ("when will it drop anchor?", 79:42) and answers it: "To your Guardian is its final boundary." (79:44). The date is not given; what is given is to whom it belongs.

Sometimes the answer follows at once: "for what Day were they deferred? For the Day of Separation." (77:12-13).

Finally, the same question may return word for word. The disowners say in 74:31: "What did God intend by this image?", exactly as in 2:26. And sura 2 gives the answer straight after: "He leads astray by it many, and guides by it many" (2:26). The translation therefore renders both questions identically, so that the reader can pass from one to the other.

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 2:214**

مَتَىٰ نَصْرُ ٱللَّهِ

*"When, then, is the help of God?"*

The question of the believers under trial.

**EXAMPLE 110:1**

إِذَا جَآءَ نَصْرُ ٱللَّهِ

"*When the help of God comes, and the victory*"
The answer, with the same words: نَصْرُ ٱللَّهِ.

**EXAMPLE 74:31**

مَاذَآ أَرَادَ ٱللَّهُ بِهَٰذَا مَثَلًا

"*What did God intend by this image*?"
Word for word the question of 2:26, whose answer follows in 2:26.

**IN BRIEF**

A principle confirmed in the suras studied: every question in the text is first set beside the answer the text gives it.

CONFIRMED PRINCIPLE

# A unique word is read through its construction

> A word that appears only once in the Qur'an cannot be lit up by its other uses. It is then read through the way the sura builds it: the word set against it, the negations that follow it, the gradation that leads to it, or the only other account that shares a rare word.

By its opposite. Sura 108 opens on "the Abundance" (108:1 ,الكوثر) and closes on "the Cut-Off One" (108:3 ,الأبتر). Both words are unique; each is read through the other: what is given in abundance against what is cut off.

By negations. Sura 112 says "God, the Impenetrable" (112:2 ,الصمد), then strings three negations: "He begets not, and is not begotten." (112:3); "And none is His counterpart." (112:4). Nothing issues from Him, He issues from no one, nothing equals Him: the negations say what the unique word means.

By gradation. The last word of sura 107, الماعون ("assistance", 107:7), closes a descent: repelling the orphan, not urging the feeding of the destitute, being absent-minded about one's Contact, seeking to be seen, and finally withholding assistance. The word is read as the last step of that series.

By the neighbouring account. The word سجيل ("hardened clay") describes the stones hurled at the people without reason of sura 105 (105:4); it returns only in the account of Lut's people (11:82, 15:74), where stones also rain upon a city. The rare word links the two punishments.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 108:3**

إِنَّ شَانِئَكَ هُوَ ٱلْأَبْتَرُ

*"it is he who hates you who is himself the Cut-Off One"*
The Cut-Off One, read against the Abundance of the first verse.

**EXAMPLE 112:3**

لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ

"*He begets not, and is not begotten.*"
The negations that state the meaning of "the Impenetrable" (112:2).

**EXAMPLE 11:82**

حِجَارَةً مِّن سِجِّيلٍ

"*stones of hardened clay*"
The only other account where the word of 105:4 returns.

**IN BRIEF**

A principle confirmed on suras 105, 107, 108 and 112: a unique word is read through what the sura builds around it.

CONFIRMED PRINCIPLE

# A root reserved for a single object

> When every occurrence of a root bears on the same object, that root is read as the proper term for that object. It has no other use in the Qur'an: its meaning is fixed by that object, and the translation renders it the same way each time.

The root حضض ("to urge") appears three times. All three times it is negated, and all three times it bears on the same thing: feeding the destitute.

"He did not believe in God, the Immense, nor did he urge the feeding of the destitute." (69:34)
"you do not urge one another to feed the destitute" (89:18)
"does not urge the feeding of the destitute" (107:3)

The Qur'an therefore never uses this verb for any other urging. The reproach is not only failing to feed: it is failing to push others to do it. Sura 89 says so with a reciprocal form: people do not urge one another.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 69:34**

وَلَا يَحُضُّ عَلَىٰ طَعَامِ ٱلْمِسْكِينِ

*"nor did he urge the feeding of the destitute"*
First occurrence: negated, and about the destitute.

**EXAMPLE 89:18**

وَلَا تَحَٰٓضُّونَ عَلَىٰ طَعَامِ ٱلْمِسْكِينِ

*"you do not urge one another to feed the destitute"*
The reciprocal form: no one urges anyone.

**EXAMPLE 107:3**

وَلَا يَحُضُّ عَلَىٰ طَعَامِ ٱلْمِسْكِينِ

*“does not urge the feeding of the destitute”*
Third occurrence, same object.

**IN BRIEF**

An observation established on the root's three occurrences, without exception.

CONFIRMED PRINCIPLE

# Seeing oneself self-sufficient, the reverse of purifying oneself

> A term is often understood through its recurring opposite. In the Qur'an, "considering oneself self-sufficient" (استغنى) is the reverse of "purifying oneself" (تزكّى): whoever believes he needs nothing does not seek to purify himself. And the attribute the human being thus claims, self-sufficiency, belongs to God alone.

Sura 80 sets the two face to face: "As for him who considers himself self-sufficient, you give him your attention, and it is not upon you if he does not purify himself." (80:5-7). Opposite him comes the other: "him who came to you striving, and he fears" (80:8-9).

Sura 92 draws the same portrait: "the one who withholds, and considers himself self-sufficient, and denies the best" (92:8-9), opposite "the one who gives, and guards himself" (92:5). Sura 96 states the consequence: "The human being truly exceeds all measure, as soon as he sees himself self-sufficient." (96:6-7). He "sees" himself so; but "Does he not know that God sees?" (96:14).

Opposite this, the text reserves the attribute for God: "God is Self-Sufficient" (64:6); "God is the Self-Sufficient, the Praiseworthy." (60:6).

The opposite act is described too: those who "enjoined one another to truth" (103:3) are not self-sufficient; they need one another. And purification is not proclaimed: it is through it that one succeeds ("He has certainly succeeded who purifies himself", 87:14).

Most often, the root in fact names what avails nothing: "his goods will not avail him when he falls" (92:11).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 80:5**

أَمَّا مَنِ ٱسْتَغْنَىٰ

"*him who considers himself self-sufficient*"

The one who sees himself without need, and does not purify himself (80:7).

**EXAMPLE 96:7**

أَن رَّءَاهُ ٱسْتَغْنَىٰٓ

"*as soon as he sees himself self-sufficient*"

He "sees" himself so; God "sees" (96:14).

**EXAMPLE 60:6**

فَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ هُوَ ٱلْغَنِىُّ ٱلْحَمِيدُ

"*God is the Self-Sufficient, the Praiseworthy.*"

The attribute the human claims belongs to God.

**IN BRIEF**

An observation verified across a wide set of suras: استغنى is read as the reverse of تزكّى, and self-sufficiency belongs to God.

CONFIRMED PRINCIPLE

# The model and its limit

> When the text offers a model to follow, it sets the model's limit itself through an exception. The exception is part of the teaching; it is read together with the passage of the Qur'an that explains it.

Sura 60 offers Ibrahim as a model: "You have had a good example in Ibrahim and those with him" (60:4). The model is a clean break with a people who obey others than God.

But the verse at once sets a limit: "except the saying of Ibrahim to his father: I will surely ask forgiveness for you" (60:4). That saying is not to be imitated.

Sura 9 gives the reason: "Ibrahim's asking forgiveness for his father was only because of a promise he had made him; but when it became clear to him that he was an enemy of God, he disavowed him." (9:114). The model is therefore complete: Ibrahim himself ended by disavowing his father.

Reading the model without its exception, or the exception without 9:114, draws a false lesson from it.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 60:4**

إِلَّا قَوْلَ إِبْرَٰهِيمَ لِأَبِيهِ

*"except the saying of Ibrahim to his father: I will surely ask forgiveness for you"*
The exception set within the very verse of the model.

**EXAMPLE 9:114**

تَبَرَّأَ مِنْهُ

*"when it became clear to him that he was an enemy of God, he disavowed him."*
The passage that explains the exception.

**IN BRIEF**

An observation established on 60:4 and 9:114: a model is read with the limit the text sets for it.

CONFIRMED PRINCIPLE

# Reveal or inspire: according to who receives

> The root وحي denotes a discreet communication. The text modulates it by recipient: addressed to a prophet, it is revelation; addressed to others (a mother, the bee, the sky, the earth), it is inspiration. The translation keeps these two words, and a third when a human addresses it to humans.

Moussa receives revelation: "listen to what is revealed" (20:13); "We had revealed to Moussa" (20:77). Moussa and his brother say it themselves: "It has been revealed to us" (20:48).

His mother receives inspiration: "We inspired your mother with what was inspired" (20:38); "We inspired Moussa's mother" (28:7). The same root, in the same account, takes two senses according to who receives it.

Inspiration extends to creation: "your Guardian inspired the bee" (16:68); "inspired to each sky its command" (41:12); the earth will recount its news "for your Guardian will have inspired it" (99:5). It even exists among the prophets' enemies, "who inspire one another with embellished speech" (6:112).

Finally, when a human addresses other humans this way, it is neither: Zakariya, deprived of speech, "signaled to them" (19:11).

## IN THE TEXT

EXAMPLE **20:13**

فَٱسْتَمِعْ لِمَا يُوحَىٰٓ

*"listen to what is revealed"*

The recipient is a prophet: reveal.

**EXAMPLE 20:38**

إِذْ أَوْحَيْنَآ إِلَىٰٓ أُمِّكَ مَا يُوحَىٰٓ

"*We inspired your mother with what was inspired*"
Same account, another recipient: inspire.

**EXAMPLE 16:68**

وَأَوْحَىٰ رَبُّكَ إِلَى ٱلنَّحْلِ

"*your Guardian inspired the bee*"
Inspiration given to creation.

**EXAMPLE 19:11**

فَأَوْحَىٰٓ إِلَيْهِمْ

"*signaled to them*"
From a human to humans: neither revelation nor inspiration.

**IN BRIEF**

An observation verified on the accounts of Moussa and the root's other uses: the rendering of وحي depends on the recipient.

CONFIRMED PRINCIPLE

# One object, two names in the story

> In a story, one object may bear two names from different roots. Each name states a function of the object in the scene where it appears. The translation keeps two words, and the choice of name, scene by scene, carries the meaning.

The story of Youssof gives three examples.

The cup. When Youssof hides it, it is السقاية, the object used for giving drink: "he placed the cup in his brother's saddlebag" (12:70). When it is claimed, it is صواع الملك, the official standard of measure: "We are missing the king's measuring vessel" (12:72). The hidden object is a utensil; the claimed object is a royal measure, and its theft becomes an affair of state.

The travellers. Those who find Youssof at the well are "Travelers" (12:19 ,سيارة): people passing through. The brothers form the "caravan" (12:94 ,12:70 ,العير): an organised convoy carrying provisions.

The baggage. The goods are placed in the "saddlebag" (12:70 ,رحل), what is carried on the mount; the search is made in the "bags" (12:76 ,وعاء), what contains. At the moment of the search, the story looks at what each bag holds.

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 12:70**

جَعَلَ ٱلسِّقَايَةَ فِى رَحْلِ أَخِيهِ

*"he placed the cup in his brother's saddlebag"*
The hidden object: the cup, used for giving drink.

**EXAMPLE 12:72**

نَفْقِدُ صُوَاعَ ٱلْمَلِكِ

"*We are missing the king's measuring vessel*"
The claimed object: the royal standard of measure.

**EXAMPLE 12:76**

فَبَدَأَ بِأَوْعِيَتِهِمْ

"*He began with their bags before his brother's bag*"
The search: the baggage named by what it contains.

**IN BRIEF**

An observation established on the story of Youssof: two names, two functions, two words in the translation.

CONFIRMED PRINCIPLE

# The preposition changes the relation

> One verb does not say the same thing depending on the preposition that follows it. A verb's construction is therefore checked across all its occurrences, and the translation changes its wording when the preposition changes.

The verb صلّى gives the clearest example. Followed by لـ, it names the act directed toward God: "So make contact for your Guardian" (108:2). Followed by على and a person, it names a bond with that person: "be in contact with them" (9:103). See The Contact: making it, maintaining it, being in contact with.

The verb ألقى ("to cast, to lay") follows the same principle. With إلى, it names what one extends toward someone: "offering them affection" (60:1). With على, what one lays upon him: "I cast upon you a love from Me" (20:39).

The reading rules give other cases, each checked across all its occurrences: Guiding "along" the path or guiding "to" it; Believing "in" and giving credit "to"; Sending "upon": what comes down, and the guardians; The preposition before "their Contact" tells the relationship.

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 108:2**

فَصَلِّ لِرَبِّكَ

*"So make contact for your Guardian"*
The verb صلّى followed by لـ: the act directed toward God.

**EXAMPLE 9:103**

وَصَلِّ عَلَيْهِمْ

*"be in contact with them"*
The verb صلّى followed by على: a bond with people.

**EXAMPLE 20:39**

وَأَلْقَيْتُ عَلَيْكَ مَحَبَّةً مِّنِّي

"*I cast upon you a love from Me*"

The verb ألقى followed by على; with (60:1) إلى, it is "offering".

**IN BRIEF**

A principle confirmed on each verb studied: the preposition decides the meaning, and the translation follows the preposition.

CONFIRMED PRINCIPLE

# Where the aspect of the verb makes the meaning

> Arabic distinguishes the perfect, the imperfect and the participle. This is not a mere tense marker, and the perfect does not always mean the past: that mechanical reading is set aside (Verbal aspect carries meaning). But when a passage sets the forms against one another, that opposition carries the meaning, and the translation keeps it in all six languages.

Sura 109 is the textbook case. It alternates three forms of the same verb: the imperfect "I do not obey what you obey" (109:2), the participle "nor are you ones who obey" (109:3), and the perfect "what you have obeyed" (109:4). The present act, the lasting state and the finished past are not confused: the break holds for what I do, for what I am, and for what you have done.

Sura 102 opens on a perfect: "Rivalry in accumulation has distracted you" (102:1). The finding is made: the distraction has already happened. Sura 104 does the same: he thinks "that his goods have made him eternal" (104:3), as if it were settled.

The openings in "has glorified" and in "glorifies" (see 59:1, 59:24 and "Has glorified" and "glorifies": the aspect of the openings in سبّح) show the opposition between two suras, or between the start and the end of one sura (One formula opens and closes the sura).

Conversely, after إذا, the perfect describes what will happen: "When the sun is wrapped up" (81:1). There, translating it in the past would be a misreading. The rule is therefore not "perfect = past", but: spot the opposition of forms, and render it.

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 109:2**

لَآ أَعْبُدُ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ

"*I do not obey what you obey*"
The imperfect: the present act.

**EXAMPLE 109:4**

وَلَآ أَنَا۠ عَابِدٌ مَّا عَبَدتُّمْ

"*Nor am I one who obeys what you have obeyed*"
The participle (a state) and the perfect (the finished past) in one sentence.

**COUNTER-EXAMPLE 81:1**

إِذَا ٱلشَّمْسُ كُوِّرَتْ

"*When the sun is wrapped up*"
After إذا, the perfect describes the future: it is not rendered in the past.

**IN BRIEF**

A principle confirmed where the opposition of forms is demonstrated (109, 102, 104, 59). The mechanical reading "perfect = past" is set aside (Verbal aspect carries meaning).

# The human being and his deeds

*How the text describes people: by what they do, by the slope they follow, by what they claim.*

CONFIRMED PRINCIPLE

# The text defines by deeds

> The Qur'an defines people by what they do, not by what they declare they believe. When it names a category (the one who denies, the believer, the enemy), it at once describes it through deeds.

Sura 107 asks a question, then answers it with a deed: "Have you seen the one who denies the Retribution? He is the one who harshly repels the orphan, and does not urge the feeding of the destitute." (107:1-3). Denial is not an opinion: it shows in how the weak are treated.

Sura 90 does the same for the steep path: "It is freeing someone from a crushing debt, or feeding, on a day of hunger, an orphan near of kin, or a destitute person in privation." (90:13-16). And those of the Fire say of themselves: "We were not of those who made contact, nor did we use to feed the destitute" (74:43-44).

Kinship or marriage does not replace the deed. The wife of Nuh and the wife of Lut are given as an example to those who disowned (66:10); the wife of Fir'awn, to those who believe (66:11). Each is judged on what she did, not on the man she married.

Even the enemy is defined by deeds: "those who fought you concerning the Law, expelled you from your homes, and supported your expulsion" (60:9), and not by what they believe.

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 107:2**

فَذَٰلِكَ ٱلَّذِى يَدُعُّ ٱلْيَتِيمَ

*"He is the one who harshly repels the orphan, and does not urge the feeding of the destitute."*

The one who denies is defined by two deeds.

**EXAMPLE 90:13**

فَكُّ رَقَبَةٍ

"*It is freeing someone from a crushing debt, or feeding, on a day of hunger*"

The steep path, described by deeds.

**EXAMPLE 60:9**

إِنَّمَا يَنْهَىٰكُمُ ٱللَّهُ عَنِ ٱلَّذِينَ قَٰتَلُوكُمْ

"*those who fought you concerning the Law, expelled you from your homes, and supported your expulsion*"

The enemy, defined by three deeds.

**IN BRIEF**

A principle confirmed in many suras: when the text defines someone, it defines them by their deeds.

CONFIRMED PRINCIPLE

# Evil lies in the deed, not in the being

> The text does not declare a being or a thing evil in itself: it places evil in a deed. One therefore looks for the condition that triggers the evil (often "when", إذا) or the form of the word that makes it a habit.

Sura 113 gives three examples. One does not seek refuge from darkness, but from "the evil of a darkness when it penetrates" (113:3). One does not seek refuge from the envier, but from "the evil of an envier when he envies" (113:5). The condition "when" isolates the moment the evil occurs.

Between the two, "those who blow insistently into the knots" (113:4) are named with an intensive form: the repeated act is in the noun itself. Here too, these are beings defined by what they do.

Sura 60 applies the same principle to human relations. What is forbidden is alliance with those who committed specific acts: fighting, expelling, supporting the expulsion (60:9). Toward others, kindness remains permitted: "God does not forbid you from being virtuous and equitable toward those who did not fight you concerning the Law" (60:8).

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 113:3**

وَمِن شَرِّ غَاسِقٍ إِذَا وَقَبَ

*"from the evil of a darkness when it penetrates"*
Not darkness, but the moment it penetrates.

**EXAMPLE 113:5**

وَمِن شَرِّ حَاسِدٍ إِذَا حَسَدَ

*"from the evil of an envier when he envies"*
Not the envier, but the act of envying.

**EXAMPLE 60:8**

لَّا يَنْهَىٰكُمُ ٱللَّهُ عَنِ ٱلَّذِينَ لَمْ يُقَٰتِلُوكُمْ

*"God does not forbid you from being virtuous and equitable toward those who did not fight you concerning the Law"*

Without the hostile act, kindness remains permitted.

**IN BRIEF**

An observation verified on suras 113 and 60: evil is tied to a deed and its conditions.

CONFIRMED PRINCIPLE

# The human slope, and the exception that leads out of it

> When the text says "the human being is…", it describes a slope: the human receives, deems himself self-sufficient, and falls. The way out is always an exception ("except", ﻻ), and that exception is made of deeds that acknowledge need: making contact, giving, enjoining one another to good, fearing one's Guardian.

The general statements are many, and they follow the same form. "The human being is certainly in loss, except those who have believed, done righteous deeds, and enjoined one another to truth, and enjoined one another to patience." (103:2-3). "We have certainly created the human being in the best of stature, then We reduced him to the lowest of the low, except those who have believed and done righteous deeds" (95:4-6). "the human being was created anxious: when evil touches him, he panics; and when good touches him, he withholds it — except those who make contact" (70:19-22).

The movement is always the same. The human receives a blessing; he sees himself self-sufficient (96:6-7, see Seeing oneself self-sufficient, the reverse of purifying oneself); he is "toward his Guardian, rebelliously ungrateful" (100:6). Then comes the exception, and it is made of deeds.

Sura 68 turns this into a story. The companions of the garden have received a harvest; they swear to gather it "without exception" (68:17-18); they set out "[deeming themselves] capable" (68:25); they find the garden ruined. The outcome is a confession: "We have indeed been wrongdoers." (68:29).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 103:2**

إِنَّ ٱلْإِنسَٰنَ لَفِى خُسْرٍ

*"The human being is certainly in loss, except those who have believed"*

The general statement, then the exception made of deeds.

**EXAMPLE 70:22**

إِلَّا ٱلْمُصَلِّينَ

*"except those who make contact, constant in their Contact"*

The way out of anxiety: a deed, making contact.

**EXAMPLE 68:25**

وَغَدَوْا۟ عَلَىٰ حَرْدٍ قَٰدِرِينَ

*"And they went early, determined, [deeming themselves] capable."*

The moment one deems oneself sufficient, just before the fall.

**IN BRIEF**

A principle confirmed across a wide set of suras: the slope is the rule, the exception is made of deeds.

CONFIRMED PRINCIPLE

# The same gesture in both camps

> Both camps often make the same gesture: they toil, strive, make contact, disavow, confess their wrongs. The text does not tell them apart by the presence of the gesture, but by its direction and its fruit. The translation therefore keeps the same word on both sides.

On the Last Day, two groups of faces: some "toiling, exhausted" (88:3), others "pleased with their effort" (88:9). All have toiled; the fruit differs. "Your efforts are indeed diverse." (92:4).

The same verb يسعى ("to strive") describes Fir'awn who "turned his back, striving" (79:22) and the blind man "who came to you striving" (80:8). The effort is the same; the direction is opposite.

The same word of disavowal is in the mouth of Ibrahim and those with him: "We are clear of you" (60:4), out of fidelity; and in that of the Diverter, after pushing the human to disown: "I am clear of you" (59:16).

The same confession saves or avails nothing depending on the moment. Dhu'n-Nun calls out in the darkness: "I have indeed been among the wrongdoers!" (21:87), and he is saved. The stricken cities say: "Woe to us — we have indeed been wrongdoers!" (21:14), but too late.

## IN THE TEXT

EXAMPLE **79:22**

ثُمَّ أَدبَرَ يَسعَىٰ

*"he turned his back, striving"*
Fir'awn's effort, turned away from the sign.

**EXAMPLE 80:8**

وَأَمَّا مَن جَآءَكَ يَسۡعَىٰ

“*him who came to you striving*”
The same verb, turned toward the messenger.

**EXAMPLE 59:16**

إِنِّي بَرِيٓءٞ مِّنكَ

“*I am clear of you*”
The word of Ibrahim's disavowal (60:4), in the Diverter's mouth.

**IN BRIEF**

A principle confirmed in many suras: the shared gesture is rendered by the same word, and its direction is what separates the camps.

CONFIRMED PRINCIPLE

# Wealth is a trust

> When the text commands spending, it recalls that the human being is only a trustee of what he owns, and that everything returns to God. Stinginess is then set before the One who is Self-Sufficient.

Sura 57 links these three ideas. First the command, with its reason: "spend from that which He has made you trustees of" (57:7). Then the question: "what is [the matter] with you that you do not spend in the way of God, while to God belongs the inheritance of the heavens and the earth?" (57:10). What one keeps, one does not keep: it will return to its owner.

Finally the stingy: "Those who are stingy and enjoin stinginess upon people. And whoever turns away — indeed God is the Self-Sufficient, the Praiseworthy." (57:24). It is the same pair as in sura 92, where the one who withholds "considers himself self-sufficient" (92:8): the stingy one believes he needs nothing, whereas only God does not (Seeing oneself self-sufficient, the reverse of purifying oneself).

The same sura describes the present life as "rivalry in accumulation of goods and children" (57:20), the very words that open sura 102.

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 57:7**

وَأَنفِقُوا۟ مِمَّا جَعَلَكُم مُّسْتَخْلَفِينَ فِيهِ

*"spend from that which He has made you trustees of"*

The command to spend, with its reason: you are only trustees.

**EXAMPLE 57:10**

وَلِلَّهِ مِيرَٰثُ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ

*"to God belongs the inheritance of the heavens and the earth"*

Everything returns to its owner.

**EXAMPLE 57:24**

فَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ هُوَ ٱلْغَنِىُّ ٱلْحَمِيدُ

"*God is the Self-Sufficient, the Praiseworthy.*"
The stingy set before the Self-Sufficient.

**IN BRIEF**

An observation established on sura 57, in agreement with suras 92 and 102.

CONFIRMED PRINCIPLE

# The same verb for the human and for God

> When the text gives a human being the verb or the epithet it gives to God, it sets claim against reality. The translation keeps the same rendering on both sides, so that the comparison stays visible.

In sura 74, the opponent of the message "thought and determined. So may he perish, how he determined!" (74:18-19). In the neighbouring sura, the same verb has God as subject: "And God determines the night and the day." (73:20). The man who "determines" what the Recitation is, is set before the One who determines time itself.

The verb "invoke" is forbidden or permitted according to whom one addresses: "so do not invoke besides God anyone" (72:18); "I only invoke my Guardian" (72:20). Same verb; only the addressee changes.

Conversely, a divine epithet may be given to a human without usurpation. The messenger is "full of kindness, benevolent toward the believers" (9:128): the rendering is the same as for God, without the capital reserved for divine names.

The case of a divine title usurped by a man is treated separately (The divine title in a man's mouth).

### IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 74:18**

إِنَّهُۥ فَكَّرَ وَقَدَّرَ

*"he thought and determined"*

The man "determines".

**EXAMPLE 73:20**

وَٱللَّهُ يُقَدِّرُ ٱلَّيۡلَ وَٱلنَّهَارَ

"*And God determines the night and the day*"
The same verb, with God as subject.

**EXAMPLE 9:128**

بِٱلۡمُؤۡمِنِينَ رَءُوفٞ رَّحِيمٞ

"*full of kindness, benevolent toward the believers*"
Divine epithets given to the messenger, rendered identically.

**IN BRIEF**

An observation verified on suras 72, 73, 74 and 9: same verb, same rendering, and the comparison is left to the reader.

CONFIRMED PRINCIPLE

# The divine title in a man's mouth

> When a man claims a divine title, the translation renders that title exactly as when it designates God, so that the usurpation shows. But the word رب ("Guardian") applied to a human is rendered "master": the difference between the two is what reveals the claim.

Fir'awn gathers his people and declares: "I am your master, the Most High." (79:24). The title "the Most High" is God's in sura 87: "Glorify the name of your Guardian, the Most High" (87:1), and in sura 92: "his Guardian, the Most High" (92:20). Rendered identically, the title shows what Fir'awn claims to take.

By contrast, رب in his mouth is rendered "master", not "Guardian": he calls himself the master of his people; he is not so as God is Guardian.

Sura 12 follows the same rule. The king of Egypt is the "master" of those who serve him: "Remember me to your master." (12:42); "Return to your master" (12:50). And Youssof asks the decisive question: "are divided masters better, or God, the One, the Subjugator?" (12:39).

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 79:24**

أَنَا۠ رَبُّكُمُ ٱلْأَعْلَىٰ

*"I am your master, the Most High."*
The usurped divine title, and رب rendered "master".

**EXAMPLE 87:1**

سَبِّحِ ٱسْمَ رَبِّكَ ٱلْأَعْلَى

*"Glorify the name of your Guardian, the Most High"*
The same title, rendered the same way, for God.

**EXAMPLE** **12:39**

ءَأَرْبَابٌ مُّتَفَرِّقُونَ

“*are divided masters better, or God, the One, the Subjugator?*”
Human masters set against God.

**IN BRIEF**

An observation verified on suras 79, 87, 92 and 12: the usurped divine title is rendered identically, and a human رب is rendered "master".

# Reading this translation

*The translation's conventions: a word for a word, brackets, register, readings of the text.*

CONFIRMED PRINCIPLE

# Every word of the translation answers an Arabic word

> In this translation, every word answers a word of the Arabic text. What the target language must add to be readable is placed in square brackets. A word with no Arabic equivalent and no brackets would be an interpretation slipped into the text: it has no place there.

Brackets show the reader where the text stops and where reading aid begins. When the companions of the garden set out "[deeming themselves] capable" (68:25), the text says only "capable"; the brackets indicate that their capability existed only in their minds. When people make the Agents "female beings" (43:19), the Arabic says only "female".

Conversely, one Arabic word does not receive two words. The word وحيدا is rendered by a single one: "the one I created alone" (74:11), not "alone and solitary".

This discipline has a consequence for the reader: what is not in brackets can be looked for in the Arabic text, word by word. Additions that answered nothing (an emphatic adverb, an explanatory complement, a title such as "Lord" instead of "Guardian") have been removed.

### IN THE TEXT

EXAMPLE **68:25**

وَغَدَوْا۟ عَلَىٰ حَرْدٍ قَٰدِرِينَ

“*[deeming themselves] capable*”
The text says "capable"; the brackets carry the reading.

**EXAMPLE 89:7**

إِرَمَ ذَاتِ ٱلْعِمَادِ

"*with Iram of the lofty pillars*"
In French, the repeated preposition is a language addition, marked as such.

**EXAMPLE 74:11**

ذَرْنِى وَمَنْ خَلَقْتُ وَحِيدًا

"*the one I created alone*"
One Arabic word, one word in the translation.

**IN BRIEF**

A principle confirmed and applied to every sura reread: a word for a word, and additions in brackets.

CONFIRMED PRINCIPLE

# The literal sense first, the reading in brackets

> When a word's literal sense and a reading drawn from context coexist, the translation keeps the literal and carries the reading in square brackets. The reading is kept only if other passages of the Qur'an support it.

Sura 89 swears "By the even [the state in which intercession is permitted], and the odd [the state in which it is refused]!" (89:3). The text says "the even" and "the odd"; the translation keeps them. The reading in brackets comes from the root of the word "even" (شفع), which is also that of intercession, and from two passages: "Who, then, intercedes with Him, except with His permission?" (2:255); "So there will not benefit them the intercession of any intercessors." (74:48).

Sura 86 describes the fluid from which the human being is created, "emerging from between the loins [of the man] and the bosom [of the woman]" (86:7). The brackets specify to whom each word belongs; the word "loins" is the Qur'an's own word for descent: "your sons from your own loins" (4:23).

In sura 68, the companion of the fish "called out while suppressing [his sorrow]" (68:48). The bracketed complement rests on the account of Yaqub, where the same word goes with sorrow: "while he suppressed his sorrow" (12:84).

The reader can thus read the text without the brackets, then with them, and judge the proposed reading.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 89:3**

وَٱلشَّفْعِ وَٱلْوَتْرِ

*"By the even [the state in which intercession is permitted], and the odd [the state in which it is refused]!"*
The literal, then the reading supported by 2:255 and 74:48.

**EXAMPLE 86:7**

يَخْرُجُ مِنۢ بَيْنِ ٱلصُّلْبِ وَٱلتَّرَآئِبِ

*"emerging from between the loins [of the man] and the bosom [of the woman]"*
The brackets specify to whom each word belongs.

**EXAMPLE 68:48**

إِذْ نَادَىٰ وَهُوَ مَكْظُومٌ

*"when he called out while suppressing [his sorrow]"*
The bracketed complement rests on 12:84.

**IN BRIEF**

An observation verified on each bracketed reading: the literal is kept, the reading is marked and supported.

CONFIRMED PRINCIPLE

# The body named with restraint

> The Qur'an speaks of the body and of procreation without a single crude word. The translation keeps that register: it does not replace a restrained word with an anatomical term, nor with a moral term the text does not say.

Sura 86 describes the origin of the human being: "He was created from a gushing fluid, emerging from between the loins [of the man] and the bosom [of the woman]." (86:6-7). The text says "a fluid" and qualifies it by its movement; it names it no other way, and neither does the translation.

For descent, the Qur'an says "loins": "your sons from your own loins" (4:23).

Of Maryam, it says that she "protected her intimacy" (21:91), and again "who protected her intimacy" (66:12). The verb is that of protection, the noun that of intimacy: the translation replaces them neither with an anatomical term nor with "her chastity", which would be an added moral judgement.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 86:6**

خُلِقَ مِن مَّآءٍ دَافِقٍ

"*He was created from a gushing fluid*"
The fluid is qualified by its movement, with no other name.

**EXAMPLE 21:91**

وَٱلَّتِيٓ أَحْصَنَتْ فَرْجَهَا

"*who protected her intimacy*"
Neither anatomical term nor added moral judgement.

**IN BRIEF**

An observation verified on each passage concerned: the text's restrained register is kept in the translation and in the notes.

CONFIRMED PRINCIPLE

# When two recitations of the text diverge

> The reference Arabic text is that of the Hafs reading. Other transmitted recitations exist, among them that of Warsh; most differences do not affect the meaning. When they do, the immediate continuation of the text, then the thread of the sura, decide which reading the translation follows.

In 47:4, Hafs reads قُتِلُوا ("those who were killed"), Warsh قَاتَلُوا ("those who fought"). The next verse decides: "He will guide them and set right their condition, and admit them to the Garden" (47:5). Guiding someone and setting right his condition supposes that he is alive. The translation therefore follows Warsh: "And those who fought in the path of God, He will never render their deeds astray." (47:4).

The reverse also happens. In 43:19, Hafs reads عِبَادُ ("the obedient"), Warsh عِندَ ("with"). Here the thread of the sura, where the root عبد keeps returning, supports Hafs: "the Agents, who are the obedient ones of the All-Benevolent" (43:19).

The rule is therefore not to prefer one reading on principle, but to check each divergence and let the text decide.

## IN THE TEXT

**EXAMPLE 47:4**

وَٱلَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا۟ فِى سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ

*"And those who fought in the path of God"*

Reference text (Hafs): "were killed"; the translation follows Warsh, "fought".

**EXAMPLE 47:5**

سَيَهْدِيهِمْ وَيُصْلِحُ بَالَهُمْ

"*He will guide them and set right their condition*"

The immediate continuation supposes the living: it decides.

**IN BRIEF**

An observation applied to every sura: each divergence of meaning between Hafs and Warsh is checked and settled by the text.