



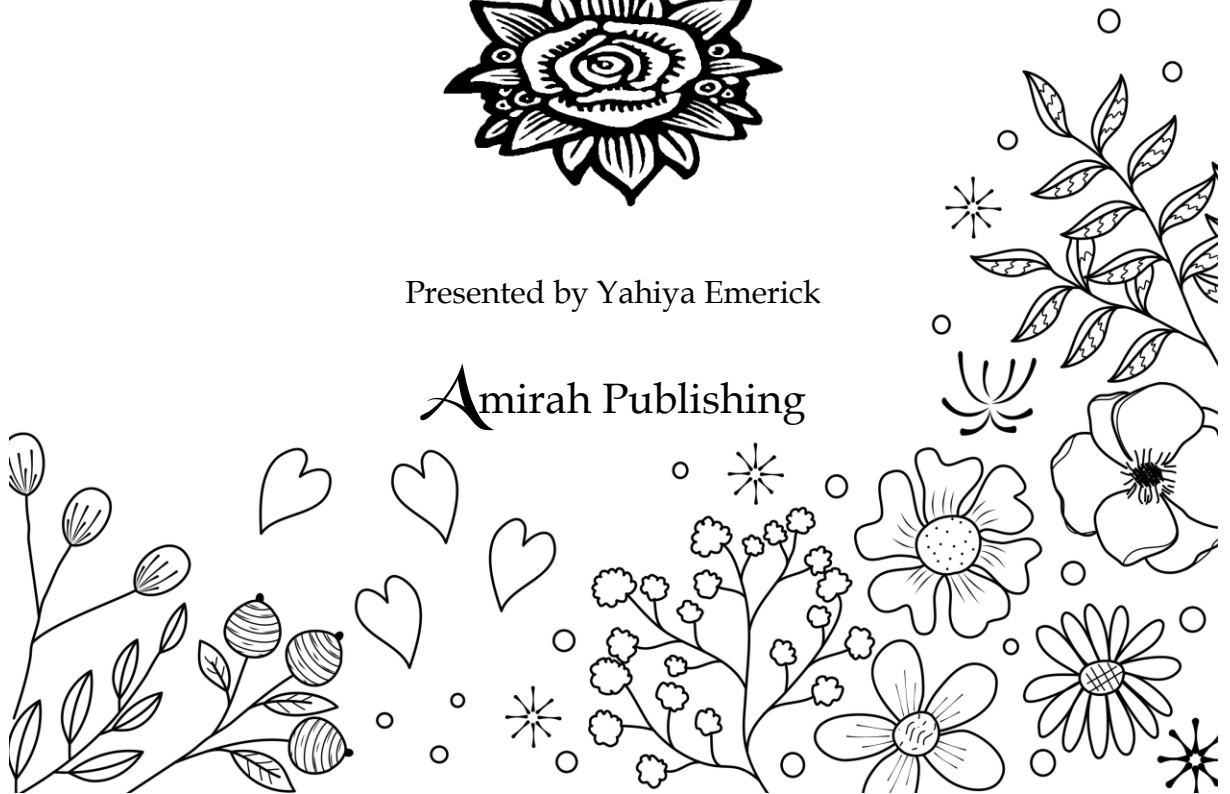
The Coloring Qur'an

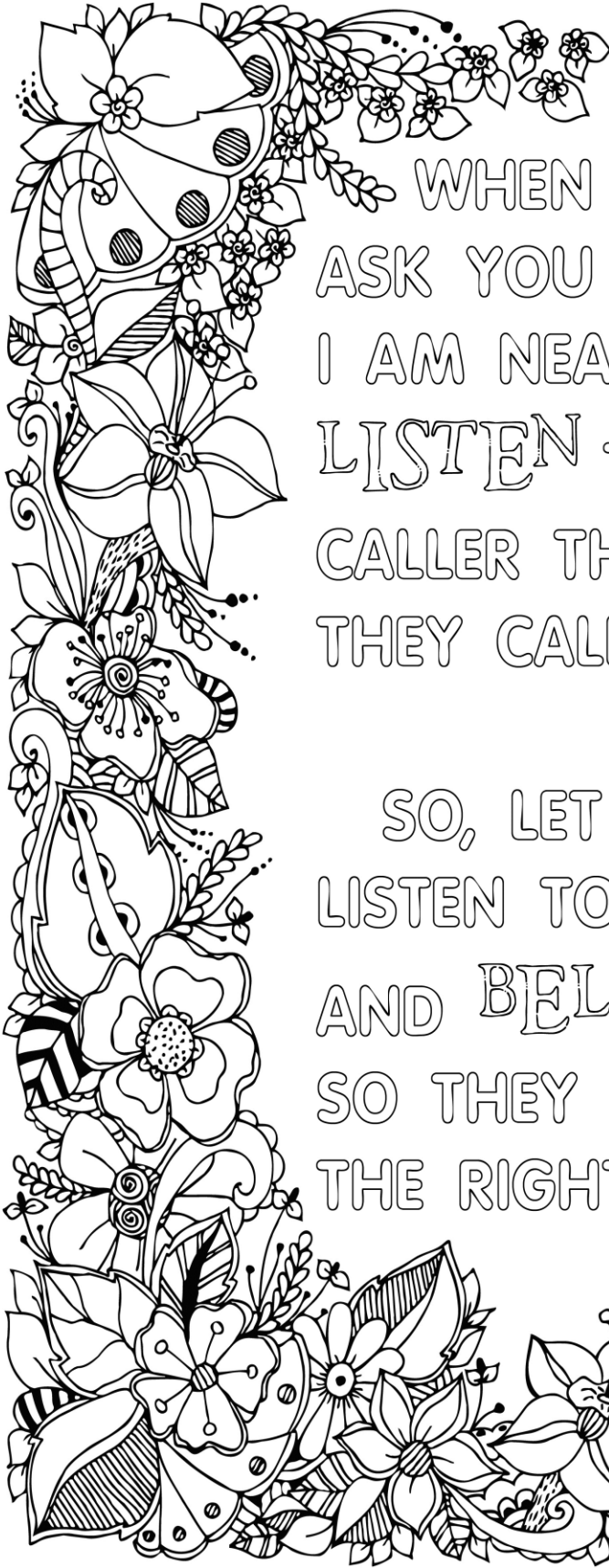
For Creative Minds



Presented by Yahiya Emerick

Amirah Publishing

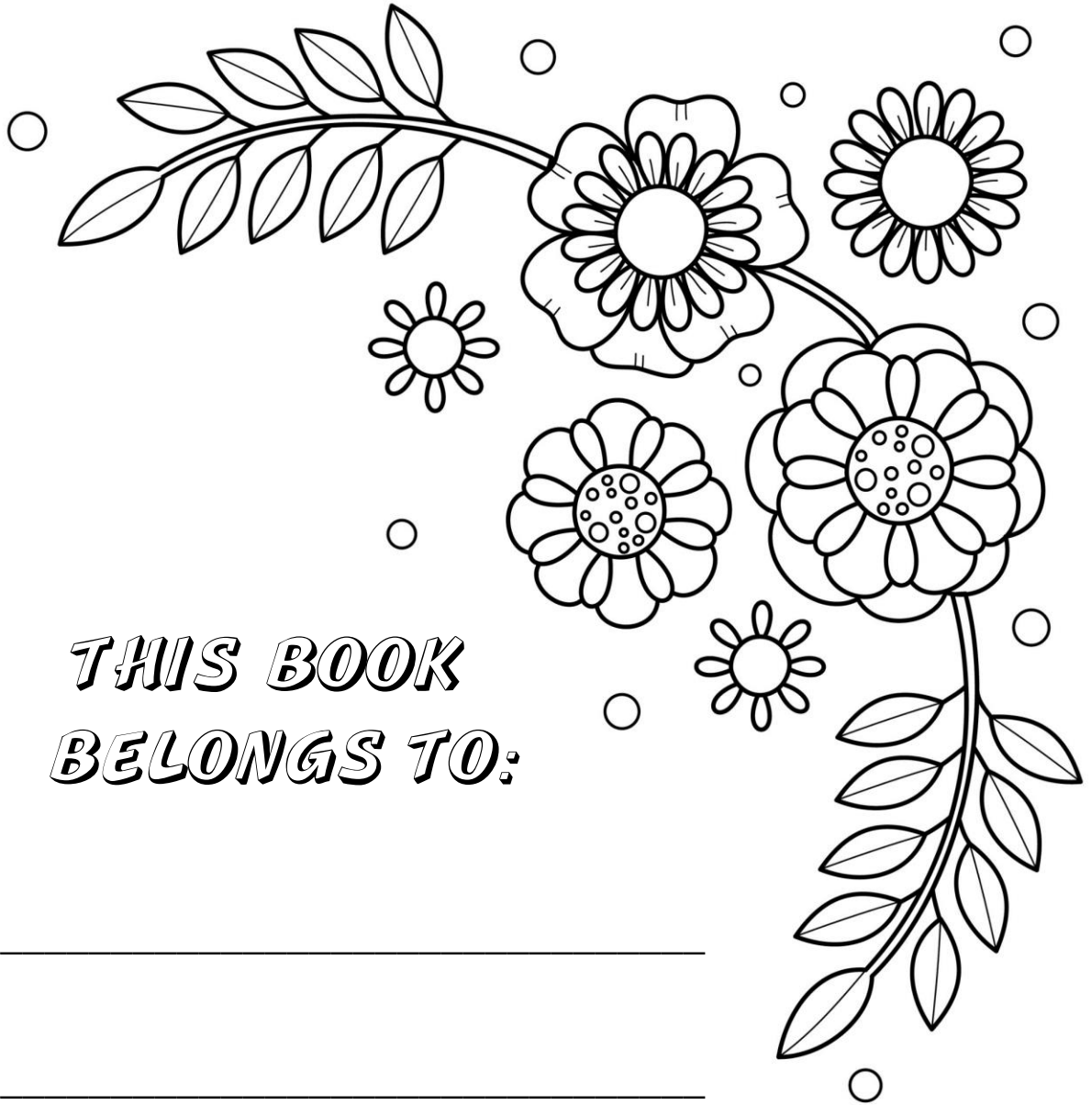




WHEN MY SERVANTS
ASK YOU ABOUT ME,
I AM NEAR, AND I
LISTEN TO EVERY
CALLER THE MOMENT
THEY CALL UPON ME.

SO, LET THEM ALSO
LISTEN TO MY CALL
AND BELIEVE IN ME
SO THEY CAN FOLLOW
THE RIGHT WAY. [2:186]





***THIS BOOK
BELONGS TO:***

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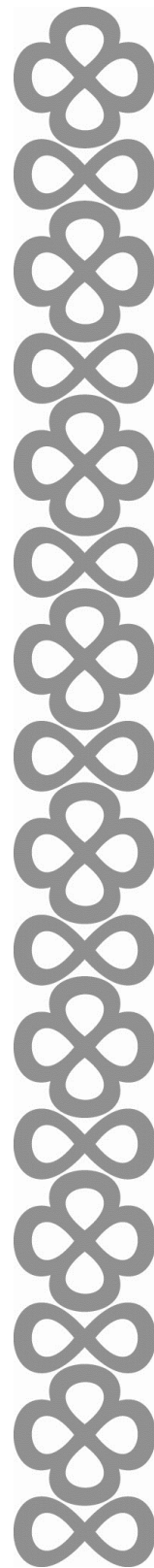
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Get Creative!



Get some *colored pencils* and take an active role in coloring the words of Allah into your heart!

CUSTOMIZE your experience of learning Allah's Message in the best way that suits you and your style

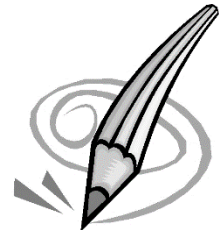
Write, Draw, Express and More!



And Now Your Turn...

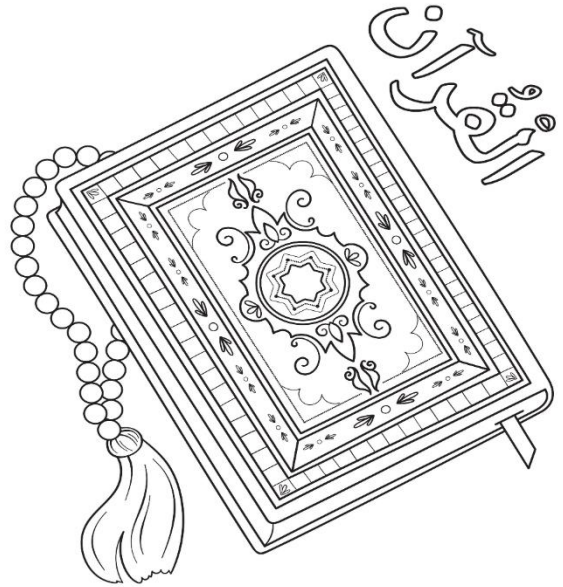
In our lives we are often confronted by people who try to get us down or question our worth. What advice does this passage teach us, and how can it be put into practice in a [real life](#) situation?

There are many opportunities to **EXPRESS** your thoughts, challenge your mind and make this exciting book your own – so scribble, quibble and dabble away!



Let it sink into your heart!

Take a journey into the last revelation Allah sent to the world, and **DISCOVER** what treasures, guidance, and **nuggets of wisdom** it has for you!



Make it a part of your life!

Adopt the good way of life that Allah offers you, and in exchange you gain His **LOVE**, His **Forgiveness** and what's more – His **Paradise**! What can be a better deal than that?





Eyes are at rest, the stars are setting.
Hushed are the stirrings of birds in their nests
and of monsters in the sea.

You are the Just Who knows no change,
the Balance Who can never swerve,
the Eternal Who never passes away.

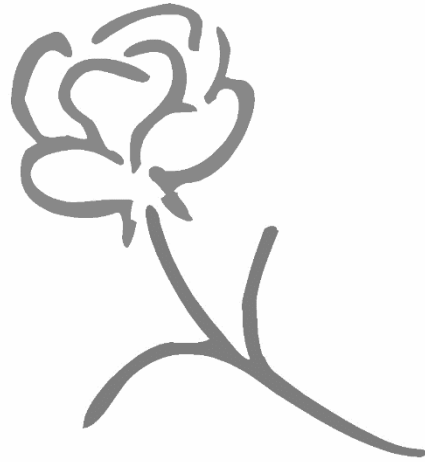
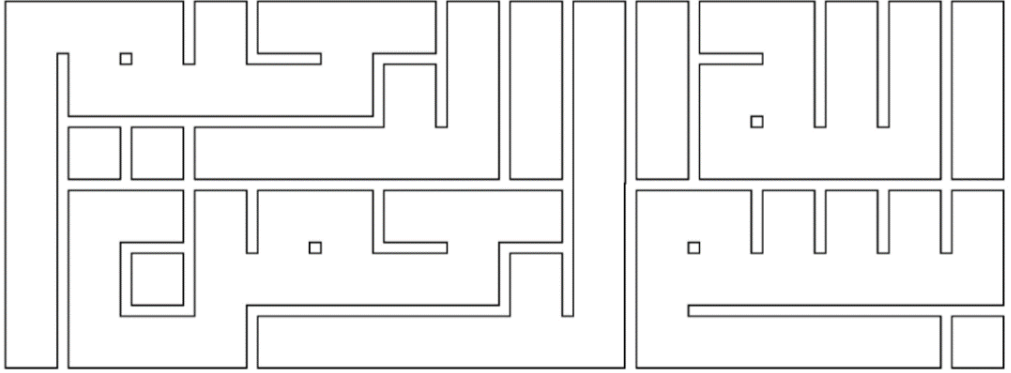
The doors of kings are bolted now
and guarded by soldiers.

Your door is open
to all who would call upon You.

Each love, my Lord,
is now alone with his beloved,
and now I am alone with You.

- Rabi'ah al Adawiyya of Basra (d. 801)

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ



In the Name of Allah,
The Compassionate, the Merciful

The Opening

1: **Al Fatihah**

Early Meccan Period

And so the Qur'an *opens* with a condensed summary of its entire message. In short, everything begins and ends with Allah or God, Who is in control and ready to provide healing, guidance and direction for any who ask. This chapter offers so many shades of knowledge that it has been said that if the entire Qur'an were lost and only this chapter remained, it would be sufficient guidance for humanity for all time. This is also the first *complete* chapter of the Qur'an revealed to the Prophet, as only partial verses from chapters 96, 73, 68 and 74 preceded it.

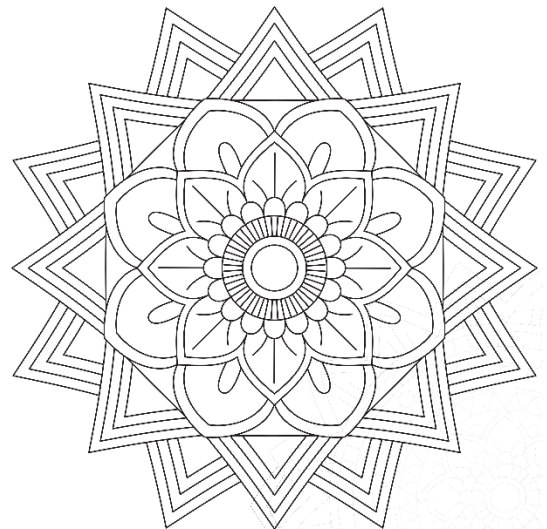
Background on verses 1-7: Muhammad ^(p) was still frightened of the visions and words he was receiving in the first days of his ministry. Whenever he would walk in the desert, he would sometimes hear the voice of a hidden spirit calling out to him, causing him to run back to the safety of Mecca. When he told his wife's cousin Waraqah about this, he urged Muhammad ^(p) to stay and listen and report back to him with what he heard. Accordingly, one day Muhammad ^(p) stood his ground when he heard the voice again during one of his walks in the countryside. When the voice called out his name, Muhammad ^(p) said, "Here I am." Then the voice commanded him to repeat that there was only one God and that he, Muhammad, was the Messenger of God. After Muhammad ^(p) had done so, then the voice commanded him to recite yet further a new set of phrases, which were the verses of this chapter below. (*Wahidi*)

In the name of Allah,
the Compassionate, the Merciful [1]

Praise be to Allah, Lord of All the
Worlds; [2] the Compassionate, the Merciful
[3] and Master of the Day of Judgment. [4]

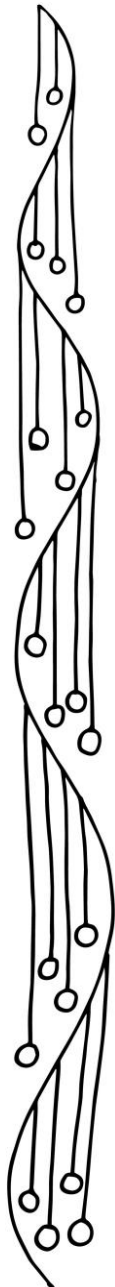
To You alone do we render
service, and to You alone do we
look for aid. [5]

Guide us on the straight path: [6]
the path of those whom You have
FAVORED, not of those who've
earned Your anger, nor of those who've
gone astray. [7]



The Cow

2: Al Baqarah Early Medinan Period



The focus of this chapter, which takes its name from an incident recounted in verses 66-73, is to give us a sense of the history that exists between Allah and humanity. Allah created human beings to be the caretakers of the earth. As such, He endowed them with a capacity to learn and know that is far more advanced than any other creature He made. However, due to human weakness, our earliest ancestors lost their fellowship with Allah, and precious few have striven to regain it.

Our collective failing is due as much to our own yearning for physical pleasure, as it is to the whisperings of the forces of darkness. That darkness is embodied in Shaytan (Satan), an evil creature who felt he was better than humans were, and thus he set out on a campaign to prove Allah wrong. Allah accepted his challenge, not because He was afraid or in need of amusement, but because, as is His way, He wanted Shaytan to understand how he went wrong *before* he was going to be vanquished.

Even though humans *could* be corrupted, as Shaytan proved, he didn't realize that they were also created with an inner nature that constantly prompts them to notice their absence from Allah. Though Shaytan continues to try and corrupt as many humans as he can in his foolish quest to somehow best Allah and save himself, some humans still do look for Allah's truth.

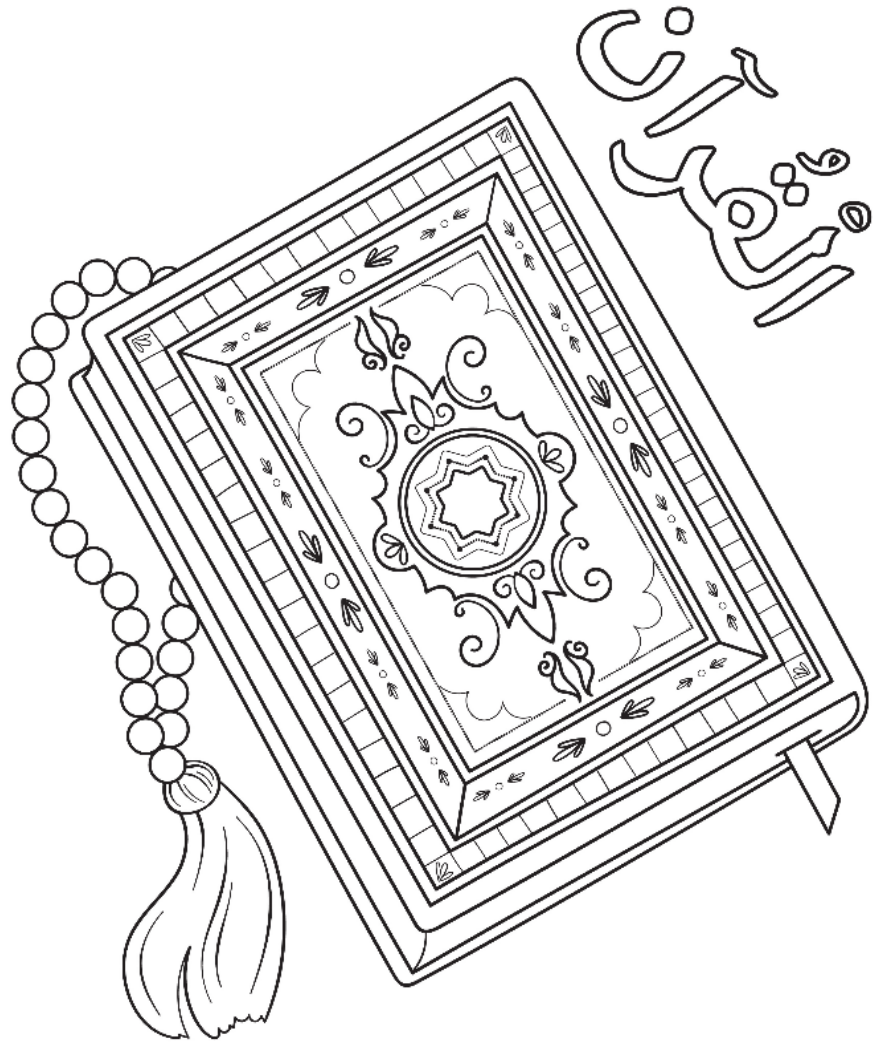
Allah constantly holds out the offer of His forgiveness and acceptance into His fellowship, regardless of the direction that human culture or values take. From the first human beings, Adam and Eve, on through waves of successive civilizations, Allah's message of salvation was renewed through the work of prophets. Therefore, no one can have any excuse when it comes time to face the reality of Judgment Day - when we will all be judged by our faith and life's work and sentenced to either eternal life in Paradise or lengthy (or even permanent) internment in Hellfire.

In the Name of Allah,
the Compassionate, the Merciful

Alif. Lam. Meem. [1]

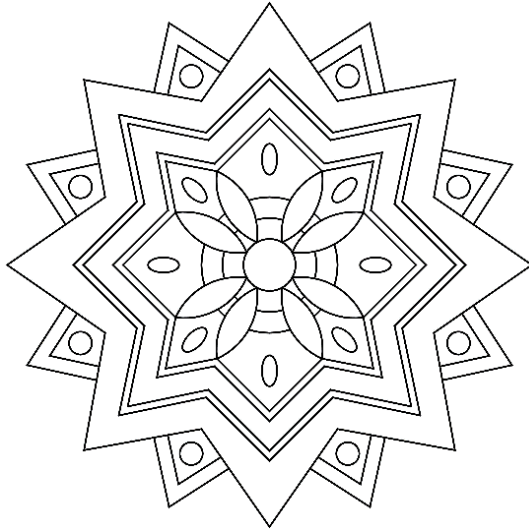
That (guidance you asked for) is (in this) Book, in which there is no doubt. It's a guide for those who are mindful (of their duty to Allah). [2]

(They're the ones) who believe in (the spiritual world) beyond their perception, establish regular **prayer**, and spend in **charity** out of what We've given to them. [3]



IT'S A GUIDE FOR
THOSE WHO ARE
MINDFUL (OF THEIR
DUTY TO ALLAH)

They believe in what's being revealed to you, (Muhammad), even as they believe in what's been revealed before your time, and they're confident of the reality of the next life. [4]



They're living by the guidance of their Lord, and they're the ones who will be successful. [5]

Disbelief and Hypocrisy

Now as for those who (willfully) cover over (their inner awareness of Allah), it doesn't matter if you warn them or not, for they're not going to believe. [6]

Allah has sealed their hearts and ears and placed blinders over their eyes.

(On account of their ingratitude) they'll (be made to suffer) a severe punishment. [7]

Among people (are some) who say, "We believe in Allah and the Last Day," but they have no faith. [8]

They try to **DECEIVE**

Allah and those who believe, but they deceive no one but themselves – *and they don't even realize it!* [9]

There's a sickness in their hearts, so Allah adds to their sickness. A severe punishment will be theirs on account of their covering over (their innate awareness of the truth). [10]

THE DISEASE OR
SICKNESS IN THE
HEARTS OF THE
HYPOCRITES,
ACCORDING TO
THE EARLY
COMMENTATORS,
IS PERPETUAL
DOUBT

When they're told, "Don't cause turmoil in the world," they retort, "But we're only trying to make it better." [11]

Yet, it's a fact that they're the ones who are making the trouble - *without even realizing it!* [12]

When they're told, "Believe (in Allah), like the (rest of the) people believe," they sneer, "Faith is for fools!"

Yet, they're the fools – *and they just don't know it!* [13]

Hypocrites Think that They're Deceiving Allah

Background on verse 14: 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy of the Khazraj tribe was set to be appointed the king of Medina before the coming of Prophet Muhammad (p) to that city. Ibn Ubayy resented his loss of status after the Prophet arrived, and he made no secret of his associative dislike for Islam, though he pretended to follow Islam because it was on the upward trend. Once when he and some of his followers were about to meet some of Muhammad's (p) companions, he whispered to his friends, "Look how I put those fools off."

Then, when he greeted the companions (Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Ali), he lavished praise upon them, particularly upon Abu Bakr and 'Umar, two of Muhammad's (p) most trusted confidants. After they left, 'Abdullah told his friends, "Do you see how I was acting? Whenever you see them do the same, and praise them much." When Abu Bakr told the Prophet how Ibn Ubayy was acting, the Prophet informed him that Ibn Ubayy had been mocking them, and this verse was revealed in comment. (*Asbab ul-Nuzul*)

When they meet the believers they affirm, "*We believe, too,*" but when they're alone with their devilish (friends), they take back what they said by saying, "*We're really with you. We were only mocking them.*" [14]

Allah will *throw* their mocking back at them by letting them fall deeper into error until they're left wandering around, completely lost. [15]

They're the ones who've traded guidance for mistakes, and they gained nothing from the deal. They've lost all sense of direction! [16]



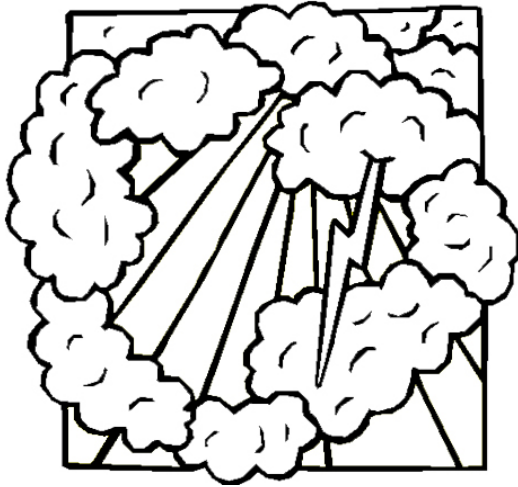
Some people lie and deceive because they think they are being clever or gaining an advantage. Why does this actually hurt them in the long run more than they realize?

The Parable of the Storm

Their example is like the man (Prophet Muhammad) who lit (the) torch (of guidance in the darkness of ignorance).

When it illuminated (the path of right from wrong) of (both) he (and his people),

Allah took away (the) light (from the hypocrites among them) and left them (lost) in utter darkness, unable to see at all!
[17] They're deaf, dumb and blind and won't return to the path! [18]



(Another example) is of a storm cloud, seething with the darkness (of doubt), thunderous (realizations calling to faith), and the lightning (call of sudden guidance). No matter how much (the hypocrites) cover their ears from the booming thunderclaps (of irresistible Divine revelation) - *fearing for their very lives* - it doesn't help them, for Allah surrounds those who cover over (the light of faith within their hearts)! [19]

When a lightning bolt (of insight or guidance) flashes (deeply in their hearts), it all but blinds them, though they can at least grope forward (in its afterglow, and understand some of Allah's truth).

However, when the darkness returns, (due to their doubting and arrogance,) they hesitate (in uncertainty).

If Allah had wanted, He could have taken away their hearing and their sight, for Allah has power over all things. [20]

Why are We Here?

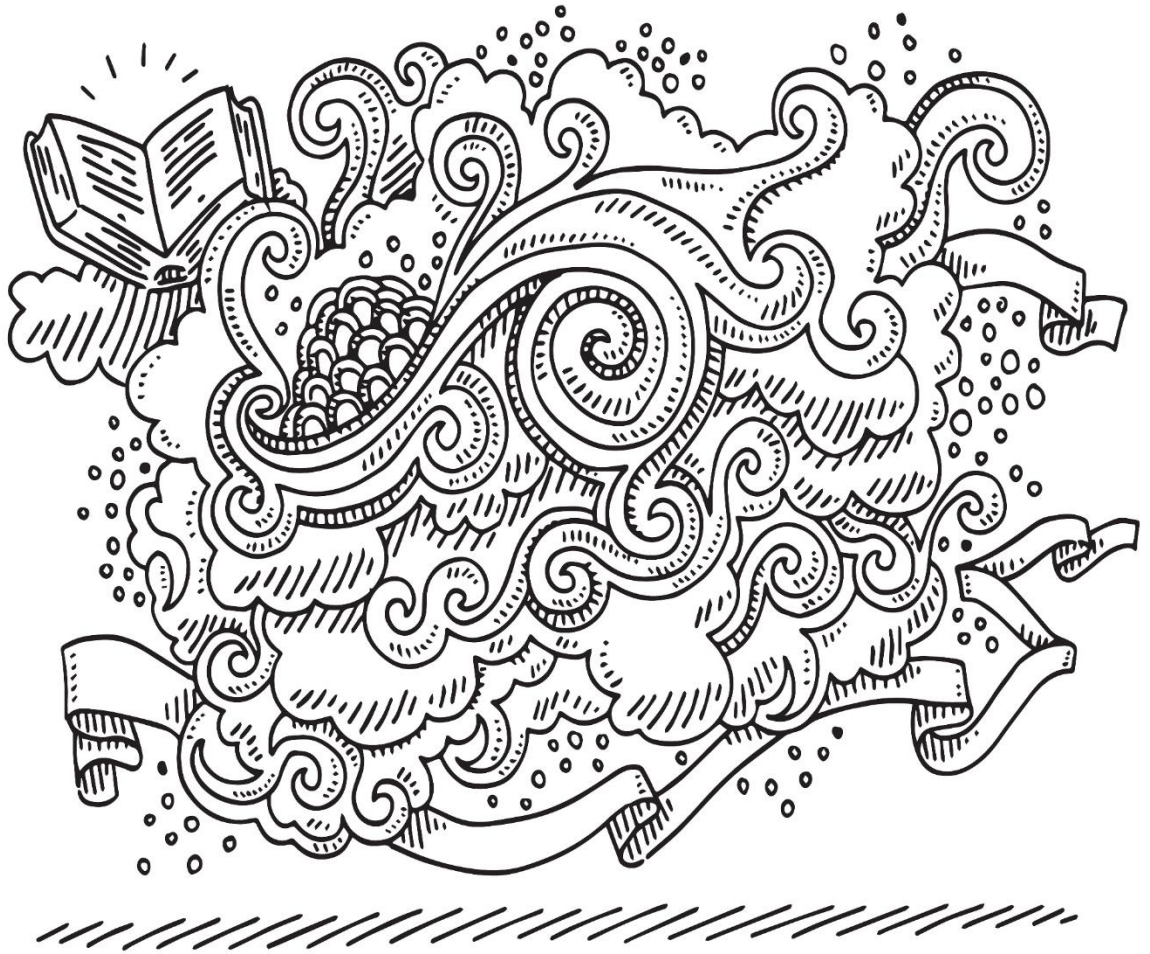
Background on verses 22-25: After explaining the differences between faith, hypocrisy and outright rejection of Allah, the Qur'an next gives us a summary of the main themes to be found throughout the rest of the book. The One God is the Creator and Sustainer of our reality. He chose a Messenger, and that Messenger is not some mere charlatan. There is an afterlife for the soul, and our beliefs and actions will determine what that continued existence will mean for us.

○ people!

Serve your Lord
Who created you
and those who came
before you so you
can become mindful
(of your duty
towards Him). [21]

(He's) the One Who made the earth as your couch and the sky as your canopy.

He sends down *water* from the sky and with it causes many types of plants to grow for your survival. So don't make rivals with Allah, especially when you know better. [22]



(ANOTHER EXAMPLE) IS OF A
STORM CLOUD, SEETHING
WITH THE DARKNESS (OF
DOUBT), THUNDEROUS
(REALIZATIONS CALLING TO
FAITH), AND THE LIGHTNING
(CALL OF SUDDEN GUIDANCE)

If you have any doubts about (the authenticity) of what We're revealing to Our servant (Muhammad), then compose a chapter similar to this. Then call upon your witnesses - *besides Allah* - if you're so certain (of your allegations that he made it all up himself.) [23]

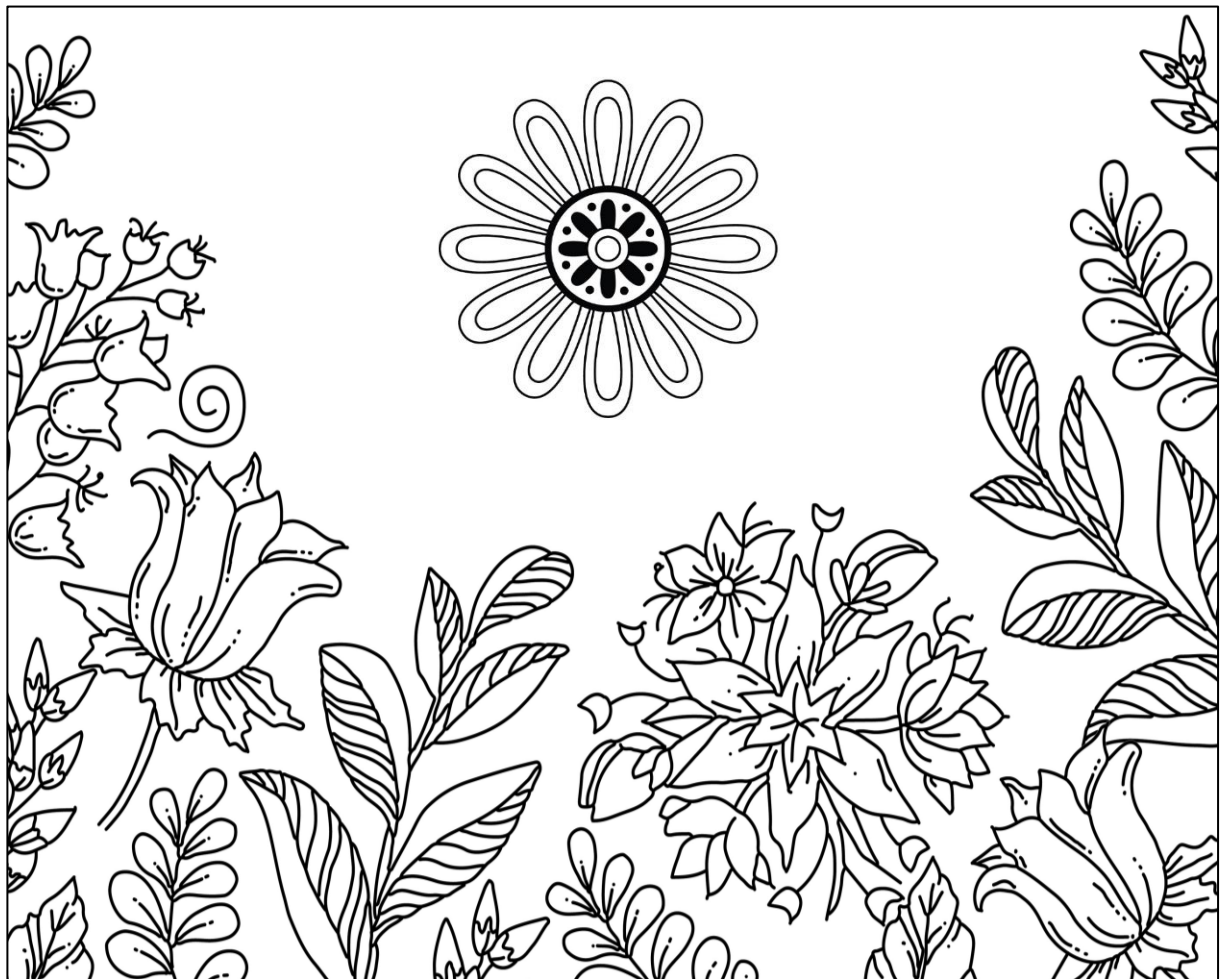
If in fact you find it impossible (to duplicate this message in all aspects), *and it is impossible*, then beware of the Fire whose fuel is people and stone - (a blaze) that's been prepared for those who covered (their innate ability to believe in Allah). [24]

But announce to those who believe and do what's morally right the good news that they shall have...

Gardens beneath which Rivers flow.

Every time they're furnished with fruit from within, they'll exclaim, "*These look just like what we had before (in our earthly lives).*"

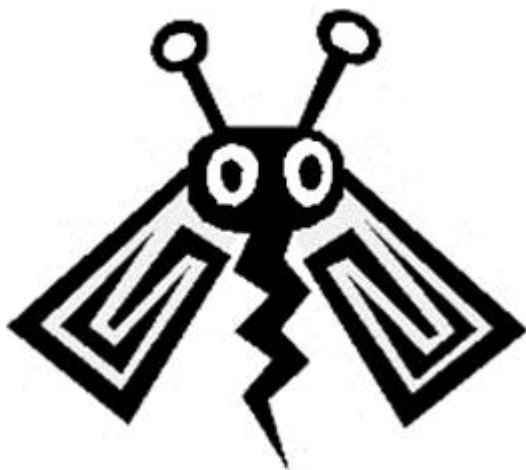
(That's because) they'll be given (their reward) in the form of what was familiar to them. What's more, they'll be joined by (wholesome) mates (with whom) to abide for all time. [25]



How does the Lord Use Parables?

Background on verses 26-27: Some Jews of Medina ridiculed the Qur'an because it mentioned things as insignificant as insects in its parables. For example, idols are said to be helpless because they can't protect themselves from a fly, as in 22:73, and spider webs are an example of how weak an argument can be, as in 29:41. Some Jews said, "This doesn't seem like a revelation from Allah." Thus, verses 26-27 were revealed in response. (*Asbab ul-Nuzul*)

Allah won't hesitate to illustrate a point with something as small as a gnat or anything bigger (or smaller) than that.



Those who believe know that (all scriptural lessons are) the truth from their Lord, while those who cover (their capacity to believe ridicule such things) by asking, "What can Allah possibly mean by these examples?"

By them He allows many to fall further into error, and by them He allows many others to be guided.



Reflection...

The Purpose of Stories

Jalaluddin Rumi (d. 1273), wrote:
"Children tell many stories, but in their tales are many mysteries and lessons. Though they may say many seemingly ridiculous things, keep looking in those ruined places for treasures." (*Mathnawi*) The commentator, ar-Rabi' ibn Anas, said that Allah used the word for gnat as a metaphor for the truth of worldly life. In his words, "A gnat is born, sucks blood, gets fat and then dies and crumbles to dust." (*Ibn Kathir*)

However, He doesn't allow anyone to be confused by them except for those who've gone beyond the bounds (of morality first).
[26]

They're the ones who **broke** their (natural) bond with Allah after it had been made **STRONG**, and they separated (the family ties) that He's ordered to be joined together, (by rejecting believing relatives). They behave badly in the world, so in the end they'll be the losers. [27]

How can you cover up (your own natural ability to have faith) in Allah, seeing how He gave you life (when you had none)?

Then He's going to take back your life and bring you to life once more, and then you're going to go back to Him. [28]

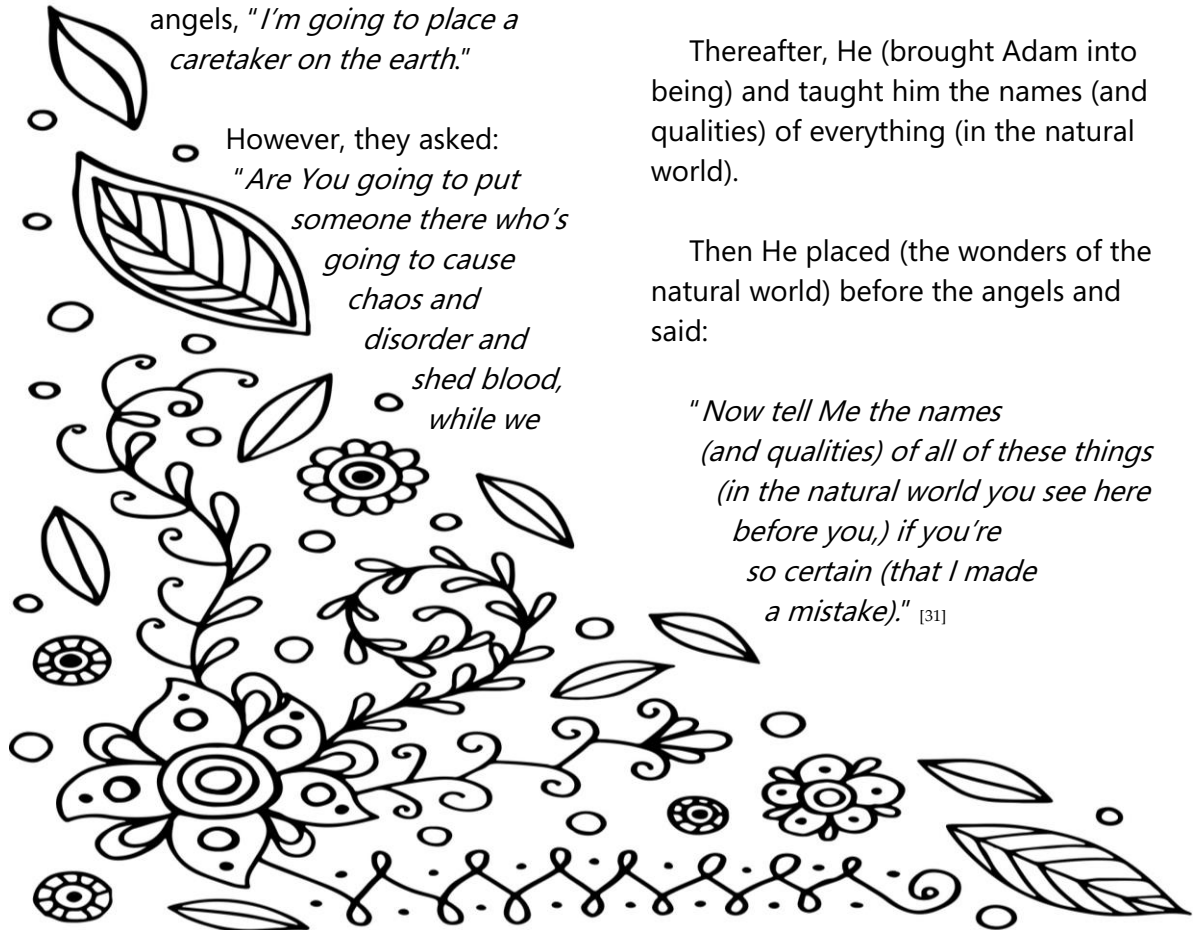
He's the One Who created everything that's on the earth for your benefit. Then He turned towards (the design of) the heavens, crafting it into seven (layers). (He was able to do that) for He knows about all things. [29]

On Adam's Creation

Background on verse 30: The Qur'an now begins the tale of humanity literally at its beginning, with the first human beings of our species – Adam and Hawwa (Eve). Who were they, and where did the fall occur? Readers of the Hebrew Bible will be familiar with this tale, but there are some important differences that have theological implications that will set Islam apart from the teachings of both Judaism and Christianity.

And so it was that your Lord said to the angels, *"I'm going to place a caretaker on the earth."*

However, they asked:
"Are You going to put someone there who's going to cause chaos and disorder and shed blood, while we



He's the One
Who created
everything that's
on the earth for
your benefit

magnify Your praise and extol Your Holiness?"

(Allah answered them), saying, *"I know what you don't know."* [30]

Thereafter, He (brought Adam into being) and taught him the names (and qualities) of everything (in the natural world).

Then He placed (the wonders of the natural world) before the angels and said:

"Now tell Me the names (and qualities) of all of these things (in the natural world you see here before you,) if you're so certain (that I made a mistake)." [31]

"All glory belongs to You!" they exclaimed. "We know nothing about any of this, other than what You've already taught us, for You are the Knowledgeable and the Wise." [32]

Then He said to Adam, *"Tell them the names (and qualities of these things)."*

After he had finished doing so, (Allah) said to (the angels), *"Didn't I tell you that I know what's beyond perception within the heavens and the earth and that I know what you do openly and in secret?"* [33]

The Origin of the Great Rift

So then We gave an order to the angels, saying *"Bow down (in respect) to Adam."*

Then they all bowed down; however, (a jinn named) Iblis (who was there watching) didn't bow down (with the rest). He refused in his arrogant pride and chose to suppress (his awareness of the truth). [34]

We said to Adam, *"Both you and your mate may live in this garden and eat freely of its bounty to your fill, but don't go near this one tree, for it will lead you into corruption."* [35]

However, they (were tempted) by Shaytan and banished (from the home) where they had been living.

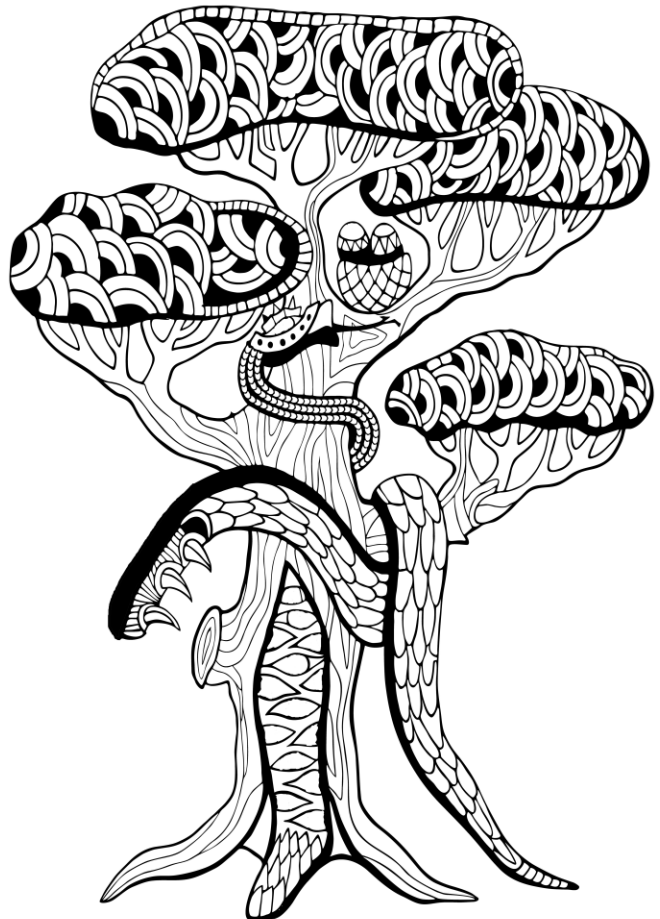
So then We ordered, *"Go down from (this Garden), and live*

in conflict with each other! Inhabit the expanse of the earth, and fend for yourselves for a while!" [36]

Then Adam learned words of
repentance

from his Lord, and He turned towards him in forgiveness, for He's the Acceptor of Repentance, the Merciful. [37]

So We (softened Our attitude towards Adam) and said, *"Go down from here altogether, but if any guidance ever comes to you from Me, whoever follows My guidance will have nothing to fear nor regret."* [38]



“However, those who conceal and deny Our proofs, they shall be companions of the Fire, and that’s where they’re going to stay!” [39]

Remembering Allah’s Covenant with the Jews

Background on verse 40: After presenting a brief summary of the significance of Adam and Hawwa and their fall, the Qur’an now turns our attention to the crucial issues raised when the storied history of the Children of Israel, later known as the Jewish people, is compared with their stated obligations to Allah.

Rather than offering a mere retelling of the many accounts contained in the Old Testament, however, the Qur’an addresses Jews personally and directly and asks them to take an honest look at their relationship to Allah through the lens of critical self-analysis. This issue is addressed early on in the arranged order of Qur’anic chapters in order to give the reader a sense of the ultimate results of Allah’s favor that was bestowed upon a past nation.

This is a logical step to take as a platform for explaining why the Jewish covenant was superseded first by Jesus and then by Muhammad. ^(p) The Qur’an takes the position that a significant number of Jews in previous ages failed to live up to their end of the covenant that Allah had established with them at Mount Sinai.

Therefore, the Qur’an is calling on Jews to rededicate themselves to Allah by purifying their faith of the pagan customs and practices that crept into their religion over the centuries, to reflect upon the strengths and weaknesses of the past, and further to perfect their faith by joining the movement brought by Muhammad, ^(p) Allah’s last prophet to the world.

Children of Israel! Remember the favor I bestowed upon you. Fulfill your

COVENANT

with Me, even as I’ve fulfilled My covenant with you, and fear no one but Me. [40]

Background on verse 41: Some Jews of Medina used to write small verses of the Torah on leather scraps and then sell them to the illiterate Arabs as something akin to good luck charms. (*Asbab ul-Nuzul*) Jeremiah 8:8 in the Old Testament levels a similar charge against certain priests in former times.

Believe in what I’m revealing, which confirms the teachings with you now, and don’t be the first to reject it, nor sell My (revealed) verses (to other people as good luck charms) for a petty gain. *Be mindful of Me!* [41]



Don’t confuse the truth with falsehood, nor conceal the truth knowingly. [42] Be constant in prayer, practice regular charity and bow down to Me, along with those (Muslims) who are already bowing down (in worship). [43]

Don’t be Hypocrites

Background on verse 44: A Jewish man in Medina gave permission to his relatives to consider Muhammad ^(p) to be a prophet, but he himself refused to accept Muhammad’s ^(p) teachings. This verse was revealed in comment. (*Asbab ul-Nuzul*)

Will you ask other people to be righteous, but then forget your own selves? You study the scriptures, so why won’t you understand? [44]

Strengthen yourselves through perseverance and prayer, though it isn't easy, save for the truly humble [45] - those who realize that they're going to meet their Lord and that they will return to Him. [46]

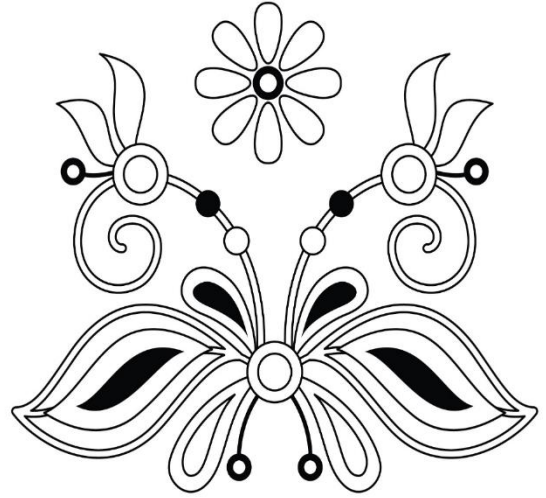
Children of Israel! Remember the blessings that I bestowed upon you and how I favored you above all others in the world, [47] so beware of a day when no soul will be able to help another, when no intercession will be accepted, nor any payment (offered) will sway, nor any help come. [48]

Allah Delivered the Children of Israel

Background on verses 49-54: Musa was the greatest prophet among the Children of Israel. He is thus given a prominent role all throughout the Qur'an as the focal point upon which Jews may compare what they have now with the pure religion he taught. The varied forms of Judaism extant in the world today are not always in conformity with the original teachings of Prophet Musa (Moses), and many of the regulations of Judaism originated not as a blessing from Allah, but as a means of reprimand to their forbears who often disobeyed Musa and the other prophets.

'Esa (Jesus) sought to free the Jewish community from the weight of an oppressive state of legalism and unnecessary regulation, but he was rebuffed. Even still, Allah loves those Jews who would be righteous, and He calls upon them in this book to remember all of His favors and accept His invitation to renew their faith through His last revelation, which confirms what they have from their ancestors.

Remember that We delivered you from Pharaoh's people, who enslaved you and tormented you, killing your sons while letting your women live.



Strengthen
yourselves
through
perseverance
and prayer,
though it
isn't easy,
save for the
truly humble



That was an enormous test from your Lord! [49] Then remember that We parted the sea and rescued you, while drowning Pharaoh's people as you stood there watching! [50]

Yet, also recall that while We communed with Musa for forty nights, you took (to worshipping the likeness of) a calf and committed a terrible crime. [51] Even after that We forgave you so you could learn to be truly thankful. [52]

Recall that We gave Musa the (revealed) scripture and the *standard* (to judge between right and wrong), so you could be guided. [53]

Remember when Musa (returned to) his people (carrying that revealed message) and declared, "*My people! You've wronged yourselves by taking this calf (as a god). Repent to your Lord, and kill (within) yourselves (all your lowly desires). That's the best thing you can do in the sight of your Lord.*"

And so (Allah) turned to you (in forgiveness), for He's the Acceptor of Repentance, the Merciful. [54]

Allah was Patient with Israel

Remember the time when you said, "*Hey, Musa! We're never going to believe in you until we see Allah face to face!*"

For that you were struck down with a thunderous boom, even as you stood there watching! [55] Yet, even after that We revived you out of your daze so you could have (another chance) to be grateful. [56]

Let's **Review** what we've read so far from verses 1-57. Define the meaning or write a thought about the following words and individuals.

Hawwa:

Hypocrites:

Adam:

Shaytan:

Musa:

Children of Israel:

We caused the clouds to spread shade over you and sent manna and quails down upon you, (saying), "*Eat of the wholesome things that We've provided for you.*"

We were never harmed (when they rebelled); rather, they only harmed themselves. [57]

An Example of Disobedience

Background on verses 58-59: It is thought that the episode mentioned below refers to an incident in which the Israelites entered into a town named Shattim, just east of the Jordan River. Although they were to be the paragons of a godly-oriented people, they failed to be virtuous standard-bearers of Allah's truth on this occasion.

Instead, they engaged in idolatry, immorality and sinfulness. See Numbers 25:1-2 and 8-9. Reference to this incident is also made in the Qur'an at 7:161-162. Prophet Muhammad narrated that instead of preaching penitence (*hittatun*), the Hebrews said to the locals, "*Hintatun*," which means, "A grain in a husk." Thus, they were mocking Allah's orders. (*Bukhari*) Also see Jeremiah 9:8-9.



Remember (the time when you were approaching a new land) and We issued the following command:

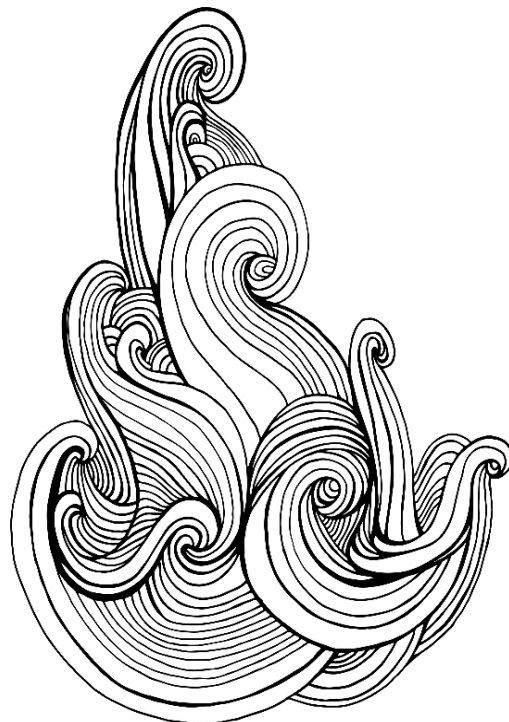
"Enter this town, and eat freely of the abundance you find there, but pass through its gates humbly and preach penitence and forgiveness. (If you act in a noble way,) then We will forgive you your sins and increase the (fortunes) of those who are good." [58]

Nonetheless, dishonest people altered the order they received (and behaved poorly towards the inhabitants of the town), and so We sent down upon the criminals a sky-borne plague, for they persisted (in doing wrong). [59]

Trials in the Desert

Background on verses 60-61: Allah provided abundant help to the Children of Israel after they escaped slavery in Egypt. However, the Children of Israel began to grumble against Moses on account of the harsh, nomadic lifestyle that was thrust upon them. (See Numbers 11:5-6.) In Egypt they lived in houses and had a settled, agrarian lifestyle, albeit with harsh labor quotas and other miseries. The price of freedom was hardship, but they failed to realize this and perhaps still suffered from a form of mental slavery to their old lifestyle.

Remember the time when Musa searched for water for his people. We told him, "*Tap the rock with your staff.*"



Right away twelve bubbling springs gushed forth, and every clan found its own place. So eat and drink from the resources that Allah provides, and don't cause corruption in the world. [60]

Yet, also recall the time when you complained, *"Hey, Musa! We're tired of eating the same thing (day after day), so call upon your Lord for us to bring us the harvest of the earth: herbs, cucumbers, garlic, lentils and onions."*

"What?" (Musa) cried out. *"Would you trade (the hardship that comes with freedom, and) that's better, for (the orderliness of slavery, which made you complacent, and) that's of lower value?"*

"Go back to some (place like) Egypt, and then you'll get what you're asking for!"

(As a punishment for their ungratefulness,) they were stricken with humiliation and misery.

Background on verse 61: Some from among the Israelites murdered their prophets on a number of occasions as recorded in the Bible in II Chronicles 24:21 and Mark 6:17-29. In Matthew 23:29-31, 37, 'Esa (Jesus), himself, accuses his people of murdering the prophets of old. (Also see I Thessalonians 2:15 where Paul makes the same charge.)

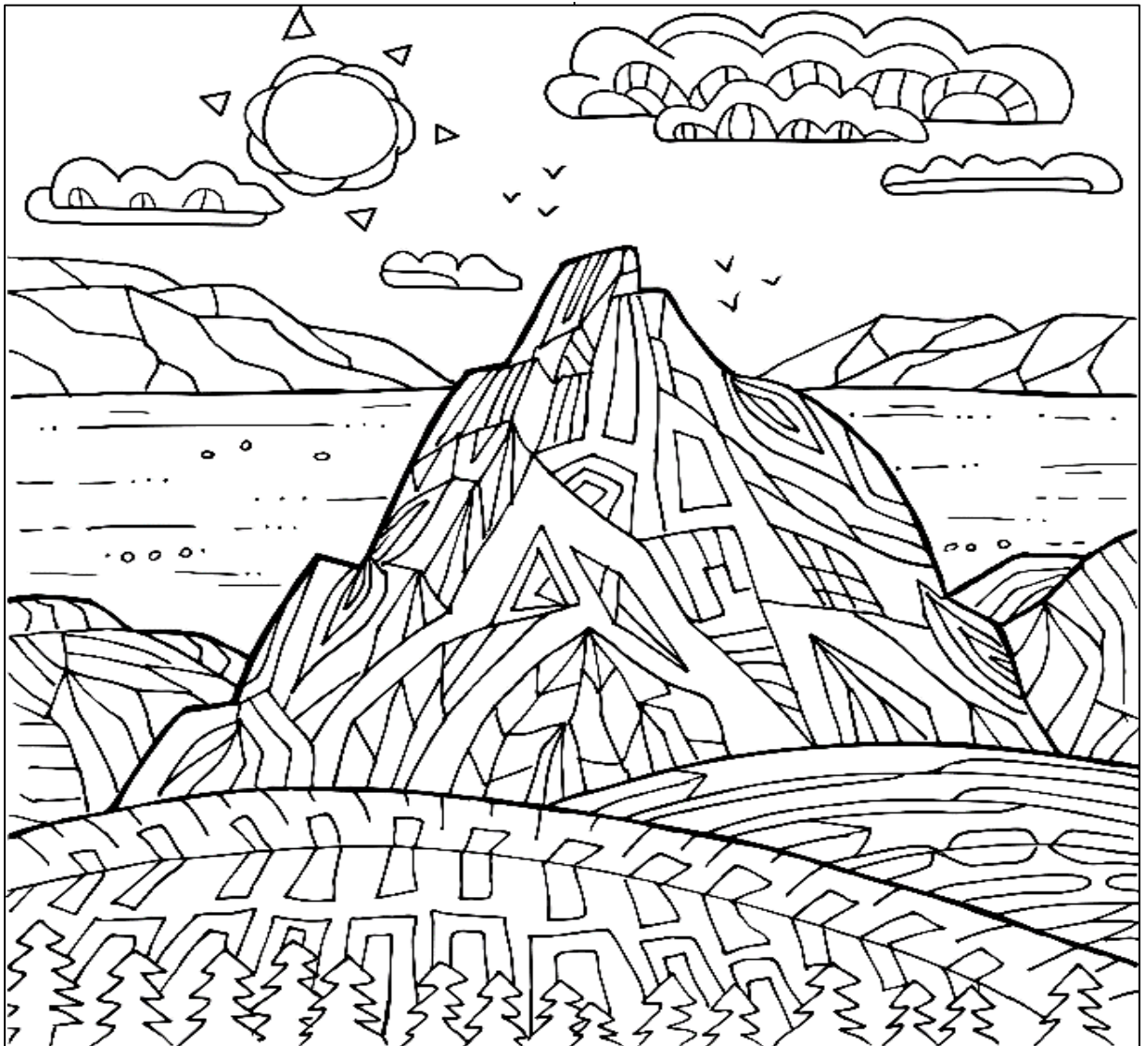
They brought the wrath of Allah down upon themselves because they rejected His signs and killed His messengers unjustly – and that's because they were a rebellious and defiant (people). [61]

Allah is the Lord of All Religions

Background on verse 62: This verse was revealed, in particular, to answer the concern of Salman Al Farsi. He was a Persian who was raised as a Zoroastrian, but who then spent a number of years as a Christian, before finally accepting Islam. He asked the Prophet about the fate of all those righteous Christians with whom he lived and studied before he entered

into the Prophet's fold. The Prophet casually remarked that those people were going to be in Hellfire, (probably on the assumption that anyone less than a pure monotheist was in trouble with Allah.) Salman describes his inner reaction to the Prophet's words thusly, "The entire earth became gloomy to me." But then this verse was revealed from Allah to correct the Prophet's incorrect assumption. (*Asbab ul-Nuzul*) Sabians are an ancient sect of people in Iraq who mix primitive Christianity and some traditional elements in their religion.

Those who believe (in Islam) and those who are Jewish, Christian or Sabian – anyone who has faith in Allah and the Last Day and who does what's morally right – their reward will be with their Lord, and they'll have neither fear nor regret. [62]



The People Receive the Law

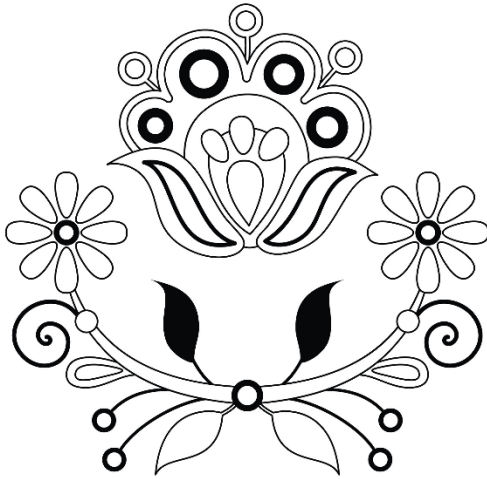
(Children of Israel), remember when We established a covenant with you at the towering heights of Mount Tūr: *"Hold firmly to what We've given to you, and remember what it contains so you can be mindful (of Allah)."* [63]

However, you later turned your backs on it! If it wasn't for Allah's favor and mercy extended towards you, you would've surely been lost. [64]

And so it was that you knew some (of your people) were breaking the Sabbath rules, (yet, you did nothing). So We said to them:

"Be (like) despised apes (by copying all the idolaters you encounter)." [65]

We made an example of them in their own time, and for all times to come - a lesson for all those who are mindful (of Allah). [66]



The Story of the Spotless Cow

Remember when Musa said to his people, *"Allah has commanded that you sacrifice a cow."*

They replied, *"Surely, you're not serious?"*

(Musa) answered them, saying, *"Allah forbid (that I would speak) so frivolously."* [67]

So they demanded, *"Call upon your Lord on our behalf to specify exactly what kind of cow."*

Then Musa replied, *"Neither too old nor too young, He says, but somewhere in between. Now do as you're told."* [68]

"Call upon your Lord on our behalf again," they implored, *"to tell us what color it should be."*

So Musa answered, *"A light brown cow, rich in tone and pleasant (to the eye)."* [69]

"Call upon your Lord on our behalf," they pleaded (once more), *"to point out its*

variety, for all cows look the same to us. If Allah wills, then we'll be rightly guided." [70]

"He says an unyoked cow," (Musa replied,) *"neither worn out from plowing nor watering the fields. It should be in good condition without any mark or blemish."*

Then they answered, *"Ah! So now you've given us a full description,"* but even still they offered the sacrifice only

grudgingly. [71]

The Torah on Unresolved Murder

Background on verses 72-74: Ibn 'Abbas (d. 687) explained the details of the incident enumerated in these verses as follows: In one of the encampments of the Children of Israel, there was a man who had no sons but many nephews. They conspired to kill him for his wealth and then dumped the body in front of another encampment. Those people discovered the body and swore to Musa that they did not kill him. Afterwards, Musa gathered the various people, and they tried to point out a single culprit to blame, but then they took to division and bickering. Innocent people might have been killed but for the intervention of Divine guidance, which provided a method, however imperfect, of getting people to accept that some crimes will remain unsolved in this life.

Remember the time when (some of) you murdered a man and then took to accusing each other (individually)? Allah would soon bring to light what you had concealed. [72]

We said, *"Apply some of (the sacrificed cow) to (the dead body),"* and in this way (the truth came out) and Allah saved lives from being taken (unjustly).

(He thus) shows you His signs so you can understand. [73] Yet, (in spite of this guidance), your hearts only hardened like rock, even harder!

Though indeed among rocks are some from which rivers (of repentance) may flow, others which crack under pressure and let (such) waters (of faith) flow, as well as others that fall down for fear of Allah, and Allah is not unaware of what you're doing. [74]

Dealing with Duplicity

Background on verse 75: When Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) would have dialogues with Jewish rabbis, some of them would misquote their Torah to hide things that pointed to Muhammad's (ﷺ) ministry as valid and worthy of consideration. Jewish converts to Islam would point out these tricks to the Muslims. This verse was revealed in response. (*Asbab ul-Nuzul*)

(Muhammad,) how can you hope to convince (the Jews of Medina) to believe in you? Some of them, after hearing and understanding the words of Allah, *changed them on purpose!* [75]

Background on verse 76: For a time the rabbis and leaders of the three Jewish tribes in Medina made a pact among themselves not to reveal their prophecies and predictions about their long awaited messenger from Allah, fearing that the Muslims would see signs in them that confirmed Muhammad's (ﷺ) prophethood. (See Song of Solomon 5:10-16 and Deuteronomy 18:15-22 among others, for example.) When asked for quotes, they would misread from their Torah and other books. On one occasion they hid from the Prophet (ﷺ) a verse in their Torah about stoning adulterers. This passage refers to that situation. (*Asbab ul-Nuzul*)

When they meet the believers they affirm, "*We also believe (in Allah)!*"

Though when they're alone among themselves they say, "*We shouldn't let them know what Allah revealed to us (in our scriptures), for they'll only have better arguments to use against us by quoting the words of your Lord.*" Don't you see (their game)? [76]

Don't they know that Allah is aware of what they hide and of what they bring out in the open? [77]



The Ignorance of the Masses

Background on verse 78: Apparently, some Jewish rabbis of Medina had certain religious writings in which their long awaited prophet was described - including a description of what he looked like. When they found that Muhammad (ﷺ) resembled this description, it is said that they altered the descriptions in their writings to make it seem as if he did not fit the physical profile. A Jewish rabbi and convert to Islam, 'Abdullah ibn Salam, confirmed that this took place, and when this action of the Jewish scholars was publicly announced, this verse was revealed in response. (*Asbab ul-Nuzul*)

Now among (the Children of Israel) there are the uneducated (masses) who know nothing of (their) scripture and who believe only in what they want to believe. They follow nothing more than their own fickle whims! [78]

Background on verse 79: Ibn 'Abbas (d. 687) said that before the coming of Islam some Jews of Medina used to write small passages of the Torah on leather scraps and sell them to the unschooled Arabs, claiming they were holy charms to be used for good luck. That is what this verse is referencing. (*Asbab ul-Nuzul*) Jeremiah 8:8 in the Old Testament levels a similar charge against certain priests in former times.

So *ruin* to those who write (false) scriptures with their own hands (to sell as good luck charms) and say, "*Here, this is from Allah,*" to make a miserable profit with it. Ruin to them for what their hands fake, and ruin to them for (the gains) they make! [79]

False Claims of Leniency

Background on verses 80-82: The Jews of Medina had a belief that the world would last no more than 7,000 years and that any Jewish people who go to Hellfire will be punished for seven days only, with each day equaling a thousand years. After that the punishment would be over. This verse was revealed to answer this notion. (*Asbab ul-Nuzul*)

They claim, "*Well, our punishment in the Fire will only be temporary.*"

So ask (them), "*Did Allah promise you that? If He did, then He won't go back on His word, or are you saying something about Allah that you're not sure of?*" [80]

Not so! Whoever earns the wages of sin, and is enveloped in evil, will be among the companions of the Fire for all time, [81] while those who believe and do what's morally right will be with the companions of the Garden for all time. [82]



And Now Your Turn...

Muslims, Christians and all other religious groups have beliefs about right and wrong and what constitutes 'salvation.' Thinking about what you have read up to this point, how can the Qu'ranic vision of salvation be summarized?

The Sworn Duties of the Children of Israel

Remember the time when We took an agreement from the Children of Israel, saying:

"Don't serve anything in place of Allah. Honor your parents and relatives. Be kind to orphans and to the poor. Speak in wholesome language to others, and lastly, establish regular prayer and practice regular charity."

However, later on you turned your backs (on these rules), all of you, save for a few, and you backslide even now! [83]

The Sin of Infighting

Background on verse 84: Prior to the coming of Islam to Medina, the three Jewish tribes of Medina would make alliances with one or both of the local Arab tribes of Auws and Khazraj. When the two belligerent tribes would fight, it often happened that Jews would be pitted against other Jews, and they would kidnap each other. When the fighting would subside, the Jewish leaders would ransom their fellow Jews amongst themselves, citing scripture as a justification. (*Asbab ul-Nuzul*) At the time of this revelation, the Jewish tribe of Banu Qaynuqa suffered from this the most.

Remember that We took another agreement from you, saying, *"You must not kill or banish each other."*

You made a promise to this and can attest to your oath, [84] and yet you're the ones who still kill and banish each other and take sides against each other shamefully in bitter rivalry.

Yet, when some (of your rivals) are brought to you in chains, you ransom them, though it was forbidden for you to drive them off in the first place!

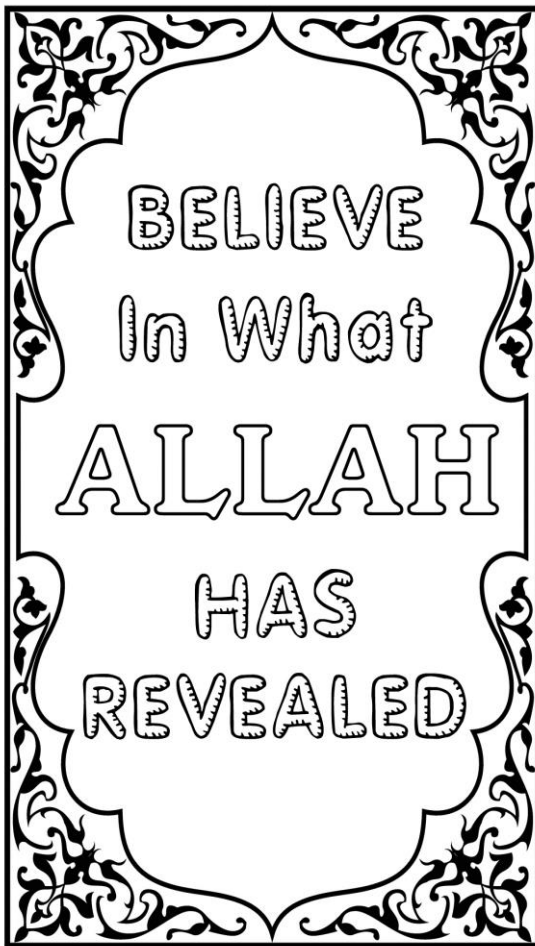
DON'T
SERVE
ANYTHING
IN PLACE
OF ALLAH...

Do you believe in only one part of (your) scripture and then ignore the rest? What other fate can there be for people who behave like this, save for utter disgrace in this life?

On the Day of Judgment, however, there's going to be an even steeper price to pay, for Allah is not unaware of what you've been doing. [85]

These are the kinds (of people) who buy the life of this world at the cost of the next. Their punishment won't be reduced, nor will they find anyone to help. [86]

We gave scripture to Musa and raised up many messengers after him, and We gave clear evidence to 'Esa (Jesus), the Son of Maryam, and strengthened him with the Holy Spirit, (Angel Jibra'il or Gabriel).



Now do you (Children of Israel) become arrogant whenever a messenger comes to you with something that you don't want to hear? You called some impostors, and others you killed! [87]

The Children of Israel Reject the Last Prophet

Background on verses 88-89: Prior to Muhammad's (ﷺ) arrival in Medina, the Jews of Khaybar, a settlement some days travel to the north of Medina, had a war with the Arab tribe of Ghatafan. They suffered a defeat in the first battle but then invoked Allah, saying, "O Allah, we beg in the name of the unlettered prophet that You've promised us to grant us victory over them." On their next engagement they inflicted a great defeat upon their enemies. After Muhammad (ﷺ) came to Medina and

began preaching, the bulk of Arabia's Jews denied him, claiming that they already had all truth from Allah. This passage was revealed as a way to remind the Jews of what they had prayed for and now rejected. (*Asbab ul-Nuzul*)

Among the (Jews of Medina) are some who say, "Our hearts are the wrappers (that contain all the knowledge of Allah)."

Not so! Allah's curse is upon them because they rejected Him, and they only have a tiny remnant of faith. [88]

When a book from Allah does happen to come to them, one that confirms what they already have in their possession, and although they've long prayed for success against those who rejected (faith) and although they recognize (the new book's connection with their own), *even still they reject it!*

The very curse of Allah is upon those who cover (the light of faith within their hearts)! [89]

Background on verses 90: Some Jews of Medina were skeptical of Muhammad's (ﷺ) claims in part because he was not Jewish. In their eyes, all prophets must be of their ethnic group. This was in keeping with their belief that they were the chosen people of God. The Qur'an's contention is that whatever blessings God gave them, they squandered, so Allah's favor went somewhere else!

They sold their souls for a miserable price by rejecting - *out of petty jealousy* - what Allah revealed, simply because Allah

would bestow His **GRACE** (equally) upon His servants, (regardless of race,) as He wills, and so they've earned wrath upon

wrath. There's a humiliating punishment awaiting those who suppress (their awareness of the truth). [90]

When they're told, "*Believe in what Allah has revealed,*" they say, "*We only believe in what He revealed to us (before).*"

So then they're *rejecting* all other revelation, even if it's the truth and confirms (the prophecies) they already have! So (ask them):

"If you really believe in (Allah's revelations), then why did you murder the prophets of Allah in the past? [91] Musa came to you with proof; yet, you worshipped a calf, and even after that you continued to do wrong." [92]

Remember when We took your covenant as the towering heights of Mount Tūr loomed over you.

(We had said,) "*Hold firmly to what We've given to you, and listen to it.*"

However, (by their actions they showed that) they (might as well have) answered, "*We hear and we disobey.*"

Therefore, they were (later) forced to imbibe (a drink made from the shavings of the melted) calf's (dust as a form of punishment), precisely because they covered up (that natural capacity to have faith in Allah).

Say (to them), "*The motivations of your faith are terrible, if you even have any faith!*" [93]

Who are the Chosen Ones?

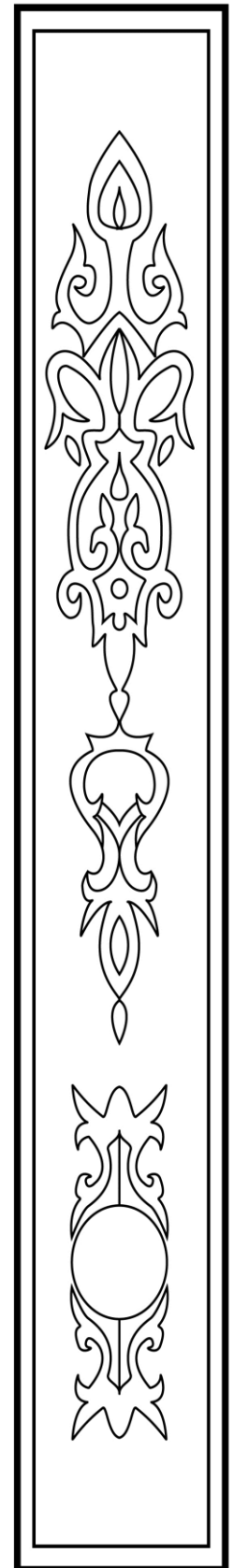
Ask (them), "*If the home of the next life is yours alone, to the exclusion of all others, then wish for death if you're so certain.*" [94]

Yet, they will never wish for death on account of the sins that their hands have sent on ahead of them (to be examined on Judgment Day). Allah knows all about every wrongdoer! [95]

In fact, you'll find that they crave life more than any other people - *even more than the idol-worshippers!*

Each one of them wants to live a thousand years.

Yet, longevity won't save them from their due punishment, for Allah is watching everything they do. [96]





Background on verses 97-99: Some Jews visited the Prophet in his mosque in Medina. A rabbi among them named ‘Abdullah ibn Suwriya asked him the name of the angel who was bringing him his revelations. When Muhammad (ﷺ) answered that it was Jibra-il (Gabriel), the rabbi said, “*Jibra-il?* He’s our enemy. He’s acted against us many times. The worst time was when he sent the news to our prophet that Nebuchadnezzar would destroy Jerusalem. We sent someone to kill Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon; yet, Jibra-il steered him away, saying, *‘If your God commanded him to destroy you, then He will not help you overcome him. Since no order (of Allah’s help) exists, why would you try to kill him?’* (Therefore, Muhammad,) (ﷺ) if you would have said Mika-il, the one who brings rain and mercy, then we would have followed you.” (*Baydawi*)

At about the same time, ‘Umar ibn al Khattab (d. 644) was having a conversation with some Jewish scholars in one of their small schools. (‘Umar sometimes went to visit them in their Torah school, so much so that on one occasion one of their scholars remarked to him, “‘Umar, you are the most beloved to us.” When he asked the reason why, the Jew replied, “Because you come and visit us.” ‘Umar then said, “I come and am amazed at how Allah’s scriptures compliment each other, and how the Torah and the Qur’an are in harmony.”) During this particular visit, a Jewish scholar named ‘Abdullah ibn Suwriya noticed Muhammad (ﷺ) passing by in the street and told ‘Umar that he should go out to see him.

Before leaving, ‘Umar asked the Jews why they didn’t follow Muhammad (ﷺ) and they replied that it was because Muhammad was friends with Jibra-il, who was their enemy. When ‘Umar went out to meet Muhammad (ﷺ) the Prophet (ﷺ) immediately recited these new verses (2:97-99) to him before he could tell him about his conversation with the Jews. ‘Umar was amazed and exclaimed that he was just coming to tell Muhammad (ﷺ) about something the Jews had said about the same issue. In later years, ‘Umar said of this incident, “Afterwards, I became rock-solid in my faith.” (*Asbab ul-Nuzul*)

Say (to them), “Whoever is an enemy to Jibra-il, (the angel) who delivers (revelation) to your heart by Allah’s will, reaffirming previous revelations, and who is the bearer of guidance and good will to the believers

Why do people make excuses to avoid being more obedient to the Creator of the Universe? What advice can you offer to set a person back on the path of strong faith?

[97] - further still, whoever is an enemy to Allah, His angels, His messengers and to both Jibra-il and Mika-il, then, indeed, Allah is an enemy to those who cover over (the awareness of the truth that exists within their hearts).” [98]

Background on verse 99: The Jewish Rabbi, 'Abdullah ibn Suwriya, said to Muhammad, ^(p) "You're not bringing anything to us that we don't already know about, and there have been no clear signs revealed about you that should cause us to follow you." Verse 99 here is an answer to that statement. (*Asbab ul-Nuzul*)

And so it is that We're revealing to you self-evident verses that no one can deny save for those who are corrupt. ^[99]

The Corruption of Babylon

Every time they made a pledge, *some of them pushed it aside*, for truly many of them had no faith. ^[100]

Even now, when Allah has sent them a messenger confirming their previous revelations, some of those who've received earlier revelation try to hide (their scriptures) behind their backs - *pretending not to know about them!* ^[101]

They follow the devilish **CHANTING** (of their ancestors), even though Sulayman (Solomon) strongly disapproved of it. Sulayman never rejected (Allah), for only the devilish suppress (their awareness of the truth).

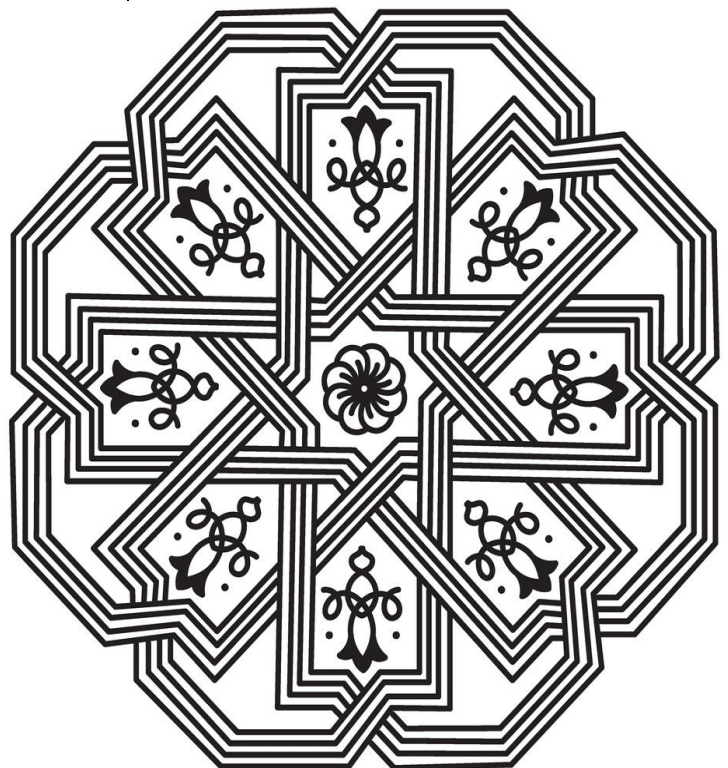
Such people teach others how to do magic and other similar practices, like those that were handed down to two Angelic Babylonian (notables named) Harut and Marut.

Yet, they never taught anyone anything without warning them first, "*We're only here to tempt you, (so don't believe in what we teach) nor renounce your faith.*"

So (the occultists) learned from them how to create marital problems between a man and his wife, but they could never succeed except by Allah's leave. What they learned only harmed themselves and brought them no gain.

They knew that those who practiced (magic) had no share in the next life. What they've sold themselves to is terrible. *If they only knew!* ^[102]

If they only would've believed (in the truth) and been mindful (of Allah), then they would've earned from Him a far greater reward. *If they had only realized that!* ^[103]



Learn from the Mistakes of the Past

Background on verse 104: Some Jews used to go to Muhammad and say, *ra'ina*, which was a word in both Arabic and Hebrew. In Arabic, it meant one thing, namely *pay attention to us* or *look after us*, while in the local colloquial language of the Jews it meant *listen, as you hear nothing*. The Jews used to say the word to Muhammad ^(p) and then snicker among themselves. A local companion named Sa'ad ibn 'Ubadah, who knew what they were doing, threatened some Jews one day for disrespecting the Prophet so. They offered in their defense that it was a word also used by the Arabs, albeit for a different intent. This verse was revealed to the Prophet in response. Thus, Muslims are asked not only *not* to use this word, because some of the Jews were using it to disrespect Muhammad, ^(p) but they're asked to say something more respectful all together. (*Asbab ul-Nuzul*)

○ you who believe! Don't address (the Prophet in a demanding way by saying), "*Pay attention to us.*"



Rather you should say, "*We're ready to listen,*" and then listen (to him), for those who suppress (their ability to attain to sincere faith) will suffer a painful punishment. ^[104]

ALLAH
IS THE
Lord OF
ENDLESS
BOUNTY

Background on verse 105: Whenever Muslims in Medina counseled their Jewish associates to believe in Muhammad, the Jews would reply that what Muhammad ^(p) brought was good, but they only wished he brought something better than that. This verse references this situation. (*Asbab ul-Nuzul*)

Those who cover up (their awareness of Allah's truth) among the Followers of Earlier Revelation and from among the idol-worshippers never want any good to come to you from your Lord, but Allah is the One

Who **DECIDES**

who receives His mercy - *and Allah is the Lord of endless bounty!* ^[105]



Let's **R**eview what we've read so far from verses 58-105. Answer the questions that follow:

How could you describe the conduct of the Children of Israel in ancient days regarding Allah's commandments?

What was the experience of Prophet Muhammad ^(p) when he was preaching to the Jews of Medina?

Why is it important for Jewish people to seriously consider the message of Prophet Muhammad? ^(p)

Verse 105 introduces the term *Ahl-al-Kitab*, which means Kindred People of the Book, which we render as Followers of Earlier Revelation (i.e. Jews, Christians and others). What relationship is the Qur'an trying to establish between the followers of the monotheistic faiths?

Allah Reveals What He Wills

Background on verse 106: This verse was revealed in response to the charge that some Meccans made that Muhammad would sometimes cancel out or supersede a Qur'anic injunction as the years progressed. They said, "Look at Muhammad, how he commands his companions to do something and then forbids it to them and commands the opposite. He says something today and takes it back tomorrow." (*Asbab ul-Nuzul*) As circumstances changed, and the believers became stronger in their faith, some previously revealed verses would be supplanted or supplemented by new ones with stronger regulations. The way in which alcohol was banned over several years through three successive revelations is an example of this. Another example is how some inheritance rules were adjusted over time.

We don't withdraw any of Our (previously revealed) verses or cancel them out altogether unless We replace it with a similar one or better. Allah has the power to do all things. ^[106]

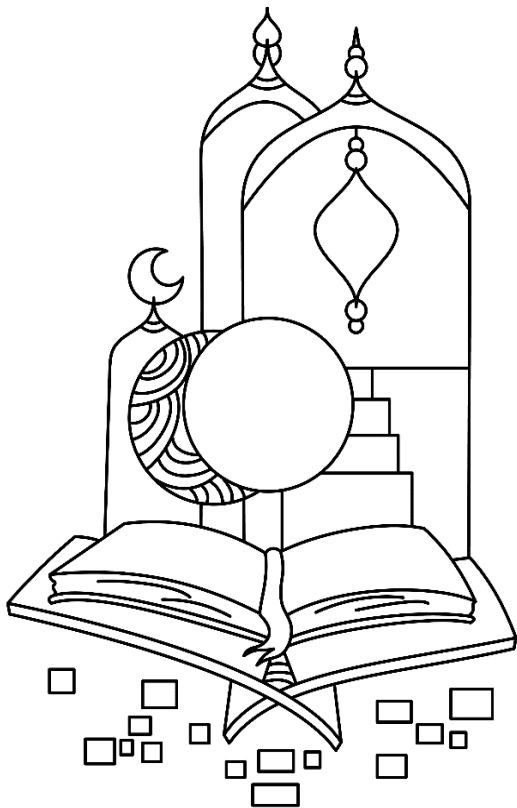
The Faithless continue to Doubt

Background on verses 107-108: Idol-worshippers and visiting Jews used to ask Muhammad ^(p) for all kinds of miracles to prove his prophethood. One day a crowd went to the Prophet, and one man asked that Muhammad ^(p) turn a hill into gold. Another man asked for a scripture to descend from the sky, while yet another man, named 'Abdullah ibn Abi Umayyah, asked for a tailor-made revelation addressed to him personally. Some new believers also were beginning to ask such petty questions, as well. This passage was revealed as an answer to that type of petty questioning. (*Asbab ul-Nuzul*)

Don't you know that Allah has control over the heavens and the earth and that no

one can save or protect you apart from Him? [107]

Would you (Muslims, who claim to) believe, question (and doubt) your Messenger (Muhammad), even as Musa was (doubted and excessively questioned) by his followers in the past? Whoever trades belief for **REJECTION** only strays from the middle path. [108]



Beware the Taunting of the Faithless

Background on verse 109: A Jewish leader and poet in Medina, Ka'b ibn al Ashraf, was composing poetry to slander Muhammad and his companions and also to incite the Quraysh of Mecca to continue their attacks on the Muslims. Muhammad (ﷺ) is counseled in this verse to be patient and calm in the face of the incitement. (*Asbab ul-Nuzul*)

Reflection...

What is Faith?

The Arabic term for faith or belief is *emaan*. Emaan comes from the root word *amuna*, which means three main things: to have faith, to confirm or trust in that faith, and finally, to feel safe. Thus, a believer is one who places his or her faith and trust in Allah with the result that he or she is no longer afraid for his or her life or death. This is similar to the Biblical idea contained in Hebrews 11:1 which states that, "Faith is the substance of all things hoped for." The related term to *emaan*, which is *amaanah*, is usually translated as secure trust. Someone once asked the Prophet, "What is faith?" He replied, "When doing good makes you feel pleased and when doing wrong makes you feel uneasy, then you're a believer." Then he asked the Prophet, "What's a sin?" He replied, "When something bothers your conscience, give it up." (*Ahmad*) What role does faith play in your own life?

Many of the Followers of Earlier Revelation will selfishly try to destroy your faith, even after they know the reality (that the Qur'an has valid arguments).

So pardon them, and pay them no mind until Allah fulfills His purpose, for Allah has power over all things. [109] Establish regular prayer, and give in charity, for the good (deeds) that you send ahead (of you for Judgment Day) are waiting with Allah, and Allah is watching everything you do. [110]

Testing Claims of Immunity

Background on verses 111-113: A group of Christians from Najran visited Medina to interview the Prophet ^(p) and learn more about him. Some Jewish rabbis came and debated religion with them in a public forum, and their argument became so heated that the rabbis and Christians each accused the other of not understanding religion and having no basis for their positions. This passage was revealed as a comment on this event. (*Asbab ul-Nuzul*)

Islam teaches that human beings achieve salvation, by the grace of Allah, through their faith in Him. Thereafter, a person has to live his or her life as a reflection of that faith by trying to follow Allah's moral way of life to the best of his or her ability. We are not saved by deeds, as some Christians have falsely charged in the past, but by faith. (Christianity also requires deeds *after* faith. See Hebrews 10:24 and James 2:14-16.)

If we sin or fall into error, we repent and ask for forgiveness from Allah. (See 40:7, among over a dozen similar verses.) He has promised to forgive the sincere seekers of His mercy. Prophet Muhammad once said, "When you die, all of you should have good expectations of Allah." (*Muslim*)

There (are some who) say, "*No one will go to Heaven except Christians and Jews,*" but that's only their wishful thinking.

Say (to them), "*Prove it, if you're so certain of the truth.*" [111]

No way! Whoever submits his face before Allah and does what's right will be allowed to enter the Garden, and they'll have no reason to fear nor regret. [112]

The Jews say, "*The Christians have no basis (for their teachings),*" and the Christians say, "*The Jews have no basis (for their teachings).*"

Yet, both groups claim to study the same Book! Those who have no knowledge talk like that. Allah will decide between them in their dispute on the Day of Assembly. [113]

ALLAH
Will Decide

Don't Obstruct the Worship of Allah

Background on verse 114: The mainstream commentators say this reference refers to the pagan Quraysh, who used to prevent the Muslims from praying near the Ka'bah in Mecca, and who later prevented them from coming for pilgrimage after they fled to Medina. (*Asbab ul-Nuzul*)

Who is more oppressive than the one who forbids the calling of Allah's name in His houses of worship? Those who are eager to ruin them have no right to enter them save in fear (of Allah). They'll have nothing but disgrace in this world and a painful punishment in the next. [114]

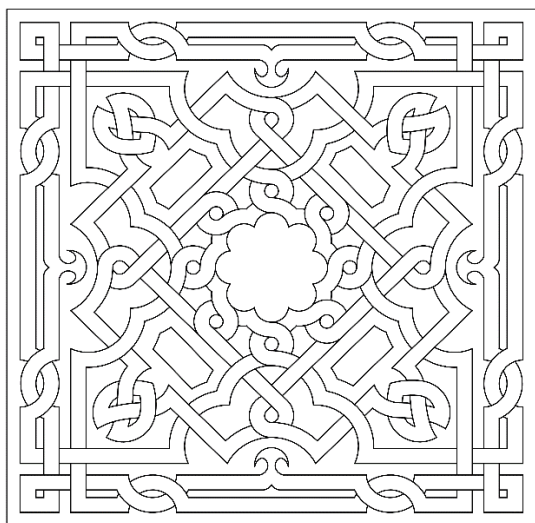
Allah is Everywhere

Background on verse 115: Opinion is divided about the reason this statement was revealed. Some suggest it was a response to some Muslims who were traveling and who couldn't agree on the direction of Mecca when they prayed late in the night. Others hold that it was an answer to the Jews of Medina who were alarmed when the Muslims were asked to turn away from Jerusalem in their prayers, in favor of facing the Ka'bah in Mecca. The second view is more widely accepted.

TO ALLAH BELONGS
BOTH THE EAST
AND THE WEST;

WHEREVER YOU
TURN, THE FACE
OF ALLAH
IS (EVER-PRESENT).

TRULY, ALLAH
IS THE ALL-
PERVADING
AND OBSERVANT. [115]



Allah has no Children

The (Christians) claim that Allah has (given birth) to a son! All glory to Him!

No way! Everything in the heavens and the earth belongs to Him, and everything is compliant to His will. [116]

He originated the heavens and the earth, and when He gives an order, He only has to say, "Be," and it is! [117]

Don't Disrespect the Majesty of Allah

Background on verse 118: A pagan named Rafi' ibn Huraymilah asked the Prophet the question that follows in the verse below. (At-Tabari)

Those who have no knowledge ask, "So why doesn't Allah speak to us or show us proof (of His existence)?"

That's what those who came before them said, for their hearts are all the same. To those who are firm in their convictions, We've shown Our signs already. [118]

What of the People of the Past?

Background on verse 119: Ibn 'Abbas (d. 687) reports that the Prophet (ﷺ) wondered aloud one day, "If only I knew what my ancestors have done." This verse was revealed in comment. (Asbab ul-Nuzul)

We sent you, (Muhammad) with the truth so that you could give good news and also so you could warn. You won't be held responsible for the companions of the raging blaze. [119]

They will never Cease Trying to Turn You to their Ways

Background on verses 120-121: The Jews of Medina and Christians of Najran were trying to influence the Prophet towards their respective positions, sensing perhaps, that as Islam was growing they might be able to influence its course. These verses were revealed in response, informing the Prophet that he should incline to neither side, but rather listen only to God and what He reveals. (*Asbab ul-Nuzul*)

The Jews and the
Christians will never be
satisfied with you until
you adopt their ways.

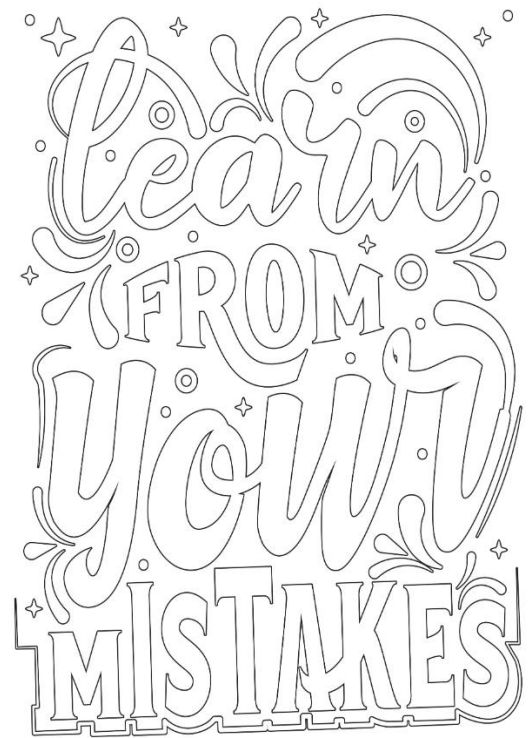
Say (to them), "*The guidance of Allah is the only true guide.*"

If you were to give in to them even after His truth has come to you, then you would have no close supporter or helper who can save you apart from Allah. [120]

Those to whom We've given scripture (in the past,) and who follow it as it should be followed, believe in it sincerely, but whoever rejects it – they will be the ones who will lose. [121]

Children of Israel! Remember the blessings that I bestowed upon you and how I favored you above all other nations. [122]

So then guard yourselves against a day when no soul will be able to help another, when no intercession will be accepted, nor any payment (offered) will sway nor any help come. [123]



Abraham Establishes a Shrine in Mecca

Background on verse 124: Ibrahim (Abraham) is a central figure in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. He lived some time between 2100-1800 BCE in Mesopotamia. (The Old Testament asserts that he was originally from the Mesopotamian city of Ur and then moved to the city of Harran with his family.) After he chose to surrender himself to Allah, he was rewarded with prophethood. Soon he took his family and followers on a meandering journey through the western Fertile Crescent as nomads. He had two primary sons, Isma-il (Ishmael) and Is-haq (Isaac). He settled the first son in west-central Arabia while the second son remained with him in southern Syria or Palestine.

Call to mind that Ibrahim was tested by his Lord with certain (new personal and hygienic) obligations, which he ultimately fulfilled, so (Allah revealed) to him, "*I'm going to make you a leader among the people (of the world).*"

To which he inquired, "*And of my descendants, too?*"

(Allah) answered, "*(Yes), but My pledge will not extend to the wrongdoers (among them).*" [124]

Background on verse 125: The 'House' mentioned in this passage is the Ka'bah, or 'Cube.' It is a small square building that stands on the site where Ibrahim and his son built perhaps the world's first place of worship dedicated only to the One Unseen Allah - a place which was meant for all people who believe in the One True God. It must be remembered that Ibrahim was a nomad at this time, so for him to build a permanent structure was a very sacred and meaningful thing. The Arabic word *maqam* means a place of standing, and it refers to an imprinted stone near the Ka'bah upon which Prophet Muhammad (p) said that Ibrahim used to stand in worship.

One day, the Prophet (p) took hold of the hand of 'Umar ibn al-Khattab and pointed to the imbedded footprint on that stone and said, "That is the *maqam* (or 'station) of Ibrahim." 'Umar replied, "Should we also make it a place of prayer?" The Prophet (p) answered him, saying, "That has not been given to me as a command." Before the sun set that day, this verse came down commanding the Prophet (p) to pray there. Thereafter, the custom of the Prophet (p) was that after he would walk around the Ka'bah seven times praising Allah, he would go to the *maqam* of Ibrahim and pray a two-unit prayer. (*Zamakshari*)

And remember that We established the **House** to be a peaceful place of gathering (for all) people, so take Abraham's place (of worship) as your own.

We did indeed arrange for Ibrahim and (his son) Isma-il to cleanse (and maintain) My House for (the sake of) those who walk around it, who rest by it in contemplation,



Seeking Knowledge

The Prophet (p) said, "I'm the (answer) to the supplication of my father Ibrahim, the glad tidings (announced by) 'Esa (Jesus), the son of Maryam, and my mother saw (in a vision) a light that radiated from her which illuminated the castles of Syria." (*Ahmad*)
The last part refers to a dream Muhammad's (p) mother Aminah had before he was born in which she reported to her maid Barakah that she saw bright lights radiating from the direction of Syria. Within a few years of the Prophet's (p) passing, the seat of the Islamic Empire was moved to Damascus, Syria, and Syria has remained ever since a destination of choice for those seeking higher learning in the Islamic sciences. Have you ever thought of going to study Islamic sciences or religious knowledge in some faraway place? How might it change your perspective on life?

or who bow down and prostrate themselves (to Allah in adoration). [125]

Remember that Ibrahim said, "*My Lord, make this settlement a tranquil place, and bless its citizens who have faith in Allah and the Last Day with the fruits (of Your bounty).*"

(Allah) answered, "*I will also provide (prosperity) for a while to its citizens who suppress (their awareness of the truth), before I inflict upon them the punishment*

of the Fire - the worst destination of all!"
[126]

Remember when Ibrahim and Isma-il were raising the foundations of the House, Ibrahim said:

"Accept this from us, Our Lord, for You are indeed the Hearing and the Knowing. [127] Our Lord! Help us to submit (to Your will), and also make our descendants a submissive community towards You. Show us the places where we must perform our rituals, and accept our repentance, for You are indeed the Acceptor of Repentance and the Merciful. [128]

"Our Lord! Raise messengers from among our descendants who will convey Your signs. Teach them the scripture, give them wisdom and purify them, for You are indeed the Powerful and the Wise." [129]

Abraham's Tradition Predates Judaism

Background on verses 130-134: This passage was revealed when some Jews went to the Prophet (ﷺ) in Medina and told him that when he was dying, Ya'qub (Jacob) asked his children to follow religious practices that were equivalent to what they (the Jews of Medina) were practicing in their own times. The witness of the Torah itself disputes this claim, for in Genesis 48:1-28 and 49:1-33 Ya'qub's dying words are limited to a last meeting with Yusuf (Joseph) where he greets Yusuf's young sons, and thereafter it recounts a full meeting of all of Ya'qub's sons where he makes some prophecies about their descendants and then lays out exactly where he would like to be buried and why.

Who would turn away from the creed of Ibrahim except for the one who would

tarnish his own soul? As it happened, We specifically chose him in this world, and in the next life he's going to be among the righteous. [130]

When his Lord said, *"Submit,"* he replied, *"I submit myself to You, the Lord of All the Worlds."* [131]

I SUBMIT
MYSELF TO
YOU, THE
LORD
OF ALL THE
WORLDS

Ibrahim left this legacy to his descendants, as did (his grandson) Ya'qub, who said, *"My children, Allah has chosen this way of life for you, so don't leave this (earthly) life unless you're surrendered (to Allah)."* [132]

Did you witness Ya'qub's final moments before death? *"What will you serve after I'm gone?"* he asked his children.



"We're going to serve your God," they answered, "and the God of your fathers, of Ibrahim, Isma-il and Is-haq, the One True God, and to Him we submit." [133]

That community has long since passed away. They will be paid back for what they did, as you will be for what you do, and you won't be asked about what they did. [134]

True Religion Predates Judaism and Christianity

Background on verses 135-137: In a public dispute, the leaders of the Jews of Medina and some visiting Christians from Najran tried to convince Muhammad (p) to join their religion. The Jews claimed that Musa was the best prophet and that the Torah was the best book, while the Christians likewise mentioned 'Esa (Jesus) and his Injeel (Gospel). They disagreed with each other and also chose not to accept Muhammad's (p) message. This passage was revealed as a result. (*Asbab ul-Nuzul*)

They say, "*Be a Jew,*" or "*Be a Christian and be saved.*"

Say (to them), "*No way! We follow the creed of Ibrahim, the natural monotheist, and he never made partners (with Allah).*" [135]

Then say (to them), "*We believe in Allah and in what He sent down to us and to Ibraheem, Isma-il, Is-haq, Ya'qub and the tribes (of Israel). (We believe in the message) given to Musa and 'Esa and in (the messages) given to all the other prophets from their Lord. We regard each of them as equally authentic, and we surrender ourselves to Allah.*" [136]

Let's **Review** what we've read so far from verses 106-137. Answer the questions that follow:

How can you answer non-Muslims who have doubts about Islam?

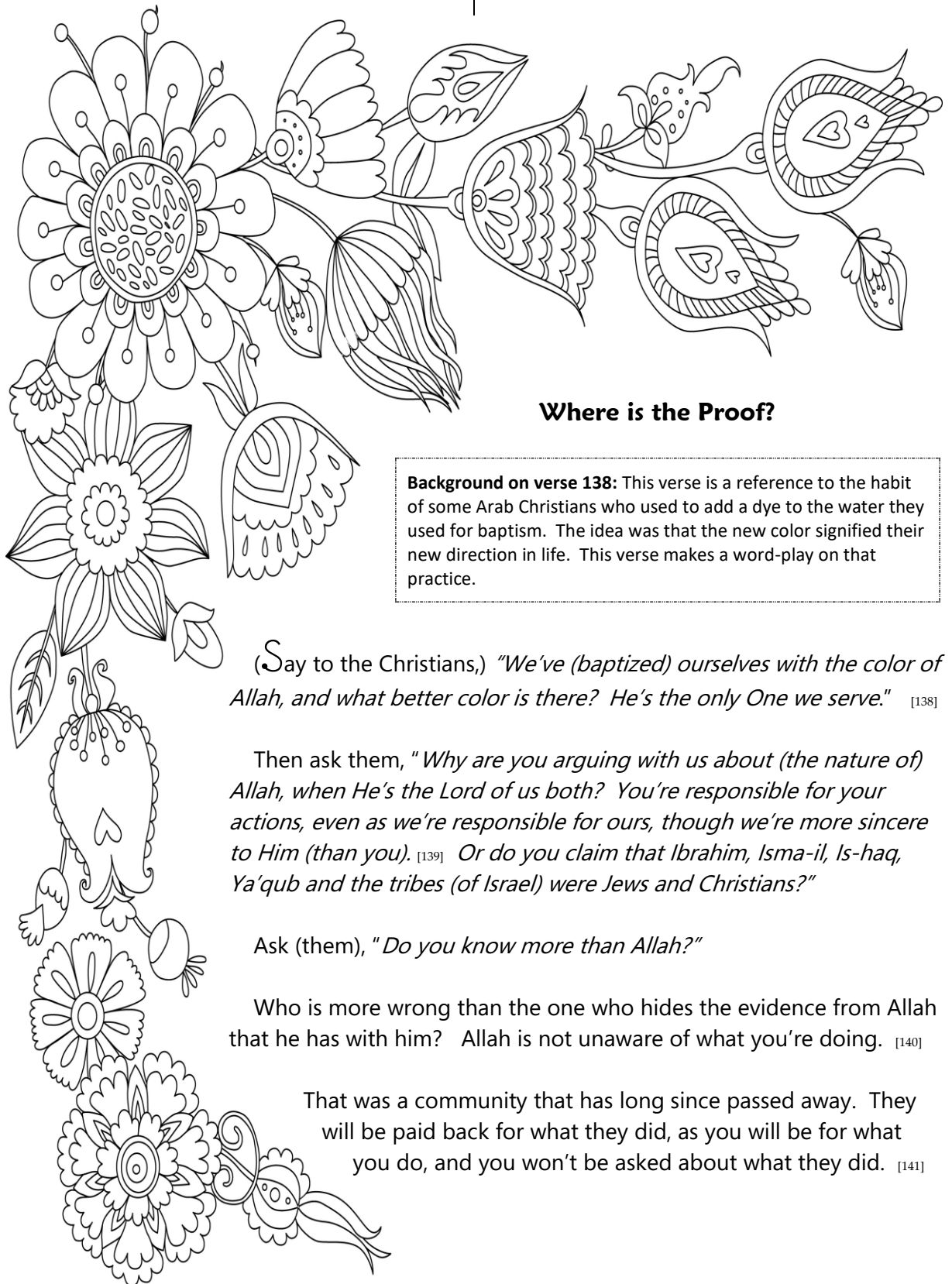
What Based on how his beliefs are presented, what is the real legacy of Prophet Ibrahim?

The Qur'an calls Islam the natural creed. How is Islam different from Judaism or Christianity?

What is the Qur'an trying to say by pointing out that the Prophets of old were not followers of Judaism or Christianity, as we know them today?

If they come to believe as you do, then they will have found guidance, but if they turn away, (then know) that they're splitting away (from Allah's religion). Even still, Allah is enough protection against them, for He's the Hearing and the Knowing. [137]





Where is the Proof?

Background on verse 138: This verse is a reference to the habit of some Arab Christians who used to add a dye to the water they used for baptism. The idea was that the new color signified their new direction in life. This verse makes a word-play on that practice.

(Say to the Christians,) *"We've (baptized) ourselves with the color of Allah, and what better color is there? He's the only One we serve."* [138]

Then ask them, *"Why are you arguing with us about (the nature of) Allah, when He's the Lord of us both? You're responsible for your actions, even as we're responsible for ours, though we're more sincere to Him (than you)."* [139] *Or do you claim that Ibrahim, Isma-il, Is-haq, Ya'qub and the tribes (of Israel) were Jews and Christians?"*

Ask (them), *"Do you know more than Allah?"*

Who is more wrong than the one who hides the evidence from Allah that he has with him? Allah is not unaware of what you're doing. [140]

That was a community that has long since passed away. They will be paid back for what they did, as you will be for what you do, and you won't be asked about what they did. [141]

A Change of Focus from Old Religions to Islam

Background on verses 142-152: When the Muslims were living in Mecca, and for about a year after that in Medina, they faced towards Jerusalem (far to the north) whenever they prayed. It may have been a way to make a statement to the Meccans that the Ka'bah shrine, filled with idols as it was, was being misused.

In any case, the Prophet ^(p) always expressed his desire to face the Ka'bah in prayer, and he used to supplicate to Allah about it. Very early in the year 624, the Prophet ^(p) received a new commandment from Allah (verse 2:144) that directed him to turn away from Jerusalem and thereafter to face towards Mecca in prayer, a change for which the Prophet ^(p) had been longing for some time. (Note that verses 142 and 143 were revealed *after* verse 144.) This change was significant because it meant that Allah was now turning the believers back to the original roots of Prophet Ibrahim, and that the Ka'bah would one day be cleansed of idols.

As the news spread throughout the neighborhoods of Medina and the surrounding countryside over the following days, people generally obeyed the new dictate, but a small amount of confusion ensued among some of the less fervent Muslims.

To the more thoughtful believers, however, this change signified to them that the time to purify the shrine in their old hometown would soon be at hand. Many scholars have also suggested that it was a message to the Jews of Medina that the main city of their religion, Jerusalem, was not as prominent as Ibrahim's original shrine, the Ka'bah in Mecca.

The foolish among the people
now ask:

"Why have the faithful now switched their usual direction of prayer (from Jerusalem in the north to Mecca in the south)?"

Say (to them):

"To Allah belongs the East and the West; He guides whomever He wills to the straight path." [142]

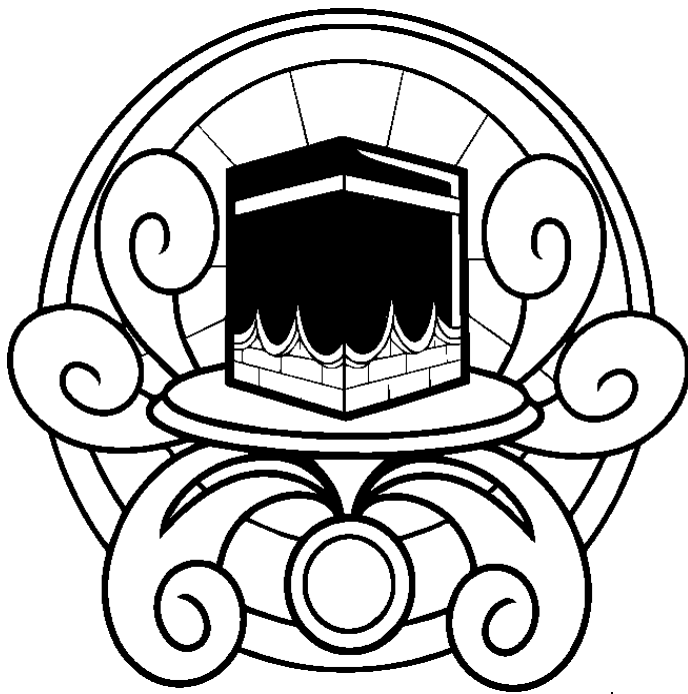
Background on verse 143: Some people passed away before the change in the prayer direction was ordered. Their relatives went to the Prophet ^(p) and asked if their deceased relatives were deficient in their record of good deeds and prayers on account of not having ever prayed facing towards Mecca. This verse was revealed to let them know that Allah will not let their past good deeds go to waste. (*Asbab ul-Nuzul*)

And so it is that We have made you into a moderate community so you can be a witness to all people, even as the Messenger is a witness to you.

We first made you pray in the (unusual) direction of (Jerusalem) to test which of you would truly follow the Messenger and which of you would not.

(The switch towards Mecca) was indeed a tough (adjustment to make), though not for the ones who were guided by Allah. Allah won't let your (previous expressions of) faith go to waste, for Allah is kind and merciful to all people. [143]

We've seen you look to the sky for guidance, so now We'll turn you towards a more pleasing direction. Now you can turn your face towards the Sacred Masjid (in Mecca), so turn your faces towards it wherever you happen to be.



Background on verses 144-147: The Jews and Christians of central Arabia also generally subscribed to the view that the Ka'bah had been originally built by Ibrahim, and Jewish scripture makes mention of Ibrahim wandering in the deserts of the region for a time. They didn't want to accept, however, that there was a kind of logic in focusing on the original patriarch's alter to Allah, rather than Jerusalem, which wasn't dedicated to Allah's service until the construction of Sulayman's Temple many centuries later. (Jerusalem, as a town, had existed as a pagan settlement for many centuries before the descendants of Musa captured it centuries later.) In addition, the Bible supports the idea of praying in the direction of the original temple in Arabia. See Psalm 138:2 and Psalms 84:1-10.

The Followers of Earlier Revelation can see the proper reasoning in this from their Lord, and Allah is not unaware of what they're doing. [144]

However, even if every convincing proof were presented to them, they still wouldn't join with you in your direction (of prayer), nor you with them.

They can't even agree amongst themselves about a direction. If you were to follow their whims, even after everything that's come to you, then you would clearly be in the wrong. [145]

Those to whom We gave revelation (in the past) know the criteria for this, even as they know their own children; yet, some still cover the truth knowingly! [146]

(Remember that) truth comes from your Lord alone, so don't be in doubt about it. [147]

(Remember
that) truth
comes from
your Lord
alone, so
don't be
in doubt
about it

EVERYONE
HAS A GOAL
THAT THEY
TURN TOWARDS,
SO MAKE YOUR
GOAL THE
DOING OF
GOOD
WHEREVER
YOU ARE.

ALLAH WILL
BRING YOU
ALL TOGETHER
(ONE DAY),
FOR HE HAS
POWER OVER
EVERYTHING [148]

No matter from where you start out, face towards the Sacred Masjid (in prayer). It's the honest truth from your Lord, and He's not unaware of what you're doing. [149]

So no matter from where you start out, face the Sacred Masjid (in prayer), and wherever you may be turn your faces

willingly to avoid public disagreements. Only wrongdoers will argue further.

Don't be afraid of them; fear Me instead, and I will shower My grace and guidance down upon you, [150] even as We've already sent one of your own kind as a messenger so he could recite Our (revealed) verses to you and purify you, as well as teach you **scripture** and **wisdom**

and **KNOWLEDGE** that you didn't know before. [151]

So remember Me, and I'll remember you. Give thanks, and don't suppress (the faith that dwells within your heart). [152]

You will be Tested

Background on verses 153-154: After the Battle of Badr, which was fought between the Meccans and the Muslims of Medina in 624 CE, some people suggested that the people who died left this world and have no more good coming to them. This passage was revealed in response. (*Asbab ul-Nuzul*)

○ you who believe! Seek courage with perseverance and prayer, for Allah is with the persevering. [153] Don't say that those who've been killed in the path of Allah are dead. No, they're living (in the next realm), though you might not perceive it. [154]

Be sure that We're going to test you in some things like fear, hunger and loss of wealth and self, and also in the fruits (of your labor), but give good news to those who patiently persevere, [155] who say, when stricken with adversity:

"TO ALLAH
WE BELONG,
AND TO HIM WE
RETURN." [156]

The blessings and mercy of their Lord are upon them, and they're the ones who are truly guided. [157]

Allah Confirms that which is True

Background on verse 158: Thus, we have the Islamic ritual of the *Hajj*, or Pilgrimage to Mecca, introduced. It is a required, once-in-a-lifetime trek for every adult Muslim male and female who can afford it and is physically fit enough to make the journey. There are many elements to the week-long event, and the two hills mentioned are the same hills that Hagar, the mother of Ishmael, ran between seven times in her frantic search for water. The people of Medina, formerly known as Yathrib, used to avoid walking between those hills during pre-Islamic days (when they visited Mecca for pilgrimage), for they thought it was a peculiar tradition of the Quraysh.

Some of the Meccan converts, as well, stopped performing rituals concerning the hills after converting to Islam, also thinking they were a relic of the past. There was also some concern about the fact that the pagan Quraysh had erected alters dedicated to two of their deities, *Isaf* and *Na'ilah*, on each hilltop. (The legend was that those two were lovers who fornicated in the Ka'bah and were thus turned into stone pillars.)

After the initial peace treaty with the Meccans allowed Muslim pilgrims into the city, the Muslims asked the Prophet about it, and this verse was revealed in response, saying that the ritual of walking was still a valid part of the pilgrimage, even if the idols have to be ignored, and when the Muslims later gained control over Mecca they removed the idols. (*Ibn Kathir*)

The two hills) of *Safa* and *Marwah* are symbols of Allah. Whoever makes a pilgrimage to the House, or who visits (at other times), is not guilty if he walks between them.

Whoever does good for goodness' sake will always find appreciation with the knowing Allah. [158]

Those who hide the evidence and the guidance that We've sent down - (especially) after it's already been made clear to people in the scripture - are condemned by Allah and those who have the right (to condemn), [159] except for those who repent, reform themselves and proclaim the truth, for in that case they'll be forgiven.

Truly,
I am the
Acceptor of
REPENTANCE
and the
MERCIFUL. [160]

Those who suppress (their awareness of the truth) and then leave this life while actively suppressing it, will bear the condemnation of Allah, the angels and of all people combined. [161] They will remain in that condition, and their suffering will neither lighten nor will it end. [162]

The Signs of Allah

Background on verses 163-164: When verse 2:163 was revealed, some pagans (in Medina) marveled at it. One of them remarked, "There's only *one* God? Then let Him reveal a verse for us (confirming it) if He's so truthful." Then verse 2:164 came to the Prophet, and he recited it." (*Asbab ul-Nuzul*)

Your god is One
God; there is no god
but He, the Ever-
Compassionate,
the Source of
All Mercy. [163]

Truly, within the creation of the heavens and the earth, in the alternation of night and day, in the sailing of ships through the sea for people to profit and trade, in the water sent down by Allah for the parched land to live, in the diversity of creatures, in the changing patterns of the clouds and winds between the earth and sky: in all of these things are signs for the wise. [164]

Yet, even still there are people who would make others equal with Allah. They love them as much as they should love Him,



Love as a Way of Life

The famous Muslim mystic, Rabi'a al Adawiyya was once asked if she loved Allah, and she replied in the affirmative. Then she asked if she hated the Shaytan (Devil) and she replied, "My love for Allah leaves me no time to hate the Devil."

The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) was exemplar in all things for his followers, and he once said, "Whoever loves to meet Allah, Allah loves to meet them." (*Ibn Majah*)

Love is the basis of the relationship between humans and the Divine. Love is the spark that makes a person worthy of redemption and salvation in this life and the next. In a world filled with chaos and oppression, it is easy to fall into a life focused on anger, hate, and retaliation, and many are the believers who fall prey to this trick of Shaytan. Sometimes the desire for justice or revenge becomes an overpowering lens through which one sees the world and their purpose in it. Love and compassion can then get crowded out like a lonely orphan.

How many people with Muslim-sounding names have been fooled by Shaytan into committing evil acts and harming innocents. When Shaytan said he would mislead humans, few are the Muslims who ever think that they could also be targets of his campaigns of deception, redirection and perversion of the ideals of the faith.

Justice is a noble cause, no doubt, and people must seek it and sometimes fight for it, but when injustice to others is the method for redress, then the justice that is sought becomes tainted, and Shaytan celebrates another victory in his war against the Truth of Allah's Word, that all shall receive their recompense as they deserve.

What are some practices we can make a part of our lives to help us safeguard our sense of justice, and grow our love for the good, without falling prey to the dangers of wounded love, that is shaped by hate?



What Makes a Muslim?

The Prophet said, "Allah, the Almighty, is good, and He accepts only that which is good. Allah has commanded the faithful to do the same things that he commanded the messengers to do. The Almighty said, 'O Messengers! Eat only of wholesome things, and do what is morally right.' (23:51) Allah, the Almighty, also said, 'O you who believe! Eat of the wholesome things that We've provided for you.'" (2:172) Then the Prophet mentioned the case of a man who undertook a long and arduous journey. He was disheveled and dusty, and he spread out his hands to the sky saying, "O Lord! O Lord!" Then the Prophet said, "He was calling on Allah while his food was unlawful, his drink was unlawful, his clothing was unlawful, and he nourished himself unlawfully. So how can he expect to be answered?" (*Muslim*)

So we do have some basic lifestyle practices to adopt to be more favorable in Allah's Sight: what we consume (halal food and drink) and what we wear (modest clothing). Allah does accept if we are trying, and the definition of a Muslim is pretty broad. The Prophet gave the definition of a Muslim thus: "Whoever prays in our manner, facing our prayer-direction, and eats what is slaughtered in our way, that person is a Muslim." (*Bukhari, Muslim*)

Thus, after accepting that Allah is our Lord, the lifestyle that we adopt is founded upon some very simple principles. This is in reality a 'big-tent' definition of Islam. How can this basic outline of who is a Muslim expand our views on accepting Muslims of diverse cultures, views, sects, races and lifestyles?

but the love of the faithful for Allah is far stronger.

If only the wrongdoers could glimpse the penalty that awaits them, then they would finally realize that all power belongs to Allah and that Allah is a severe punisher. [165]

(On the Day of Judgment), those who were followed will distance themselves from their (hapless) followers.

They'll see the punishment waiting there just for them, and they'll break all bonds with them. [166]

Then their (frightened) followers will cry out (in bewilderment), "*If only we had the chance again, just as they're leaving us now, we would've left them!*"

(However, there's no going back), and so they'll be shown their evil deeds and be filled with utter regret. There will be no escape from the Fire. [167]

Keep Your Food Pure

○ people! Eat only what is lawful and wholesome. Don't follow in the footsteps of Shaytan, for he's clearly your enemy. [168] He'll order you to indulge in evil and shameful behavior and to speak (lies against) Allah that you can't even imagine. [169]

Old Habits are No Justification

Background on verses 170-171: The reply quoted here in verse 170 was made by a group of Jews to the Prophet after he had invited them to Islam. (*Asbab ul-Nuzul*)

When they're asked to follow what Allah has revealed, they say, "No way! We'll hold on to the traditions of our ancestors."

What! Even though their ancestors had no sense, nor any guidance? [170] The example of trying to reach them is like a shepherd shouting (words of wisdom) to sheep. They're deaf, dumb, blind and devoid of sense! [171]

What are the Forbidden Foods?

O you who believe! Eat of the wholesome things that We've provided for you, and give thanks to Allah, that is if you truly serve Him. [172]

He's only forbidden you from eating animals that have died by themselves, blood, pork and (anything) that was dedicated to (idols) instead of Allah.

However, if one of you has no choice but to eat of these things, without wanting to, nor returning to them (after your desperate situation is over), then he's not guilty of sin, for Allah is forgiving and merciful. [173]

Those who hide the revelations of Allah and gain a little something by doing it are eating nothing but fire.

Allah won't address them on the Day of Assembly, nor will He purify them, for a painful punishment will await. [174] They're the ones who've bought mistakes instead of guidance and punishment instead of pardon.

How eagerly do they seek the Fire! [175] That's because while Allah was revealing the scripture truthfully, they were arguing against the scripture and increasing in their opposition. [176]





Let's **R**eview what we've read so far from verses 138-176. Answer the questions that follow:

Why is it an important point to note that the ancient prophets were neither Jews nor Christians in the modern sense?

Why was the change in prayer-direction an important statement to the Jews, Muslims and idolaters?

How is verse 2:152 a summary of our purpose in life?

Why is it hard for some people to abandon disbelief and embrace Allah's wisdom, mercy and good way of life?

When is it allowed to eat unwholesome things, and why is this allowance there?

Mercy is the Foundation of Faith

Righteousness isn't
turning towards
the East or the West.

Righteousness is
believing in Allah,
the Last Day, the angels,
the scriptures
and the prophets.

(Righteousness) is
spending of your wealth,
for love of Him,
on relatives, orphans,
the poor, travelers,
and on those who
ask (for help).

(Righteousness) is
freeing slaves,
establishing prayer, giving
in charity, fulfilling your
agreements, and being
patient in danger,
hardship and adversity.

These (people) affirm
the truth
and are mindful
(of their Lord). ^[177]

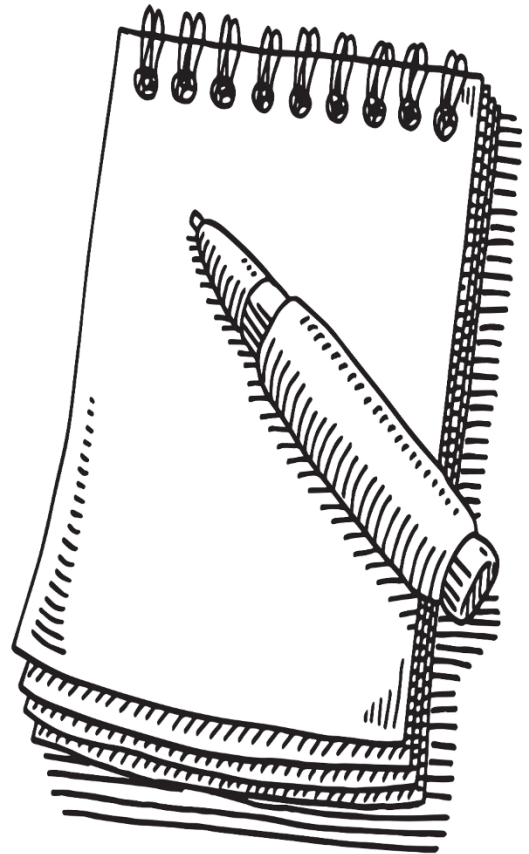
On Murder and the Limits of Retribution

Background on verses 178-179: There was a street fight in Medina between some men of different clans, and the stronger group taunted the other, saying that they would kill a free man of their rival in revenge if one of their own slaves were killed or that they would kill a man of them if one of their own women were killed. This was in keeping with the longstanding Arabian custom known as *retaliation* whereby any harm done to one member of one's own tribe or clan would be harshly repaid on the family or associates of the perpetrator. When news of this public challenge reached the Prophet, these verses were revealed that laid out the principle that only the one guilty of a crime should be punished and that going overboard in demanding excessive retribution was wrong. (*Asbab ul-Nuzul*)

○ you who believe! In the event of a murder being committed, fair retribution is in order, (but only the murderer shall be held to account). Whether a free man is guilty of murdering another free man, or a servant of a servant, or even a woman of a woman, (no one except the one who did the crime may be punished).

Though if a relative (of the victim) chooses to pardon the guilty (person), then he should be dealt with fairly and should settle a penalty to be paid with gratitude. This is a concession from your Lord and a mercy.

After this, whoever goes beyond the limit (by taking revenge on the innocent, in spite of this clear directive,) will be punished severely. ^[178] (Innocent) lives are protected through the law of fair retribution, so the sensible among you will restrain themselves. ^[179]



Making a Will

It's the duty of every believer who owns property to make a will when he (or she) is near death, and he should bequeath fairly to his parents and next of kin. This is binding upon everyone who is mindful (of their duty to Allah). ^[180]

If anyone changes the will after learning of it, (then know that) they'll be guilty and accountable, and Allah hears and knows all things. ^[181] However, if someone feels that the deceased was unfair to him, then he may bring about a (legal) settlement, and he won't incur any guilt, for Allah is forgiving and merciful. ^[182]

The Month of Ramadan

Background on verse 183: The Islamic style of fasting is a dawn to dusk abstention from food, liquids and intimate relations. Lying, cheating or fighting can also ruin a person's fast. This month-long training teaches Muslims to maintain those good habits of moral behavior and control over their bodily needs for the rest of the year. Previously revealed religions have also contained a fasting component, and the principle is not new. Mastering the body and its urges is the path to elevating the heart and mind, i.e., the goal of *taqwa*, or mindfulness of Allah.

○ you who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you, even as it was prescribed upon those before you, so you can increase your mindfulness (of Allah).
[183]

(Observe the fast for) a set number of days, but if someone is ill or on a long journey then he can make up the days he missed later.

Anyone who would have an exceptional hardship from fasting (has the option) to make up for it by feeding the poor instead, and if someone freely gives more than he must, it's that much better for him! Fasting is indeed good for you, if you only knew.
[184]

Ramadan is the month in which the Qur'an (began) to be revealed as a source of guidance for all people, as clear evidence of the truth and as the standard of (right and wrong).

So when you see the new moon (signaling the start of Ramadan), fast the entire month, though the very ill and those traveling should fast (later when it's more

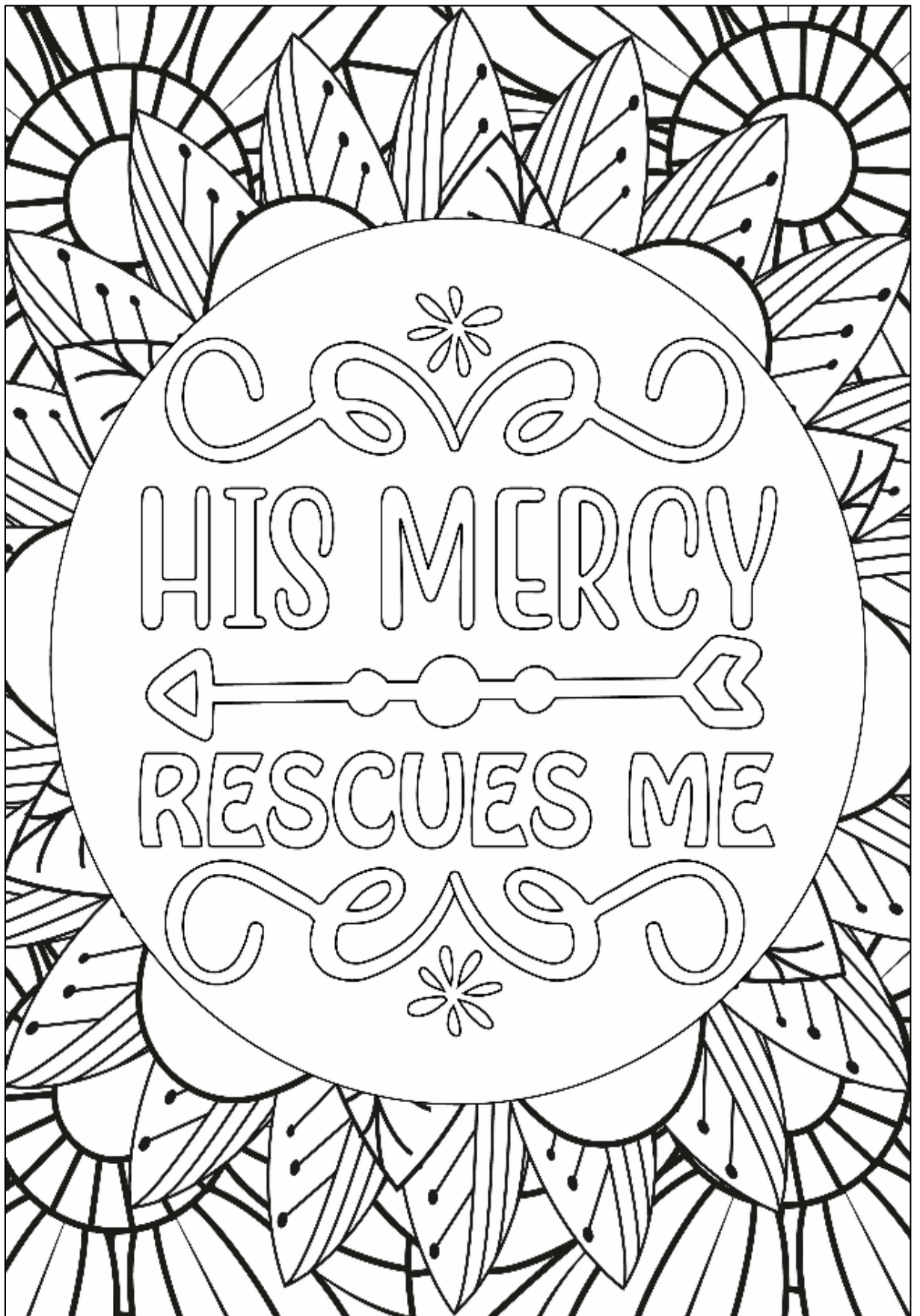
convenient to do so), for Allah wishes

ease and not hardship. Complete the fast, and praise Allah for His guidance, so you can learn to be thankful. [185]

Despair not of Allah's Notice

Background on verse 186: A visitor from a far village went to the Prophet and asked if Allah was far away, thus requiring people to shout loudly in their supplications to be heard by Him, or if He was near, in which case people could whisper to Him. The Prophet remained silent and did not answer. Then this verse came to him, and he recited them aloud. (*Ibn Kathir*)

WHEN MY
SERVANTS ASK YOU
ABOUT ME,
I AM NEAR, AND I
LISTEN
TO EVERY CALLER
THE MOMENT HE
CALLS UPON ME.
SO, LET THEM ALSO
LISTEN TO MY CALL
AND BELIEVE IN ME
SO THEY CAN
FOLLOW THE
RIGHT WAY. [186]



HIS MERCY

RESCUES ME

Allowances after Nightfall

Background on the first half of verse 187:

When fasting was first introduced as a personal obligation, there was some confusion among the community in Medina about what was allowed for them to do after sunset. Some thought that no intimate relations were allowed after the last prayer of the day ('*isha*). Others used mental gymnastics to justify having intimate relations when they really had misgivings about it. Yet, others were of the understanding that if a person slept after fast-breaking, all eating and such were forbidden for the rest of the night. When 'Umar ibn al-Khattab (d. 644) complained one day about his confusion over the issue, this Qur'anic verse was revealed, clarifying that intimate contact between married people at any time of the night is allowed during the month of Ramadan. (*Ibn Kathir*)

You *are* allowed to approach your spouses during the *nights* of Ramadan. They're like a garment for you, and you're like a garment for them. Allah knows what you were doing in secret among yourselves, so He turned to you and forgave you. Now you may approach your wives and seek what Allah has allowed.

(You may) eat and drink until the white thread of dawn appears distinct from its

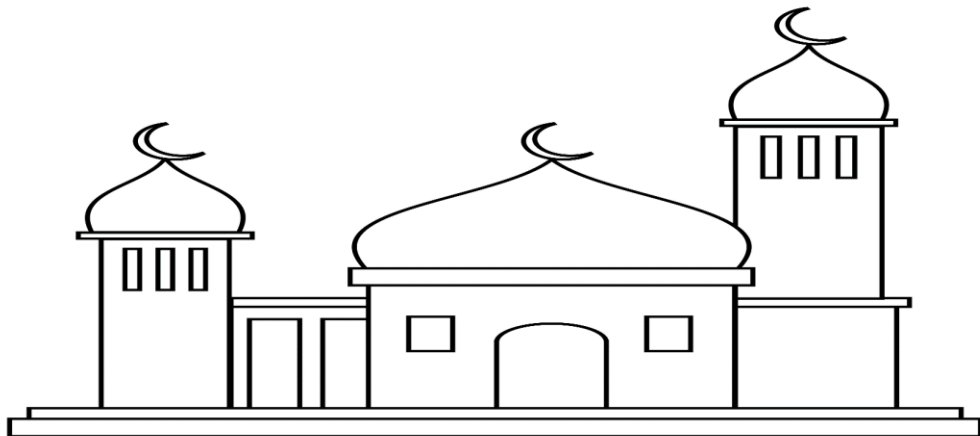
black thread. Then fast until the night approaches again, but abstain from your wives (even at night) when you're in retreat in the masjids for more intense devotion.

These are the rules set by Allah so keep well within them. He makes His (revealed) verses clear for people so they can (learn to be) mindful (of Him). [187]

Don't Bring Ruin upon Each Other

Background on verse 188: Two men disputed about the ownership of a strip of land near the outskirts of Medina. One of the men was using unscrupulous means to take possession of the land that he knew was not his. The Prophet asked both men to swear to Allah about their claims, but before the dishonest man swore his oath, the Prophet recited verse 3:77 which reminded him of the dire consequences of dishonesty. The dishonest man then refused to swear to Allah about his claim. The Prophet found in favor of the original owner, and this verse was revealed, warning people not to attempt to seize what was not lawfully theirs. (*Asbab ul-Nuzul*)

Don't eagerly consume each other's wealth in wasteful pursuits or try to bribe those in authority, hoping to consume unlawfully the property of others. [188]



How do We Use the Moon?

Background on the first part of verse 189: Mu'adh ibn Jabal asked the Prophet about crescent moons and why they followed the courses they did. The first part of this verse was revealed in response. (*Asbab ul-Nuzul*)

When they ask you what the new moon signifies, tell them, "You can use it to calculate the date for people and to regulate the pilgrimage rites."

There is no Virtue in being Evasive

Background on the second part of verse 189: With regards to the "doors" mentioned here, the pagan Arabs had a strange superstition that held if a person wanted to conduct a religious pilgrimage and consecrated himself for that purpose, then he could not enter his house through the front door. Instead he would jump over a fence, climb in a window, or enter through a back door. This verse addresses this practice and nullifies it. It has even become something of a proverb in the Arab world to the effect that open action is better than secretive schemes. (*Ibn Kathir*)

(Know that) there's no virtue in going "through the back door." Virtue comes from listening to Allah, so go "through the front door," (and conduct your affairs openly). Be mindful of Allah so you can prosper. [189]

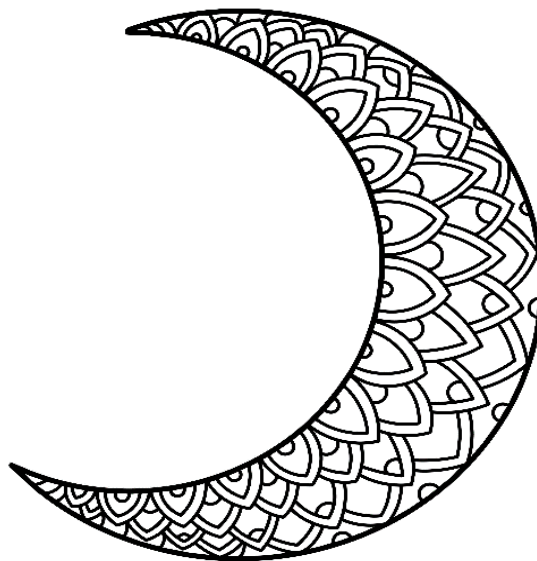
When Self-Defense becomes Necessary

Background on verses 190-195: This passage was revealed six years after the Prophet and his followers had left hostile Mecca for the safer refuge of Medina. One night the Prophet had seen himself in a dream leading religious pilgrims back to Mecca to perform a

pilgrimage. After a large party of Muslims, led by Muhammad, appeared in the hills outside of Mecca, the alarmed Meccans kept the Muslims from entering the city, even though it was a customary Arab truce month. Some Muslims were concerned that the hostile Meccans might take the opportunity to attack them; however, a Meccan envoy concluded a truce deal with the Prophet. (That pact is known as the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah. See chapter 48.)

This treaty stipulated that the Muslims had to turn back and would not be allowed to complete their journey to Mecca that year, but the following year they would be allowed to enter the city for three days to perform their pilgrimage rites. As the following year approached, there was some discussion and concern among the Muslims as to whether or not the pagan Quraysh would continue to uphold their end of the bargain. This passage was revealed about this concern, and it informed the Prophet that if the Meccans reneged on the deal and attacked the pilgrims on their journey, they had prior permission to fight back if necessary. (*Asbab ul-Nuzul*)

Fight in the way of Allah those who fight you, but don't go beyond the limits (of decency and humane conduct), for Allah has no love for those who go beyond the limits. [190]



Fight the (the idol-worshippers) wherever they're found, and drive them out from where they drove you out, for oppression is worse than killing, but don't engage them at the Sacred Masjid (in Mecca), unless they attack you there first.

Oppression
is worse than
killing

If they do, then slay them, for that's the reward of those who cover over (their awareness of the truth and do wrong on account of it). [191]

Though if they cease their aggression, (then remember that) Allah is forgiving and merciful. [192]

If they continue to practice oppression, then fight them until oppression is no more and Allah's way of life prevails.

If they seek peace, then you seek it as well; yet, continue to pursue the (persistent) wrongdoers (among them). [193]

On the Sacred Months

Background on verse 194: Arabian custom, purported to trace its roots to Abraham and Ishmael, held that four months of the year were sacred, in which all tribal feuds, wars and hostilities were to cease to allow pilgrims to complete their visits to shrines throughout the land. The Ka'bah in Mecca was the most important of them all. The months of Dhul Qa'dah, Dhul Hijjah and Muharram were reserved for the major pilgrimages to Mecca, which would encompass many days of strict devotion, while the month of Rajab was reserved for minor pilgrimages of a few days.

Now about the sacred months: for the sacred months and all other restricted things, there is the law of fair retribution. Therefore, if one of (your enemies) goes out of bounds against you (during those truce months), then you may retaliate likewise against him. Be mindful of Allah, and know that He's with those who practice self-restraint. [194]

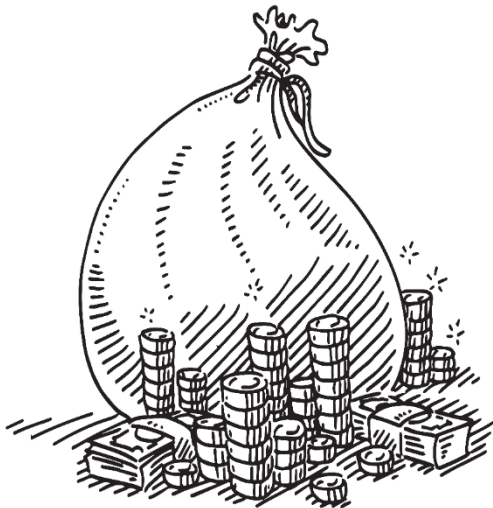


Don't Abandon Allah's Cause

Background on verse 195: Some years after the Prophet passed away, a Muslim army was fighting the Byzantines not far from Constantinople. One of the Prophet's companions, a native of Medina, rushed into the enemy lines and broke through. Some Muslims who were watching from a different area of the battlefield told Abu Ayyoub al-Ansari that that man was throwing himself into destruction. Abu Ayyoub said, "We understand the meaning of a verse (from the Qur'an) better than you, for it was revealed about us (Helpers)...When Islam became strong, we, the Helpers, met together and said, 'Allah has honored us with being the companions of His Prophet and in supporting him until Islam became victorious...We had before neglected the needs of our families, estates and children. Warfare has ceased, so let us go back to our families...' So this verse was revealed about us, and the 'destruction' refers to staying with our families and estates and abandoning struggle (in Allah's cause)." (*Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud, Nisa'i*)

Don't hesitate to use your own resources in the struggle, and don't cause your own destruction from greed. Do what is right, for Allah loves those who do good.

[195]



Perform the Pilgrimage to Mecca

Background on the first part of verse 196:

Thus we are introduced to the Islamic ritual of pilgrimage, or Hajj. This is the famous journey to Mecca that all able-bodied and financially capable Muslims must make at least once in their life. The official pilgrimage is held in the first part of the month named *Hajj*, while pilgrimages performed outside of that month are counted as extra merit. There are a number of religious rites to be performed during the pilgrimage, with the main goals being to gain greater insight into the shortness of this life and also to bring home the reality of our ultimate return to Allah.

Perform the major pilgrimage and the minor pilgrimage in the service of Allah, though if you're prevented, then send an affordable offering instead. (Know that no one should) shave their heads until the offering has reached the appointed place.

Indulgences for Special Circumstances

Background on the second part of verse 196:

There is an allowance for the person who cannot wait until the end of the week-long *Hajj* to shave his hair due to a medical emergency. A man named Ka'b ibn 'Urja was the catalyst for this part of the verse. He explained his story in the following words: "This (verse) was revealed about my situation in particular, but it is also for all of you in general. I was carried to Allah's Messenger, and the lice were falling in great numbers on my face. The Prophet exclaimed, 'I never thought your struggle (with lice) had become so serious as what I see. Can you afford a sheep?' I answered no, and then the Prophet said, 'Fast for three days or feed six poor people, each with a small measure of food, and now shave your head.'" (*Bukhari*) So the man's pain was relieved, and he offered compensation for having to shave his head early.

If one of you is sick or suffering from an ailment of the scalp that makes shaving immediately necessary, then in compensation (for completing this part of the pilgrimage ritual early), you can either fast, feed the poor, or offer something in sacrifice.

However, when more stable circumstances allow you to perform the pilgrimage and lesser-pilgrimage (rituals as they should normally be done), then offer a sacrifice according to your means.

Whoever doesn't have enough money (to purchase an animal for sacrifice) should fast for three days during the pilgrimage and seven days after he returns (home), completing ten. This is ordained for all those who don't live near the Sacred Mosque. Be mindful (of your duty) to Allah, and know that He's severe in retribution. [196]

Take up the Pilgrim's Garb

The months of pilgrimage are well known (to all). Whoever resolves to fulfill his duty within them, then there should be no sexual relations, immorality or quarreling.

Whatever good you do is well known to Allah. Provide for the journey, (but remember) that mindfulness (of Allah) is the best provision to take, so all you insightful people, be aware of Me! [197]

Furthermore, there's nothing wrong in seeking the bounty of your Lord (through trade) during the pilgrimage. When you pour down into the plain of 'Arafah all

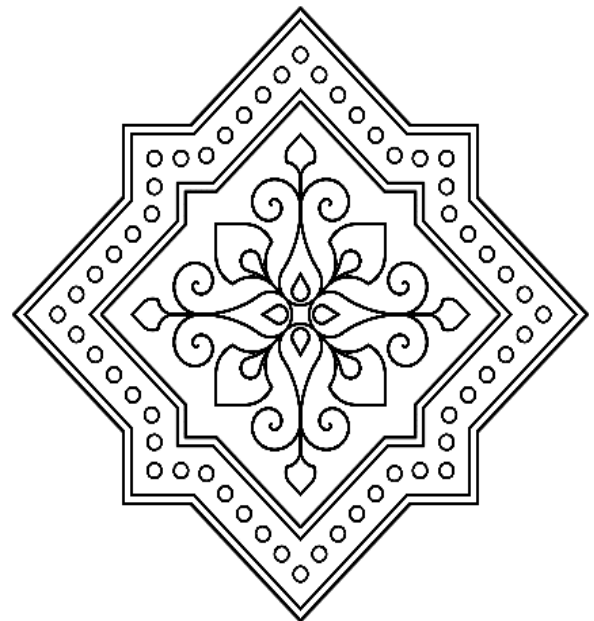
together, remember Allah at the Sacred Monument.

Remember Him as He showed you the way, for before this you were (a people) astray. [198] Then move quickly along with the other people at the proper place, and ask Allah's forgiveness for your sins, for Allah is forgiving and merciful! [199]

Remembrance of Allah in All Places

Background on the first part of verse 200: At the conclusion of their own pilgrimage rituals, the pagan Arabs used to hold a kind of rally on the plains of Mina in which each clan used to shout and boast about how great its ancestors were. This verse was revealed to ask the Muslims to turn their exuberant focus towards Allah. (*Ibn Kathir*)

When you've finally completed the holy rituals, commemorate Allah - even as you used to commemorate your ancestors



(before you were believers) – yet (do it) with far more passion and enthusiasm!

There are some people who pray, *“Our Lord, give us the best in this world,”* though they’ll have no share in the next life. [200]

While there are others who pray, *“Our Lord, give us the best in this world, the best in the next, and protect us from the punishment of the Fire.”* [201]

They will receive their share for their efforts, for Allah is quick to settle accounts! [202]

Remember Allah (during your pilgrimage at the plain of Mina) for the (three) appointed days, but if anyone hurries away after two days, it’s not a sin, nor if he stays longer, as long as he guards (his conduct).

Be mindful (of Allah) and know that you will all be gathered before Him (in the end). [203]

The Temptations of Earthly Life

Background on verses 204-206: A Meccan pagan named Akhnas ibn Shariq ath-Thaqafi arrived in Medina one day and heaped praises upon the Prophet and Islam. He swore that his aim was to enter into Islam, and he swore to Allah that he was sincere. The Prophet was pleased with his words, but then ath-Thaqafi left the city without converting. Next, ath-Thaqafi began destroying a patch of crops and chopping off the legs of some cattle he found grazing nearby. He had only feigned sincerity and allegiance to the Prophet in order to mock him. This passage was revealed in response. (*Asbab ul-Nuzul*)

Our Lord,
give us the
best in this
world, the
best in the
next and
protect us
from the
punishment
of the Fire

There’s one kind of person who will try to dazzle you about this worldly life with his words, and he’ll swear to Allah that he’s sincere at heart, *but he’s the most determined enemy!* [204]

When he turns his back from you, he looks to make mischief everywhere he can in the world, and he goes around damaging crops and cattle- *and Allah doesn’t love disorder!* [205]

When he’s told, *“Be mindful of Allah,”* his arrogance causes him to go on sinning

even harder. Hellfire is punishment enough for him - *what a terrible place to rest!* [206]

Background on verse 207: The good man being referenced here is Suhayb ar-Rumi, a convert to Islam who wanted to flee Mecca for the safety of Medina. When he was leaving the city, a group of thugs from the Quraysh followed him and tried to seize him. He stood his ground and drew his bow saying, "People of Quraysh! You know well that I'm faster and more accurate than any of you with my bow. By Allah, none of you will be able to reach me before I let loose all my arrows, and I will fight the survivors with my sword. Make a choice: either fight here, or let me go, and I will tell you where I hid my money and property in Mecca." They agreed to let him go in exchange for his wealth, so Suhayb told them and later entered Medina poor and penniless. When the Prophet was informed of this he exclaimed, "The father of Yahiya made a bargain! He made a bargain!" (At-Tabari)

**However,
there's
another type
of person
who sells his
life to earn
Allah's
pleasure, and
Allah is kind
to His
servants.** [207]

Be Firm in Your Resolve

Background on verses 208-211: Ibn 'Abbas (d. 687) explained that this passage was revealed with regards to some Jewish converts to Islam who tried to harmonize their practice of Islam with what they used to practice of Jewish customs. Thus, they still held the Sabbath in esteem and forbade themselves from eating the milk or meat of certain animals that were forbidden in Judaism. Some other Muslims rebuked them for synthesizing the two faith traditions, but the Jewish converts felt they could do it, and when the matter was brought before the Prophet for resolution, they told him, "The Torah is the Book of God, too, so let us follow it, as well." This passage was revealed telling them that they had to commit to God's last revelation wholeheartedly to be counted among the true believers. (*Asbab ul-Nuzul*)

**O YOU WHO BELIEVE!
SURRENDER
YOURSELVES TO
ALLAH COMPLETELY,
AND AVOID THE PATH
OF SHAYTAN,
FOR HE'S YOUR CLEAR
ENEMY.** [208]

If you backslide after knowing the truth, (it won't harm Allah in the least), for He's powerful and wise. [209] So what are they waiting for - for Allah to appear in the billowing clouds with a host of angels to settle the matter once and for all? But all matters will go back to Allah in the end. [210]

Ask the Children of Israel how many evident signs We sent them, though if anyone substitutes (something else for) Allah's (teachings) after having received them, know that Allah is a severe punisher. [211]

This world is alluring to those who suppress (their awareness of the truth), and they scoff at those who believe.

However, those who were mindful (of their duty to Allah) will be held higher on the Day of Assembly, for Allah will provide unlimited resources to whomever He wants. [212]

All people were (once together) in a single community, and Allah raised messengers among them to give glad tidings (of Paradise) and also warnings (of Hellfire). He also sent the scriptures of truth to be a judge between people in their disputes. However, after the clear evidence came to them, those who received these (earlier) revealed messages, out of factionalism and pride, fell into disagreement.

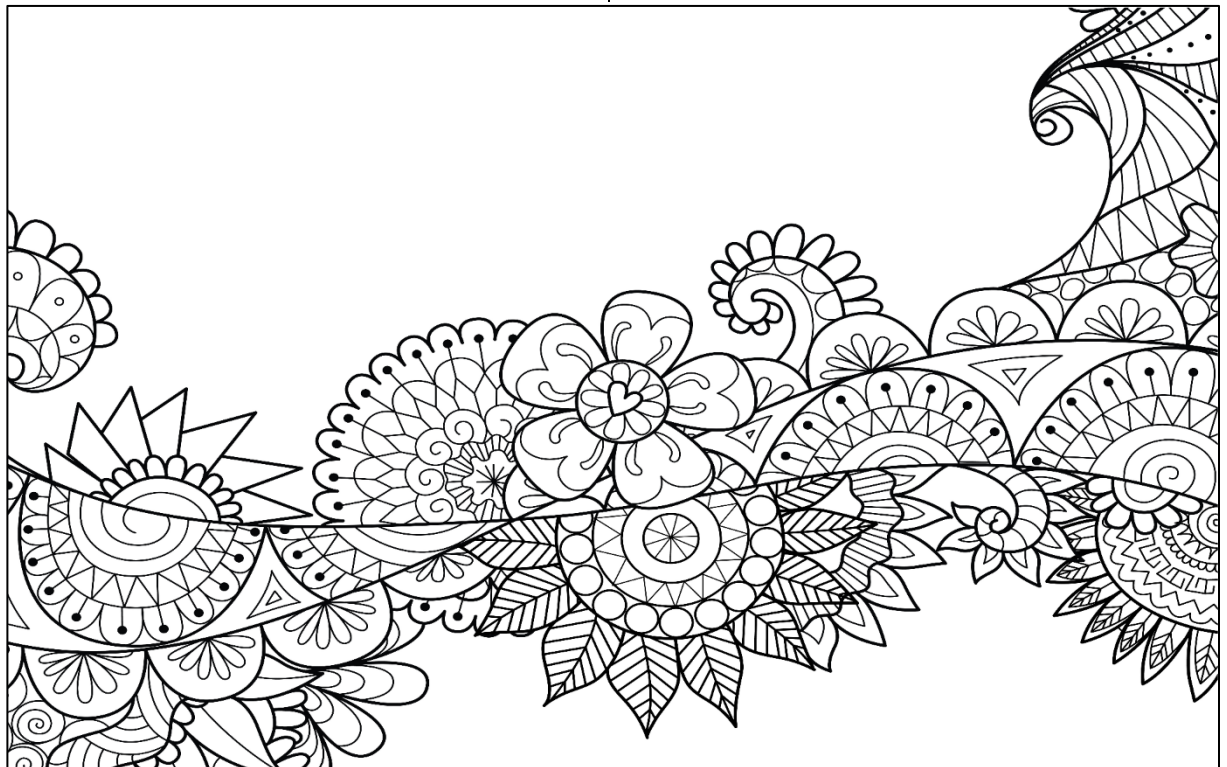
Yet, by His grace, Allah guided the sincere believers out of their disputes and

brought them to the truth, for Allah guides whomever He wants towards a straight path. [213]

Be Prepared for Testing and Trial

Background on verse 214: This verse was revealed to console the Muslims who had arrived in Medina, having to leave behind in their hometown all their wealth and property, which were immediately seized by the pagans. Hardship is a way for Allah to help His sincere servants increase in their faith and become worthy of even greater favor and reward later on down the line. (*Asbab ul-Nuzul*)

Did you think you could enter Paradise without experiencing what those before you did? They were tested through affliction and loss, and (some were) so shaken that even their messenger joined with them in crying, "When will Allah's help arrive?" (Remember) that the help of Allah is always near! [214]



What is Good Charity?

Background on verse 215: This verse was revealed when a wealthy man named Amr ibn al-Jamooah asked the Prophet, “How much should we give in charity, and upon whom should we give it?” (*Asbab ul-Nuzul*)

They ask you what they should spend (in charity). Say (to them):

Anything
you can give to
help parents,
relatives,
orphans,
travelers
and the poor
is good, and
every good you
do is known to
Allah.

[215]

Fight, but Only in the Way of Allah and Only When It is Necessary

Background on verses 216-218: About two months before the Battle of Badr (624), the Prophet (ﷺ) sent a small scouting party of eight men to gather intelligence about the intentions of the Quraysh. He instructed his men to spy on their caravans and attempt to gain news from them. Two days later, the scouts found a small caravan and pretended to be travelers on the road in order to mingle with them. Some of the scouts suggested to their leader that it would be fortuitous for them to capture the caravan and return it to Medina. Accordingly, they seized two of its four overseers and directed the caravan away from the direction of Mecca. (A third caravan attendant named ‘Amr was killed, while a fourth escaped and fled to Mecca.)

After the scouting party returned home with the spoils, Muhammad (ﷺ) angrily scolded them, saying, “I did not order you to fight during the sacred month.” Indeed, the attack might have occurred on the last day of the sacred month of Rajab. The Quraysh in Mecca complained very publicly that Muhammad (ﷺ) broke the sacredness of the month, and they sent a delegation to Medina to confront him about it. Meanwhile, Muhammad (ﷺ) arranged for the two captives to be freed, and he impounded the goods of the caravan, rather than distributing them to the impoverished immigrant Muslims from Mecca. (One of the ransomed captives decided to accept Islam, and he remained in Medina by choice.)

The scouts, for their part, were mortified, and they were ostracized and embarrassed. These verses were revealed as a response to the Quraysh delegation, who had asked why the Muslims would fight in the sacred truce months, and they pointed out that they had no right to claim injury when they had previously murdered and tortured so many Muslims for thirteen years in Mecca, adding insult to injury by seizing their wealth when they fled for their lives. After this passage was revealed, the Prophet ordered the booty to be distributed to the Muslims. (*Asbab ul-Nuzul*) Another report says that he returned the caravan to the Quraysh. (*Baydawi*)



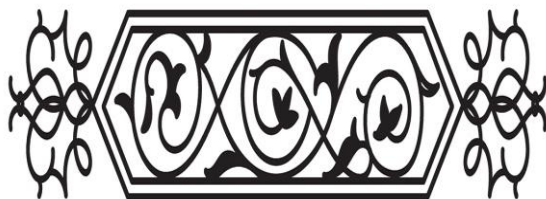
Fighting (in the cause of Allah) is a duty laid down upon you, even though it might be unpleasant for you. However, you may hate something that's good for you and love something that's bad for you. Allah knows, and you don't know. [216]

When they ask you about fighting in a sacred month, tell them, *"Fighting in it is indeed wrong, but an even greater wrong in the sight of Allah is to discourage people from His way, to reject Him, and to keep people out of His Sacred Mosque, even driving out those who were already living there!"*

Oppression is worse than killing, (and the oppressors, who will never tolerate your existence), will always seek to wage war against you until they make you renounce your faith, if at all possible.

(Just remember) that those who renounce their faith - *and leave this life in a state of rejecting it* - will have wasted their deeds in this world. In the next life, they'll be among the companions of the Fire, *and that's where they're going to stay!* [217]

Those who believe, however, and who suffer exile and strive in the cause of Allah can count on the mercy of Allah, for Allah is forgiving and merciful. [218]



Let's **R**eview what we've read so far from verses 177-218. Answer the questions that follow:

In your view, which of the acts of righteousness enumerated in verse 177 is most important and why?

Why is the principle outlined in verses 178-179 so important?

How is the fast of Ramadan framed with mercy in verses 183-199? Choose one instance and discuss it.

In verse 201, why are both worlds mentioned in our prayer to Allah?

Choose one passage between verses 204 and 218 that resonates with you. What is it about, and why is its message important?

Liquor and Gambling have Greater Harm than Good

Background on verse 219: ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab (d. 644) and Mu’adh ibn Jabal asked the Prophet to give the community a definite ruling on intoxicants, pointing out that imbibing them caused drunkenness and debauchery. This verse was revealed to the Prophet, causing ‘Umar to ask for more clarification. Later on in Medina, verse 4:43 was revealed forbidding praying while drunk. Some time after that, ‘Umar asked for an even more definitive injunction, and verses 5:90-91 were revealed, forbidding all intoxicants categorically. (*Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi*)

When they ask you about liquor and gambling, say (to them): *“There’s both great harm and benefit in them for people, but the harm is greater than the benefit.”*

When they ask you how much they should spend in charity, tell them, *“Whatever you can spare.”* This is how Allah clarifies His verses so you can better understand ^[219] how they relate to this life and the next.

Fairness to Orphans

Background on verse 220: When verses 4:10 and 6:152 were revealed concerning the importance of not squandering or stealing the property of an orphan, those who had orphans and their property under their care became very strict in keeping their possessions separate from the property of the orphans for whom they cared, so much so that they would even prepare meals for the orphans from separately owned ingredients. If the orphan children didn’t finish their food, the guardians used to set it aside until the orphan either ate it or it spoiled. Many such people went to the Prophet for they disliked the inconvenience and wastage, and this verse was revealed in response, which said that it wasn’t wrong to mix foods that were bought from the two different monetary sources. (*Ibn Kathir*)

When they ask you about orphans, tell them, *“The best thing you can do is to help them. If you’re their guardian, and you happen to mix your affairs with theirs, (never forget) that they’re your brothers, (so keep track of their goods faithfully).”*

Allah knows the troublemaker from the morally upright person. If Allah had wanted, He could’ve put you into as vulnerable a position (as they), for Allah is powerful and wise. ^[220]

Don’t Marry an Idolater

Background on the first part of verse 221: The Prophet sent a man named Abu Murthid Ghanawi to Mecca in order to bargain with the Quraysh for the freedom of some Muslim converts they had captured. While he was in Mecca, Abu Murthid saw an old mistress of his from pre-Islamic days named ‘Inaq. She wanted to have relations with him, but he refused her advances, explaining that, “Islam has come between you and me.” He did express a willingness to marry her, but wanted to confer with the Prophet first. Then he concluded his business with the Meccans and returned to Medina whereupon he asked the Prophet ^(p) if he might marry ‘Inaq. The Prophet ^(p) enquired about her, and when he was informed that she was an idolater, the first sentence of this verse was revealed forbidding Muslims from marrying those who make partners with Allah. (*Asbab ul-Nuzul*)

(Men), don’t marry any women who make partners (with Allah) until they become believers.

A maidservant who has faith is *better* than an idol-worshipper, even though you may be strongly attracted to her.



Background on the last part of verse 221: As for the remainder of this verse, a man named ‘Abdullah ibn Rawaha had an African maidservant whom he slapped in anger one day. He felt remorseful and went to the Prophet for advice. The Prophet asked what her habits were, and ‘Abdullah mentioned that she was a very pious Muslim who practiced the faith perfectly. The Prophet answered saying, “‘Abdullah, she is a true believer.” Whereupon ‘Abdullah swore that he would free her and marry her, and he did. Several people went to the Prophet thereafter and, thinking that ‘Abdullah had married a *pagan* maidservant, took it as a sign of the permission to marry pagans. They thus beseeched the Prophet to let them marry pagan women to whom they were attracted, as well. This second part of this verse prohibiting marriage with pagan servants was revealed in response. (*Asbab ul-Nuzul*)

(Women), don't marry men who make partners (with Allah) until they believe.

A servant who has faith is better than an idol-worshipper, even though you may be fond of him.

The influence (of idol-worshippers) will lead you to the Fire, while Allah calls you to

Paradise

and to His Own forgiveness. He makes His verses clear to people so they can be reminded. [221]

An Intimate Prohibition

Background on verse 222: The Jews of Medina had a general habit of forcing their women to leave their homes when they were menstruating, and neither would they eat nor drink with them. All forms of intimacy were also suspended for this time. Some local Arabs also adopted the custom of not having affection or intercourse during menstruation. (Men from Mecca did not subscribe to this prohibition.) A mixed group of local and immigrant Muslim men, with this issue in mind, asked the Prophet about what was allowed and proper for them to do during women's menses, and this verse was revealed in response, which explained what menses was and then merely forbade actual intercourse but nothing else. When the Jews were told of this, one of their rabbis said, "What's the matter with this man? He never hears of any of our customs without challenging them!" (*Ibn Kathir*)

They're asking you about menstruation, so tell (them), "*This is a time of pain and impurity for women, so don't be (fully intimate with them) until they're relieved of it. Then, after they've purified themselves, you may again go to them as allowed by Allah. Indeed, Allah loves the repentant, and He loves the pure.*" [222]

Intimate Permissions

Background on verse 223: This verse was revealed because of a superstition among the Jews of Medina, which they promoted publicly, that if a man had intercourse with his wife from the back then his newborn children would be cross-eyed. The Immigrants from Mecca, who knew nothing of this belief, were marrying Helper women of Medina, and these women kept refusing to engage in that practice for fear of having deformed children. So one of these women went to the Prophet's wife, Umm Salamah, and asked her to ask the Prophet about what the Jews were saying. The Prophet asked his wife to summon the Helper woman,

and he recited this verse, which dispelled that myth and gave a blanket allowance for basically any consensual intimate practice among married couples. (*Tirmidhi*)

Your women are like your fertile fields, so cultivate them as you wish, but always do something beautiful beforehand (so they know that you love them).

Be aware (of your duty to Allah), knowing that you'll have to stand in His presence one day, so convey good news to the faithful. [223]

Fairness during Times of Marital Discord

Background on verses 224-225: This passage was revealed about the case of a man named 'Abdullah who had sworn an oath to Allah to forsake his friend and refuse to reconcile with his wife. He went to the Prophet and received this ruling from Allah in answer. (*Asbab ul-Nuzul*) It is assumed he then reconciled with both.

Don't take the name of Allah as an excuse if the promise is against doing good, acting rightly or making peace among people, for Allah hears and knows (what you're doing). [224]

Allah won't hold you responsible for (unrealistic) promises (or foolish things said) without forethought, but rather for the intentions in your hearts, for Allah is forgiving and forbearing. [225]

Now, those (men) who swear (in anger) to abstain from (having intimate relations) with their wives (cannot prolong their period of abstinence for more than) four

months (and must either begin divorce proceedings to set them free or reconcile with them).

If they do (renounce their oath and reconcile with them), Allah is forgiving and merciful. [226]

Though if they're determined to initiate the divorce (proceedings, then remember that) Allah hears and knows (all things, so behave in a proper manner). [227]

On Divorce

Background on the first part of verse 228:

Some companions, both male and female, had a variety of issues concerning divorce for which they wanted answers. This passage was revealed in response. (*Ibn Kathir*)

Divorced women should wait for three monthly cycles (before seeking remarriage). If they believe in Allah and the Last Day, then they shouldn't conceal (the news) of anything that Allah may have created in their wombs.

It would be best for their husbands to reconcile with them (in that case), if they were inclined to (reconcile).

(Remember that women) have rights, just as (men) do in all fairness, though men have been given an edge over them, and Allah is powerful and wise. [228]

A divorce (pronouncement) can only be (revoked) twice. (After that) they must either (reconcile once and for all) and stay together lovingly, or (they must) end their relationship (in a spirit of) fairness.



Harmonious Marriage

The goal of an Islamically-based marriage is love, family, children and legacy. Allah created males and females to be mates for each other, to comfort each other and to dwell together in harmony. (Qur'an 4:1, 2:187, 30:21, 13:38)

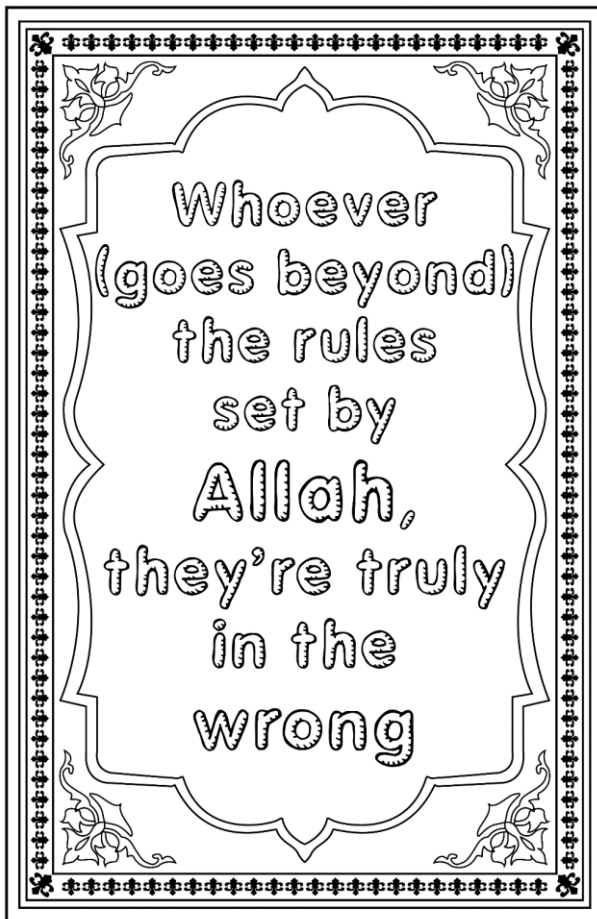
An ideal family is one in which the husband is respected for his role as a protector and guide, and the wife is respected as an equal partner who nurtures the family and safeguards the home. While a woman is allowed to work and have her own wealth independently of her husband, her main focus should be on the family – that is her most important long-term asset.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said that every husband must be good to his family, and that he was the best with his family. In other words, men must follow the example of the Prophet (ﷺ) in their conduct within the marriage.

The Prophet (ﷺ) was supportive of his family, did not raise his voice in anger, nor did he ever oppress or physically abuse his wives. He helped with household chores, listened to the concerns of family members, shared all he had and made an effort to groom himself including taking regular baths, wearing scented oils, brushing his teeth several times daily and keeping his clothes clean.

While ideally, both the husband and wife will take care to make the marriage work, Islam also recognizes that there are times when a marriage is untenable. Counseling is encouraged, and a man in particular, is counseled to persevere if he is dissatisfied. The Prophet (ﷺ) once said, "A believing man must not hate a believing woman because for every quality he dislikes, there is another one that he will like." (Muslim)

If one or both partners seek a divorce, then they can do it, but the Prophet (ﷺ) exclaimed that divorce is the most hateful of the things allowed by Allah. In that case, fairness must prevail, and the children must be cared for in the best way by mutual agreement. Why do you think the Qur'an directly addresses these issues



Women are Allowed to Initiate Divorce

Background on the last part of verse 229: The last part of this verse is taken as proof that women can initiate divorce against their husbands. It was revealed about the case of a woman named Habeebah bint Sahl who went to the Prophet and waited outside his door early one morning. When he came out of his house to attend the morning prayer, he noticed her and asked who she was. She replied, and then the Prophet asked her, "What's the matter?" She answered, "(My husband) Thabit and I (are the matter). Messenger of Allah, I don't criticize his practice of the religion or his personal habits, but after having accepted Islam, I don't like being unappreciative (by disliking him, ignoring him and refusing his needs)." The Prophet then allowed her to divorce him upon her returning to him the garden he gave her as her dowry. (Bukhari, Ibn Kathir)

You (men) are not allowed to take back anything you gave to (your wives), unless both sides fear breaking the rules set by Allah.

If so, then there will be no sin on either of them if she returns something (of her dowry) to be free (of her husband).

These are the rules set by Allah, so don't go beyond them; whoever (goes beyond) the rules set by Allah, they're truly in the wrong. [229]

Don't Take Marriage and Divorce Lightly

(If a man pronounces) divorce (against his wife the third, irrevocable time), then he cannot remarry her until after she's been married and divorced by another.

If this condition is met, then there is nothing wrong for either of them if they reunite, intending to follow the rules of Allah. These are Allah's rules, clarified for those who understand. [230]

When you (men initiate) divorce (proceedings against) women, and they've fulfilled the end of their waiting period, then either reconcile with them fairly and stay together, or let them go fairly.

Don't take them back in order to be spiteful and cruel, for whoever does that brings corruption upon his own soul.

Don't take Allah's verses lightly. Remember His favors upon you, and

(contemplate the meaning of) what He revealed to you of the Book and the wisdom (that came along with it), as both of them are for your instruction. Be mindful of Allah, and know that Allah is well aware of everything (you do). [231]

Don't Prevent former Wives from Remarriage

Background on verse 232: The exact reason for the revelation of this verse is as follows. A man named Ma'qil ibn Yasar gave his sister in marriage to a man in the community, but the couple soon divorced. After some time passed, however, both the man and the woman began to miss each other, and they both desired to get married again. (The man had never said 'divorce' three times, so he was still eligible to remarry her again.) When the man approached Ma'qil and asked to remarry his sister once more, Ma'qil was outraged and said, "You thankless man! I honored you and married her to you, but you divorced her! By Allah! She will never be returned to you!"

This verse was revealed to the Prophet concerning this situation, and when it was recited to Ma'qil, he said, "I hear and obey my Lord!" He then let the man remarry his sister, and he paid the compensation for having to break his vow. (*Bukhari, Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi, Bayhaqi*) So, this verse is a warning for family members who may try to obstruct a divorced couple from reuniting.

When you've divorced women, and they've completed the waiting period, don't prevent them from marrying their former (husbands), if they've agreed with each other in a fair manner.

This instruction is for all those among you who believe in Allah and the Last Day. That's the most wholesome course of action, and Allah knows (why), even if you don't know. [232]

On Child Care and Maintenance Issues

Mothers should nurse their children for two full years. This (time period) is for the one who can complete this term. (During this time, the father,) the one to whom the child was born, must support (the expenses of the child) according to his means, though no one will be forced to do more than he is able.

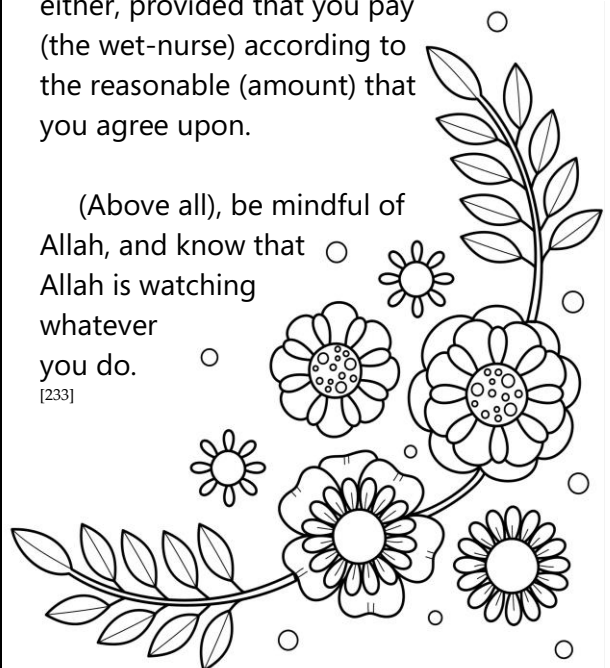
Neither the mother nor the father should be treated unfairly on account of their child. This also applies to whoever must assume responsibility (in the event of the father's death).

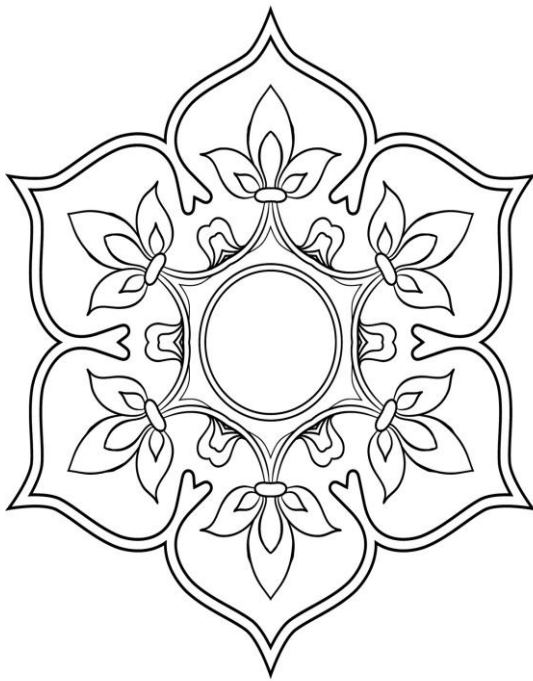
If both (parents) discuss and then agree to wean (the child before two years is up), and have consulted upon this, then there is no blame on them for that.

If you wish to hire a wet-nurse for your children, there is no blame on you for that, either, provided that you pay (the wet-nurse) according to the reasonable (amount) that you agree upon.

(Above all), be mindful of Allah, and know that Allah is watching whatever you do.

[233]





On Widows and Remarriage

If any of you (husbands) die leaving widows behind, then they must wait for four months and ten days (before they can remarry). When they've finished that term, then there will be no blame upon you if they **honorably** do as they please with themselves, and Allah is well-informed of what you do. [234]

There's also no blame on (any of) you (men) if you propose (to a widow), nor (is there anything wrong if you secretly) desire (to marry one while she's still completing her waiting period). Allah already knows if you're thinking about them.

Just don't make secret commitments unless you can speak to them in respectable terms, and don't finalize the marriage details until the appointed waiting period is over.

Know that Allah is already aware of what's on your minds, so be wary of Him, and know that Allah is forgiving and forbearing. [235]

Dowry Details

Background on verses 236-237: The Prophet married a woman named Umaymah bint Sharahil. After the wedding ceremony was finished, she was escorted to where the Prophet was sitting, and he extended his hand to her. She suddenly changed her mind and decided that she didn't want to be married to the Prophet after all. The Prophet asked a man named Abu Usayd to give her some goods and the gift of two sets of clothes, and then she was released from the marriage bond. (Bukhari)

There's no blame on you in divorcing women before the consummation of marriage or the settling of the dowry, as long as (the bride) is compensated with a gift - the rich and poor as they're able. A fair gift is a duty upon those who want to do what's most proper. [236]

However, if you divorce (a woman) before the consummation of marriage and after the settling of the dowry, then half of the dowry must be given to her unless she forgives it, or (the groom) in whose hand is the marriage tie chooses (to give her the full dowry).

Giving the whole to her is closer to piety, so don't fail to be generous to each other, for Allah is watching whatever you do. [237]

Don't Neglect the Prayer even in Times of Fear

Background on verses 238-239: The prayer-time mentioned in this passage is usually assumed to be the late-afternoon prayer, or 'asr prayer. Usamah ibn Zayd, the son of the Prophet's adopted son, explained the reason for this verse. He said that in Medina very few Muslims would come out to join the Prophet for the afternoon (*zuhr*) and late afternoon ('*asr*) prayers on account of the heat or because of their business activities. This passage was revealed to remind them of the importance of not missing their prayers during the day even if they are apprehensive about their surroundings.

Guard the (times of) prayer, especially the (late afternoon) prayer, and stand before Allah in a compliant fashion. [238] If you feel threatened (by an enemy force if you prayed in the normal way), then pray while standing or riding, but when you're in a secure place once more, then remember Allah in the way He taught you – in the way you didn't know before. [239]

Provide Maintenance for Widows

Those (husbands) who leave widows behind them should provide for them (in their will at least) a year's expenses and a place to stay. If (any widow) leaves (her home before that), then you won't be blamed for what they reasonably do with themselves. (Remember that) Allah is powerful and wise. [240]

Divorced women should also be given reasonable maintenance. This is a duty for those who are mindful (of Allah). [241] That's Allah making His verses evident for you so you can understand (them better). [242]



Let's Review what we've read so far from verses 219-242. Answer the questions that follow:

What is one good point about why gambling and liquor *should* be prohibited, even though many people may like them?

What does Islam say about orphans?

Why is marriage with an idolater a bad idea?

What advice are men given in verse 223 that is important in their marriages?

According to verse 225, which is more important: actions or intentions? Why do you think that is?

Looking at verses 224-242, how can you summarize the position on the Qur'an with regards to issues of marriage and divorce?

Fleeing an Enemy Won't Save You

Background on verse 243: There is a story of Talmudic origin that has been passed along in some of the books of Qur'anic commentary that this verse is referring to a group of Israelites who fled the plague in fear, only to die anyway. They were later restored to life upon the supplication of Prophet Dhul-Kifl (Ezekiel). It is more probably about a town's militia that attempted to flee from a greater foe, rather than placing faith in Allah that they would prevail. They were still all but defeated, or metaphorically 'dead,' but when they regained their faith, they ultimately prevailed.

Have you ever considered those who fled from their homeland in fear, thinking they would be safe? They numbered in the thousands! Therefore, (as a punishment for their cowardice), Allah said to them, "*So die, anyway!*"

Then He restored them to life. Allah grants His favor to people, though most people are thankless. ^[243] So fight in the cause of Allah (without fear that you might die), and know that Allah hears and knows (all things). ^[244]

Support Allah's Cause with What He Gave You

Background on verse 245: After this verse was revealed, the Jews of the tribe of Banu Qaynuqa began to ridicule Islam, saying that Muhammad's God was stricken with poverty. Verse 3:181 was revealed in response. Also see 5:64 and 36:47.

Who is it that will lend to Allah a beautiful loan, which He will then redouble and increase many times? Allah is the One Who withholds (resources), and (He is the



From the Pen of Believers...

Zeb-un-Nisa'a was a princess of Persia and daughter of Sultan Aurangzeb and his chief consort Dilras Banu Begum. She was known for her intelligence and skill with poetry. She preferred to write her poems under an assumed name, and called herself the Hidden One, or *Makhfi*. In this poem she writes of her call to people to rise up for Allah's Cause and end oppression in the world.

Isn't it time from your long sleep to rise
And lift the veil that hides
you from our eyes?

See how the world is wasted by decay,
So chase the evil influences away.

Let loyalty once more in honor dwell
Or see good faith from
the code of life expelled

The world is filled with men
who fawn and praise
Let us sweep the hypocrisy
away and end its reign

From pole to pole injustice rules the land
So crush the oppressors
and disperse them as you can

Justice has crowned me
with a cloak of night
So let mercy lift the cloak
and give me sight

Anoint my eyes with grace
and ask them to gaze
Bold and unfazed on
Your Glory's Blaze

These eyes, like Yaqub's,
on the road are bent;
Let the (Divine) breeze touch them
with its healing scent.

One Who) grants (bounty to His creatures, so never think you're doing Allah a favor by supporting His cause), for you're (all) going to go back to Him. [245]

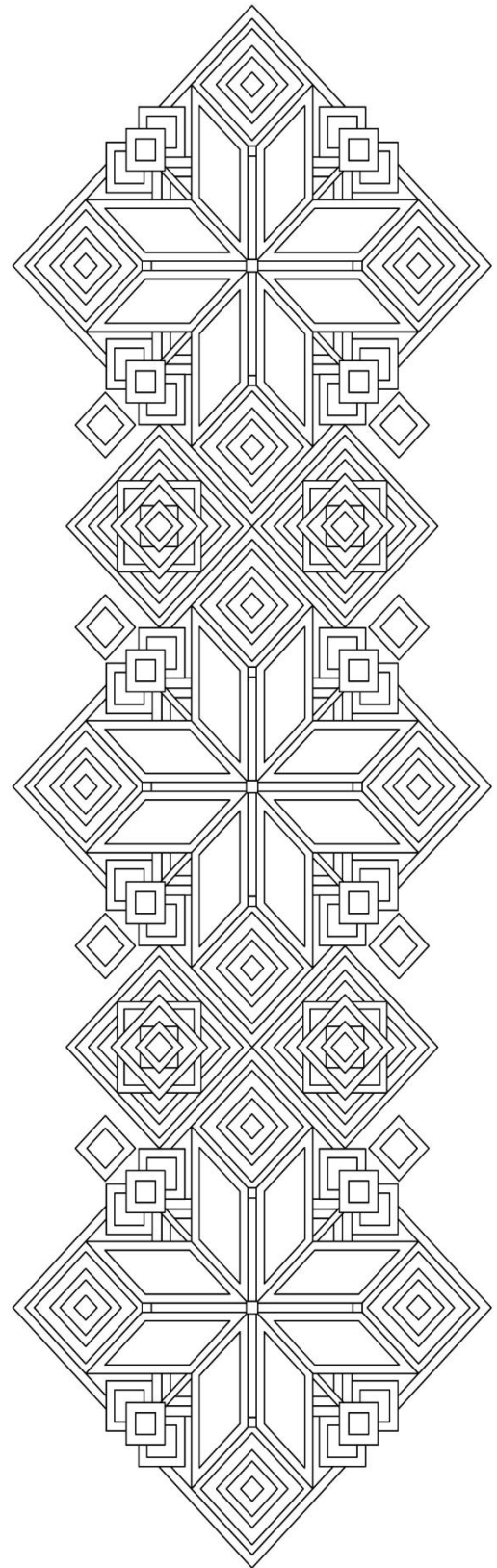
The Children of Israel Ask for a King

Background on verses 246-251: Musa led the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage. His people disobeyed Allah when they were asked to enter Canaan and take possession of it from idol-worshippers. Thus, they were forced to wander in the desert for forty years. (See 5:20-26) When both Musa and that generation of disobedient adults passed away, Joshua became the leader of the people. They successfully entered the Promised Land and established their rule over much of it. For the next three centuries, however, the Israelites were disunited, often feuded with one another, and adopted many pagan customs in the process. From time to time, leaders called Judges arose who imposed their authority over the wider community. Some of these Judges were even prophets. Samuel was the last great one among these authority figures, and he came at a time (approx. 11th century BCE) when the Israelites demanded a strong monarchy to unite them against their many foes. Talut (Saul) became their king after much disagreement. Dawud (David) succeeded him.

Have you ever considered the chiefs of Israel who came after (the time of) Musa? They said to a prophet (named Shammil or Samuel), "*Set up a king for us, and then we'll fight in the cause of Allah.*"

(Shammil, sensing their duplicity), replied, "*And maybe when you're commanded to fight, you won't fight at all!*"

They (insisted they would, however), by saying, "*Why wouldn't we fight in the cause of Allah? We've been driven from our homes and families.*"



Nonetheless, when it came time to fight, they turned back, save for a few among them. Allah knows who the wrongdoers are. [246]

When their prophet told them, "*Allah has chosen Talut to be your king,*" they objected, saying, "*How can he be made our king when we're more qualified than he is to rule? He's not even rich enough!*"

"*Allah has selected him over you,*" he answered, "*and endowed him with knowledge and talent. Allah gives the right to rule to whomever He wants, and Allah is infinitely more knowledgeable (than you).*" [247]

Then their prophet said to them, "*You'll see a sign to prove that leadership is his right in that the Ark of the Covenant will be given back to you. Within it is tranquility from your Lord, for it contains the relics of the families of Musa and Harun. It will be carried (back to you) by the angels, themselves. This will be your sign if you (really) have faith.*" [248]

When Talut set out with his army (to face the Canaanites), he addressed (his men), saying:

"*Allah will test you by that stream. Whoever drinks from it won't be allowed to march any farther with me. Only those who abstain from it will go with me, or who at the very least drink only a sip from their hand.*"

All of them, save for a few, drank from the stream.

Then after they crossed over (the stream), the (few remaining) faithful

(soldiers) lamented, "*We're no match for Jalut (Goliath) and his army today.*"

However, those who were certain they would meet Allah one day said:

"HOW MANY TIMES HAS A SMALLER FORCE DEFEATED A LARGER ONE BY ALLAH'S WILL? ALLAH IS WITH THOSE WHO PERSEVERE!" [249]

As they advanced upon Jalut and his forces, they prayed:

"*Our Lord, pour determination down upon us, make our stance firm and help us against this nation that rejects (faith).*" [250]

And so by Allah's will they routed them, and Dawud killed Jalut. Allah also gave (Dawud) leadership skills, wisdom and whatever else He wanted to teach him.

If Allah didn't enable one people to deter another, then the world would be filled with turmoil, but Allah is infinitely bountiful to the entire universe. [251]

On Religions of the Past

These are the revelations of Allah that We're reciting to you in all truth, for you, (Muhammad), are one of the messengers. [252]

Of those messengers, We've favored some above others; Allah spoke directly to one (of them), while others were raised to a higher rank.

To 'Esa (Jesus), the son of Maryam, We gave miracles, reinforcing him with the Holy Spirit (Angel Jibra'il).

If Allah had wanted to (intervene), the later followers (of all these messengers) would never have fought with each other after receiving the evidence.

Yet, they chose to argue; some believed, and some denied. If Allah had wanted to (intervene), then they would've never fought amongst themselves. Allah does what He wills. [253]

On the Importance of Charity

O you who believe!

Spend (in charity) out of what We've supplied to you before the day comes when *no bargaining* will be accepted, when **no friendship** will matter **NOR INTERCESSION** sway.

(That will be the day) when those who rejected (faith) will finally realize that they were in the wrong. [254]

The Verse of the Throne

Allah!

There is no god but He:
the Living, the Everlasting!
No fatigue overcomes Him,
nor (does He) rest.

All things within the heavens
and the earth belong to Him;
who can intercede with Him
without His behest?

He knows what's
ahead of (people)
and (the deeds)
they've left behind,
while they know nothing of
His knowledge
except for what
He prescribes.

His authority extends over
the heavens and the earth,
and He never tires
in their safekeeping.

He alone is the
Most High,
the Lord
Sovereign Supreme. [255]

Does Islam Allow Freedom of Religion?

Background on verse 256: When the conflict between the Muslims and the Jews of the Banu Nadir was settled, with the requirement that the Jews had to leave the city and move elsewhere, it was found that there were a number of Arab children living among the Jews. This was not unusual, as some were adopted, while others were being raised as Jews with their (Arab) parents' consent. The reason why some Arab children were raised as Jews is because of a curious local custom. If a woman was considered to be barren, she would vow that if she ever was able to give birth, she would raise the baby as a Jew in compensation for the miracle. This happened from time to time. The Medinan Muslims did not want these Arab children to leave with the Jews, and they asked the Prophet (ﷺ) if they could take custody of them. This verse was revealed in response. The Prophet gave the Arab children the choice of going with the Jews or becoming a part of the wider community in Medina. Some left, and others remained. (*Asbab ul-Nuzul*)

There is no (permission) to force (anyone into following this) way of life. The truth stands clear from error. Whoever rejects falsehood and believes in Allah has grasped a firm hand-hold that will never break, for Allah hears and knows (all things). [256]

To those who believe, Allah is a protector Who will lead them out of darkness and into the light.

To those who suppress (their awareness of the truth), falsehood is their protector, and it will lead them out of the light and into the darkness. They'll be the companions of the Fire, *and that's where they're going to stay!* [257]

The Story of Ibrahim and the Arrogant King

Background on verse 258: After Ibrahim (Abraham) had renounced idolatry and began publicly campaigning against it, he devised a plan to show the people of his city that idolatry was false. That was the incident of destroying the idols (see 21:51-66). When the order came for Ibrahim to be thrown in a fire pit, (an order apparently given by the priests of the temple,) the famous incident of Ibrahim surviving the fire unscathed took place (see 21:67-69). After that he was hauled before the royal court, and the exchange recounted below took place. After the king (Nimrod engineered a plot to cause his death, Ibrahim escaped somehow and left Mesopotamia forever.

Have you pondered (the tale of the arrogant king) who argued with Ibrahim about his Lord and the power which Allah allowed him to wield?



When Ibrahim announced, *"My Lord is the One Who gives life and death,"* (the king) cried out, *"I'm the one who (decides) who lives and who dies!"*

Ibrahim replied, *"Well, Allah makes the sun rise from the East, so can you now make it rise from the West?"*

This is how the one who covered (the knowledge of faith in his heart) was

silenced

for Allah gives no guidance to people who are unjust. [258]

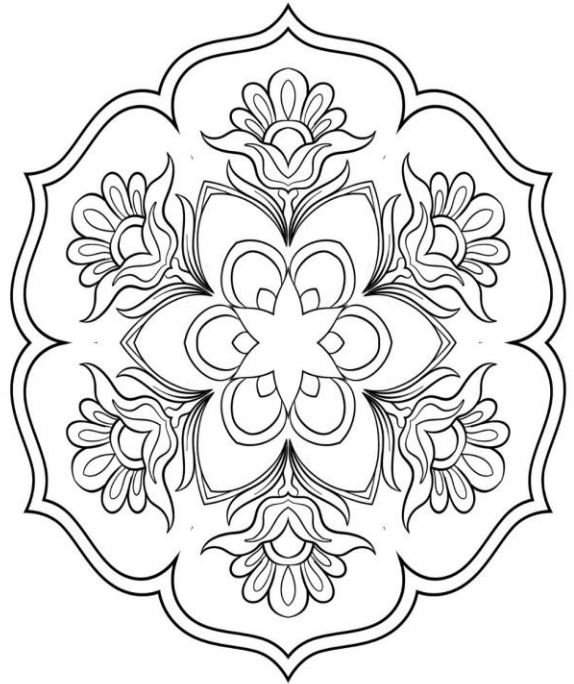
Asking Allah for Proof

(Have you learned the lesson) of the one who passed by a ruined city, whose roofs had tumbled down? *"Can even Allah restore this place after so much decay?"* he mused.

So Allah caused him to die for a hundred years, and after that He raised him back to life and asked, *"How long have you been there?"*

"A day, maybe less," was his answer.

"Not so," declared (Allah), *"you were there for a hundred years after, and while your food and drink are preserved, look at your donkey (for it has died and rotted to bones). I'm going to make your example a sign to others, so look closely (as I raise your donkey back to life). Do you see how*



We knit the bones together and cover them with flesh?"

When (the man) began to understand, he declared, *"Truly, Allah has power over all that exists!"* [259]

A Demonstration for Abraham

Even Ibrahim had once asked, *"My Lord, show me how You bring the dead to life."* (Allah) replied, *"Don't you believe (that I can do it)?"*

"Of course!" answered Ibrahim. *"I'm only asking for my own satisfaction."*

So (Allah) said, *"Take four birds, and train them to come to you (when you call); then divide them up, placing them on separate hills. Call to them, and they'll come swiftly to you. (In this lesson), know that Allah is powerful and wise."* [260]

Charity Multiplies Blessings

The example of those who spend their money in the cause of Allah is like that of a seed grain.

From it seven robust stalks rise, and each stalk contains a hundred grains! Allah gives abundantly to whomever He wants, for Allah is enough of a provider and is full of knowledge. [261]

Charity is not for the Humiliation of Others

Background on verse 262: This verse was revealed in response to the willing and cheerful charity that Uthman ibn Affan (d. 656) gave to support Muhammad's mission. He went to the Prophet and said, "I have eight thousand silver coins. I am keeping four thousand for myself and my family, while I am lending to Allah the other four thousand." The Prophet answered, "Allah bless what you kept and what you gave." (*Asbab ul-Nuzul*)

Those who spend their money in the cause of Allah, and who neither remind others about what they spent nor humiliate (the poor to whom they give charity), will be rewarded by their Lord. They'll have no reason to fear or regret. [262]

Kind words and forgiveness are much better than charity that hurts. Remember; Allah is self-sufficient and is forbearing. [263]

O you who believe! Don't negate your charity by making others feel they owe you or by humiliating (the poor). This is what the boastful do when they spend to be seen by other people, for they don't really believe in Allah and the Last Day.



Gems for the Sky

Ibrahim ibn Adham (d. 782) was a prince who gave up his kingdom and wealth to wander the Muslim world seeking knowledge and spiritual growth through study and righteous living. He was also a big proponent of clansing the soul through charity to the poor. He once saw a wealthy leader ride by and composed this poem in response.

The gems of this *Deen*
can never adorn
The flimsy robe
of pride so worn.

It's brittle texture
so soon would tear,
And throw its jewels
up in the air!

Happy are they
who seek Your Home,
Its joys and pleasures,
So soon they'll know!

As for those who spurn
the goods of this world
And see its temptations
as falsehoods and lies –

Only they
can ever hope to obtain
the Lasting Peace
that lies beyond the skies!



They're like a rock covered only by a little soil that a torrent of rain soon washes away, exposing the hard bare stone underneath. They can't do anything with what they've earned, for Allah doesn't guide people who suppress (their awareness of the truth). [264]

The example of those who spend their money seeking only to please Allah and to strengthen their own souls is like a high garden where rain is plentiful and the yields are double. Even if there's no heavy downpour, the dew is enough! Allah is watching everything you do. [265]

Who wants to have an orchard full of date palms and grapevines, with streams flowing underneath and produce of all kinds, but then be stricken with old age while his children are still small, and then

have a scorching whirlwind come and destroy it all? That's how Allah makes His revelations clear so you can think carefully. [266]

What is True Charity?

Background on verse 267: Some men of Medina would offer clusters of rotting dates in charity, thinking that they wouldn't be noticed among the piles of date clusters that were often hung on the walls of the mosque to feed the poor. This verse came in response, asking Muslims *not* to donate things to the poor that they themselves wouldn't want. (*At-Tabari*)

○ you who believe! Spend in charity out of the good things that you've earned and (of the harvest) of the earth that We've allowed to grow for you. Don't choose to spend (in charity) items of inferior quality - *things that you wouldn't even want to*

receive yourself! Know that Allah is self-sufficient and is praiseworthy. [267]

Shaytan scares you with fears of poverty and tempts you to do shameful things, while Allah promises you pardon and grace. Allah is enough of a provider, and He is full of knowledge. [268]

HE GRANTS
WISDOM TO
WHOMEVER HE
WANTS, AND
WHOEVER
RECEIVES
WISDOM
GAINS GREAT
BENEFITS
THEREBY, YET,
ONLY THE
INSIGHTFUL
EVER REALIZE
THIS. [269]

Whatever you spend in charity or pledge to give is well-known to Allah. The wrongdoers, (who never give), will have no one to help them, (even as they help none).

[270]



Reflection...

Generosity Beautifies the Soul of a Believer

The Qur'an seeks to combat feelings of greed and miserliness by reforming the hearts of people with a call to remember the shortness of life. For their own good, people should learn to let go of some of what is not needed for their survival, because no material goods travel with them into the next life.

A person who has enough to eat, good health, some clothes to wear, a shelter over their head, and something to drink, exclaimed the Prophet, ^(p) has everything in the world compared to the poor, sick, and downtrodden. The Prophet ^(p) said that *sadaqah* (charity) is due on every limb of our bodies, every day. Those who have no resources are to give in charity with smiles, kind words, and helping others with their labor, all cherished by Allah as much as hoards of wealth given in charity.

Now to be clear, Islam does not make getting wealthy forbidden, and the Prophet ^(p) did encourage people to better themselves by saying the giving hand is better than the receiving hand, Islam merely places the duty on all people to 'purify' the blessings of their wealth by redistributing some of it to the needy. Wealth, at whatever level, is a test or trap, the Qur'an warns. (Qur'an 9:24, 9:55, 57:20, 63:9, 69:28) It can make a person a greedy miser who clings to life, never thinking they will leave it. (Qur'an 9:69, 102:1-8)

No, to become the master of your wealth rather than its slave, you must tame it by being willing to let some of it go periodically to remind you that it is only due to Allah's favor or desire to test you that you have it to begin with. (Qur'an 51:19, 18:46, 63:10, 64:16)

Wealth should not only be concentrated among the hands of a few, (Qur'an 59:7) but should be joyfully distributed to help poor relatives, the hungry, orphans, widows and the like, for the sake of Allah. Those who share their bounty with others boost the health of the society they are all a part of. (Qur'an 73:20) So it can be said that the Islamic economic system is a blend of the best of both socialism and capitalism without their worst excesses, and it predates both by over 1500 years!

The famed medieval poet, Abu A'la of Ma'arri (d. 1057), once wrote, "You strut in piety the while you take that pilgrimage to Mecca. Now beware, for starving relatives befoul the air, and curse, O fool, the threshold you forsake" (*Diwan of Abu A'la*)

If you had the opportunity, what could you do to help others in need? How could you bring hope to those who have lost all hope?



So if you donate to charity in public, it isn't wrong, though giving in secret to those in need is much better for you, as this will help to erase some of your sins. Allah is well-informed of everything you do. [271]

Charity is a Sincere Offering to All Who Need It

Background on verse 272: Some Muslim converts disliked giving charity to their non-Muslim relatives, and they asked the Prophet (ﷺ) about this. This verse was revealed telling them that it was perfectly allowed to give in charity to non-Muslims, as helping another human being is a good act, regardless of the religion of another person. (*Asbab ul-Nuzul*)

IT'S NOT
REQUIRED FOR
YOU TO GUIDE
(THE NEEDY
PEOPLE TO
YOUR BELIEFS
BEFORE YOU
GIVE TO THEM
IN CHARITY),
FOR ALLAH
GUIDES
WHOMEVER HE
WANTS.

It's not required for you to guide (the needy people to your beliefs before you give to them in charity), for Allah guides whomever He wants.

Whatever you spend (in charity) is done for the good of your own soul, for in so doing you've (shown that you're) seeking Allah's face alone.

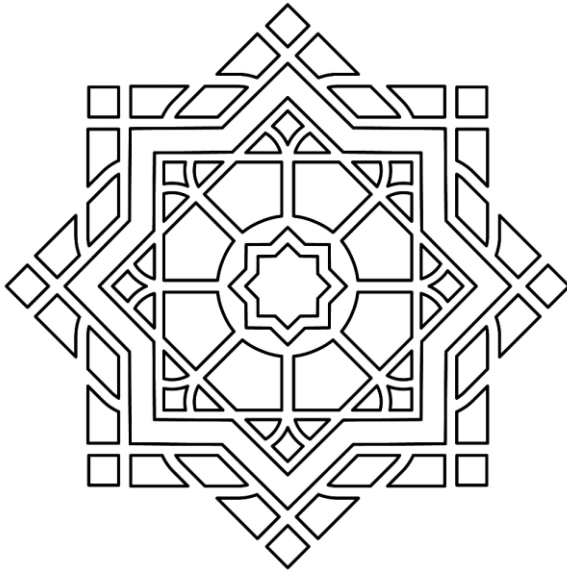
Whatever good you spend will come back to you, and you won't be shortchanged. [272]

(Give to) the needy (missionaries) engaged in the cause of Allah who are prevented from going abroad to support themselves in the world - whom the ignorant consider to be well taken care of because of their modesty.

You can recognize them by their faces for they don't ask people persistently. Whatever good you spend, Allah knows about it. [273]

Background on verse 274: 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, the Prophet's younger cousin, once had four silver coins. He donated one to charity at night, one during the day, one secretly and one in public. The Prophet went to him and said, "This (verse) is for you." Then he recited this new revelation. (*Asbab ul-Nuzul*)

Those who spend their money (in the cause of Allah) through the night and through the day, in **secret** and in **PUBLIC**, will have their reward with their Lord, and they'll have no reason to fear or regret. [274]



The Prohibition of Interest and Other Business Matters

Those who devour interest-money will have no standing except for that of someone who's been knocked down by the touch of Shaytan – *demented*

That's because they say that business and taking interest-money are the same, *but Allah has made business lawful while forbidding interest!*

Whoever listens to this warning that has come from his Lord and desists (from accepting interest may retain the interest already accrued). Then the matter will rest with Allah. Whoever continues (taking interest after this) will (soon) be among the companions of the Fire, *and that's where they're going to stay!* [275]

Allah cancels out any profits made through interest but adds to acts of charity,

for Allah has no love for thankless sinners. [276]

Truly, those who believe and do what's morally right, who establish regular prayer and give the required charity will have their reward with their Lord, and they'll have no reason to fear or regret. [277]

You can Keep Your Principal Investment

Background on verses 278-281: This passage was revealed after Mecca capitulated and was under Muslim authority. An Arab tribe in the countryside named the Banu 'Amr was owed money by the tribe of Banu al-Mughirah. The loan also had a certain interest rate attached to it. Verses 278-279 were revealed to the Prophet and he warned the Banu 'Amr that unless they gave up collecting interest on the loan owed to them, (for the Banu 'Amr were insistent about it), he would fight them. The Banu 'Amr agreed to forgo the interest if the principle were repaid immediately, but the Banu al-Mughirah could not afford this stipulation, and the Banu 'Amr would not back down. Verses 280-281 were revealed, and the Banu 'Amr finally agreed to let the debt be repaid slowly. Also, in his treaty with the semi-autonomous Christian community of Najran, the Prophet used this passage to stipulate that they must give up interest-transactions or their treaty of peace would be nullified.

○ you who believe! Be mindful of Allah, and forego any interest that's owed to you, that is if you really believe. [278] If you don't, then beware of war on the part of Allah and His Messenger.

Though if you *repent*, then you may keep your principal investment. You will do no wrong, and neither will you be wronged. [279]

If a person who owes you money is in financial difficulty, give him time until his circumstances improve, but if you forgive his debt altogether, as an act of charity, that's better for you, if you only knew. [280]

Be mindful of the day when you'll be brought before Allah, for then every soul will be repaid for what it's earned, and no one will be treated unfairly. [281]



The Importance of Business Contracts

Background on the first part of verse 282:

This is the longest single verse of the Qur'an. In practical application, there is a story that demonstrates its purpose. The Prophet negotiated with a bedouin to buy his horse. After the price was agreed upon, the Prophet asked the bedouin to follow him to his house so he could get the money to pay him. The bedouin followed after the Prophet at a slower pace, and along the route various people saw the horse and offered to buy it from the bedouin for more money than what he had agreed to with the Prophet. When the bedouin arrived at the Prophet's house the bedouin said, "If you want to buy this horse, then offer a price for it or I'll sell it to someone else." The Prophet, rightly thinking that he had already closed negotiations with the bedouin, said, "Didn't I already arrange to buy the horse from you?" The bedouin said, "By Allah, I haven't sold it to you." Then people gathered while the two were disputing. Eventually the bedouin backed down, but the point was made

that in the absence of a written contract for a one-time deal, witnesses are asked to be present. (Ahmad)

○ you who believe! When negotiating transactions involving future obligations and (delivery) schedules, finalize any agreement in writing. Let a legal secretary accurately record the terms between each side.

No legal secretary should refuse to write as Allah taught him, so let him record (the contract accurately). Let the borrower read out the terms (as the secretary writes), and let him fear Allah his Lord, and not leave out any obligation on his part.

If the borrower is mentally handicapped, suffering from some illness or (in health too poor) to dictate (the terms) himself, then let his representative dictate the contract faithfully, and have two of your men to act as witnesses.

If two men are not available, then choose a man and two women of whom you approve to be the witnesses, because if one of the (women is not skilled at business) and makes an error (in future legal testimony), then the other may

remind her. If the witnesses are summoned, then they must not refuse to come.

Never neglect to draw up a contract for future transactions, whether for large or small sums. That's most fair in the sight of Allah and better for proof and avoiding doubt (concerning your reputations) among yourselves.

If the transaction involves merchandise for only a one-time, face-to-face deal, then there's nothing wrong if you forego a written contract, but have witnesses for commercial contracts.

Ensure that the witnesses and secretaries remain unharmed, for it would be a great sin on your part (if you pressured them unfairly). Be mindful (of Allah), for it's Allah Who is teaching you, and Allah knows about all things. [282]

If you're traveling and a legal secretary is unavailable, then taking a deposit (is good enough to seal the deal). If one of you makes a good-faith deposit with another, then let the **trusted** one fulfill his duties and fear Allah his Lord.

Never suppress any evidence, for whoever does that will have his heart tarnished with sin, and Allah knows everything you do. [283]

In What shall We Believe?

All things within the heavens and the earth belong to Allah. Whether you reveal what's in your soul or suppress it, Allah will make you answer for it. He'll pardon whom He pleases and punish whom He wills, for Allah has power over all things. [284]

The Messenger believes in what his Lord revealed, as do the faithful. Each of them believes in Allah, His angels, His books and His messengers. (The believers say), "We don't consider one of His messengers as being better than another."



Tears of Yearning

Zeb-un-Nisa'a (d. 1702) was a princess of Persia and daughter of Sultan Aurangzeb and his chief consort Dilras Banu Begum. She was known for her intelligence and skill with poetry. She preferred to write her poems under an assumed name, and called herself the Hidden One, or Makhfi. This poem was translated by Paul Whalley.

O Lord! Grant me what my faithful heart desires. Protect my aching soul from every blazing fire

You seem so far away;
bring me near to You.

Though I'm weak and all confused,
help me break through

From the depths of sin in which I dwell, take me up,
as Your Yusuf from the well.

Preserve my tears from falling wasted in the bitter sand;
Gather them together, kind Lord,
into Your open hand.

And from the ashes of my past distress
Bring the flowers of hope
to bloom for me at last.

(They pray), " *We hear, and we obey, (and we seek) Your forgiveness, Our Lord, for we (know that our) final destination is back with You.*" [285]



For What shall We Pray?

Background on verse 286: When verse 284 was revealed, Abu Bakr, 'Umar, Mu'adh ibn Jabal and others went to the Prophet and knelt down humbly, saying, "Messenger of Allah, we swear by Allah that this is the hardest verse ever revealed for us. All of us speak inwardly of things that we don't like in our hearts, for all of us would desire to own the whole world. If we're condemned for what we think to ourselves, then we're doomed."

The Prophet replied, "This is how the verse was revealed." The companions lamented that they couldn't bear such a strict burden, and the Prophet suggested they could either disobey Allah like the people of Moses did or they could obey Allah. They reaffirmed their faith, and a year passed with no further word from Allah on this issue. Then this verse was revealed that gave them relief, saying that Allah would not burden a soul beyond what it could bear; thus, Allah would not hold people to account for what they said within their own thoughts. (*Asbab ul-Nuzul*)

Allah will not burden any soul beyond what it can bear. Each will enjoy the good of what it gains, as indeed each (will suffer for the wrong) it has earned by its own efforts. (Pray then these words:)

"Forgive us, our Lord, if we forget or sin. Don't test us, our Lord, as those before us have been.

"Don't burden us, our Lord, with something beyond our capacity. Forgive us our trespasses, and grant us Your mercy. You alone are our Protector; so help us against those who are rejecters." [286]

Let's **R**eview what we've read so far from verses 243-286. Answer the questions that follow:

Verse 244 contains an important lesson for people facing overwhelming odds. What is the lesson, and how can you apply it to your own life?

Verses 246-251 echo the struggle of Prophet Musa with his people in verses 63-74. Compare the two sets of verses and describe the similarities.

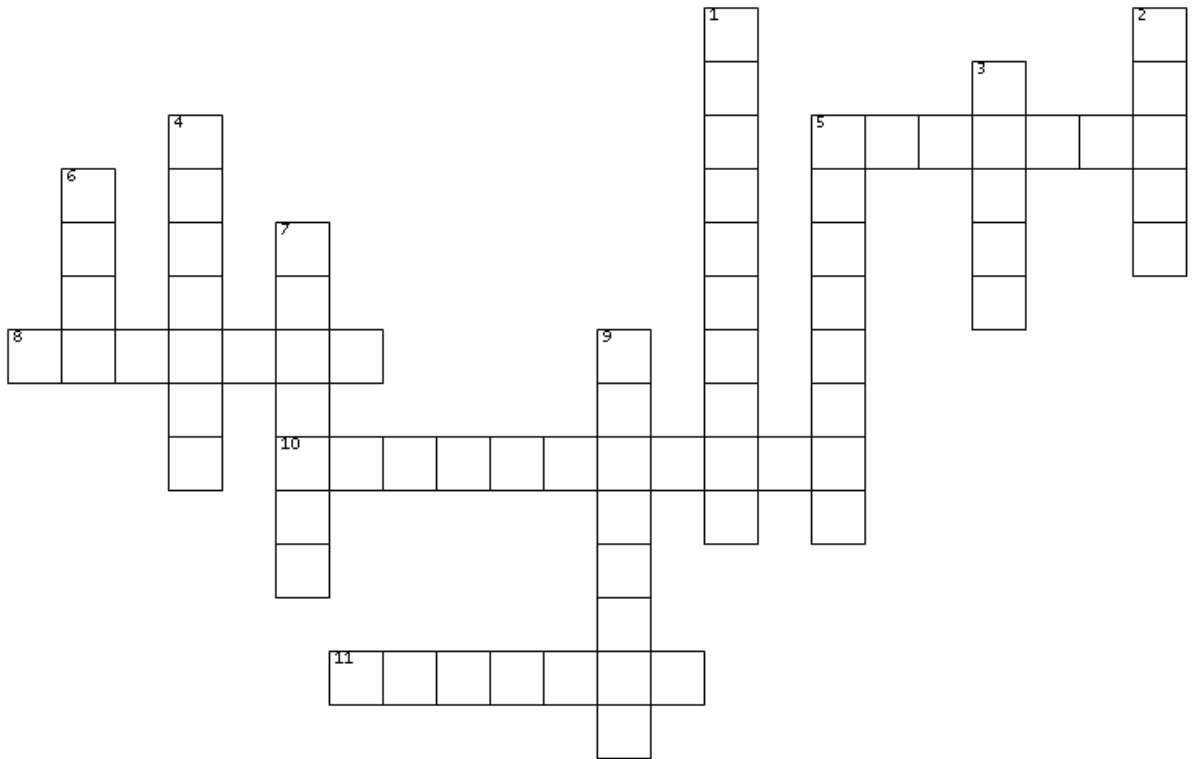
What 'big lie' have critics of Islam pushed, that is easily refuted by verse 256?

Describe something about the Islamic concept of Charity, as outlined in verses 261-274.

Which part of verse 286 resonates with you most powerfully and why?

Knowledge Check

Directions: Use the clues to fill in the correct words in the puzzle.



ACROSS

- 5. He was neither a Jew nor a Christian
- 8. This practice enhances our mindfulness of Allah
- 10. Allah offers it to all who ask for it
- 11. He wants to mislead all people

DOWN

- 1. The people who pretend to believe
- 2. Men must respect their rights
- 3. He was the first king of Israel
- 4. If you do this to the poor it ____ your charity
- 5. This financial practice is forbidden
- 6. He was appointed to rescue the Children of Israel
- 7. When we listen to Allah and obey Him we are...
- 9. What is the answer to our prayer for guidance in the first surah?

THE FAMILY OF AMRAM

3: **Ali 'Imran** **Medinan Period**

The main focus of this chapter, which is named after a clan of Jewish priests whose lineage stretches back to the time of Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron), is to introduce the idea that Allah has sent an eternal message to the world in a continuous (and evolving) chain of prophethood. Judaism, Christianity and other religions were founded by true prophets who taught monotheism and righteous living, and there has been no corner of the globe that Allah has not touched with His message. Each successive revealed religion was more advanced than the last, reflecting the corresponding rise in human civilization and cultural development.

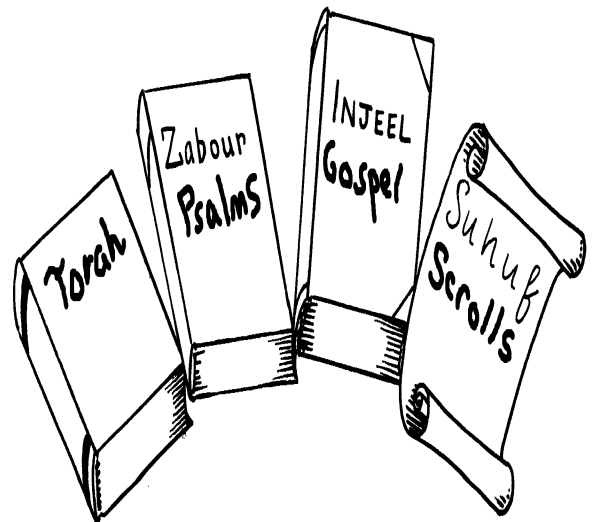
If the people that each prophet left behind, however, lost or distorted his teachings, then a later prophet might be raised to correct their descendants. The stories of Maryam and 'Esa (Jesus) are introduced in this regard, as their example was meant to show how Judaism could be reformed. Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) is offered as the last in a long line of messengers from Allah who all taught essentially the same basic message of salvation. The Prophet said of this chapter, "Learn and recite the chapters of the Cow and Amram for they are the most radiant lights of the Qur'an." (Ahmad)

In the Name of Allah,
the Compassionate, the Merciful

Alif. Lam. Meem. [1]

Allah: there is no god but He, the Living, the Everlasting. [2] He is revealing this Book gradually to you as a truthful confirmation of previous (revelations), even as He revealed the Torah and the Injeel (Gospel) [3] before this as a guide for all people.

He also revealed to you the (prophetic sunnah) standard (of right and wrong).



Those who suppress (their ability to have faith) in these proofs of Allah will suffer the severest punishment, for Allah is powerful and utterly intense in vengeance. [4]

Division Leads to Disintegration

Background on verses 5-9: This passage was revealed for a specific reason. An eye-witness narrates, "My brother and I were present in a gathering that is more precious to me than even red camels. My brother and I had arrived and found that some of the leaders of the companions were sitting close to one of the Prophet's doors. We didn't want to be away from them, so we sat near the room also. Then they mentioned a verse and began arguing over it until they were shouting. The Messenger of Allah was so angry that when he came out to them his face was red. He threw sand on them and said, 'Pay attention people! This is how nations before you were destroyed, on account of their arguing with their prophets and contradicting parts of their scriptures with other parts. The Qur'an does not contradict itself, rather it testifies to the truth of itself. Therefore, however much knowledge you have of it then implement it, and whatever you don't know of it, refer the matter to those who have (more) knowledge about it.'" (Ahmad)

There's not a thing on the earth nor in the sky that's hidden from Allah. [5]

He's the One Who shapes you in the womb as He wills. There is no god but He, and He's the Powerful, the Wise! [6]

He's the One Who is revealing this scripture to you. Among its verses are some that are plain and clearly understood. They're the foundation of the Book.

There are also other (verses, however), that are obscure (and thus open to different interpretations.) Those who have hearts

There's
not a
thing on
the earth
nor in the
sky that's
hidden
from
Allah.

inclined towards dissension dwell upon (the verses) that can be understood in more than one way.

They try to cause division (among the community) by giving them their own (fanciful or misleading) interpretations, but only Allah and insightful people know their true meaning.

They're the ones who proclaim, "*We believe in the (whole of the) Book, because it's all from our Lord.*" Only those who think deeply ever truly understand. [7]

"Our Lord," (they pray), "don't let our hearts go astray, now that You've shown us the way. Shower us with Your mercy, for truly You are the Generous One. [8] Our Lord, You're going to gather all people together one day, and there's no doubt about that, for Allah never breaks His word." [9]

Allah's Plan will Prevail

Background on verses 11-13: After the victorious Muslims returned to Medina following the famous Battle of Badr, in which 313 men overcame a force of approximately 1000 idol-worshippers, the Prophet addressed the leaders of the Jewish tribes of Medina, trying to impress upon them that Islam was a power with which to be reckoned and that they should look again into their scriptures where they would find prophecies about him. It was already a hotly debated topic among the Jews of the city, and a few had already openly joined Islam. The bulk of the Jews, however, were not convinced, and they publicly belittled the Muslim victory at Badr. One of the leaders of the Jewish Banu Qaynuqa tribe said, "Muhammad! Don't be overconfident, for you met the weak (Meccans), who know nothing of war. So what that you defeated them! If you fight us then you would find out how tough we are." This passage was revealed in response. A short while later, fighting broke out between the two sides, and the defeated Banu Qaynuqa were exiled from the city. (*Asbab ul-Nuzul*)

As for those who suppress (their inner yearning for faith), neither their money nor their children will save them in the least from Allah – *they'll just be more fuel for the flame!* [10]

They're no better than the people of Pharaoh and all those (faithless people) before them who denied Our signs. Allah seized them for their sins, *and Allah is a strong punisher.* [11]

Say to those who reject (the truth), "*You'll soon be defeated and gathered together in Hellfire - and how terrible a resting place!*" [12]

You've already been given a sign in the two armies that clashed (at the battle of

Badr). One (army) was fighting in the cause of Allah, while the other was resisting Him.

With their own eyes (your opponents) saw you to be twice their number, (even though you were outnumbered by them), for Allah reinforces with His help whomever He wants. There's a lesson in this for those who have eyes to see! [13]

Materialism and its Allure

People are infatuated with the (worldly) pleasures they so ardently desire, such as women, children, mounds of gold and silver, well-bred horses, livestock and productive land. These are the goods of this worldly life, but nearness to Allah is the best investment! [14]

Say (to them):

"Should I tell you about what's far better than (the pleasures of this life)? In their Lord's presence, those who were mindful (of Allah) will have gardens beneath which rivers flow and pure and holy companions to live with forever. (In Paradise) they'll find Allah's good pleasure, and Allah ever watches over His servants." [15]

"They're the ones who used to say, 'Our Lord, we believe, so forgive us our sins and protect us from the punishment of the Fire.'" [16]

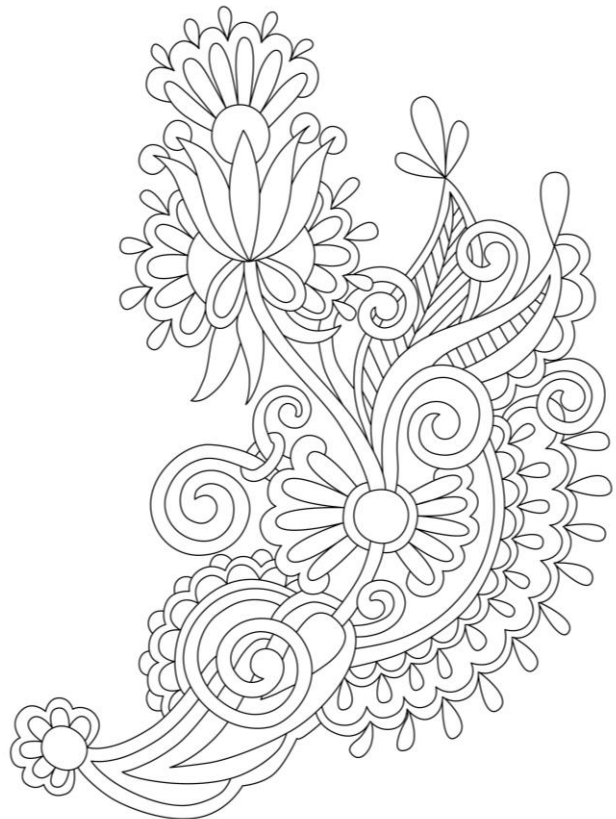
"They're the patient, sincere, devout and charitable, and they seek forgiveness (for their shortcomings) even at the early light of dawn." [17]

The Mistakes of the Past

Background on verse 18: Two rabbis from Damascus arrived in Medina desiring to meet with the Prophet. When they were in his presence, they asked him his name. They then requested that he answer one question of theirs that, if he answered it correctly, would convince them that he was, in fact, the foretold prophet of which their scriptures had spoken. They asked him, "What is the greatest verse in the Book of Allah?" This particular verse was revealed to the Prophet, and the rabbis, being filled with wonder, accepted Islam. (*Asbab ul-Nuzul*)

Allah affirms that there is no god but He, as do the angels and the people of knowledge who are firmly grounded (in knowledge).

There is no god but He,
the Powerful, the Wise! [18]





The (only valid) way of life in the sight of Allah is surrender (to His will). The Followers of Earlier Revelation didn't take to divergent views except out of jealousy of each other after they received this knowledge. Whoever rejects the proofs of Allah (should remember) that Allah is swift in settling accounts. [19]

If they argue with you, then say to them, *"I've surrendered my whole self to Allah, as have those who follow me."*

Then ask the Followers of Earlier Revelation and the unschooled (people of Arabia) who've never received (any revelation before), *"Will you now surrender yourselves (to Him)?"*

If they surrender themselves (to Allah), then they will have found guidance. If they turn back, well, your duty was only to convey the message, and Allah is watching His servants. [20]

Those who reject the signs of Allah and who killed the prophets and killed those who called for justice among people, even though it was against all right (to kill them), give them the news of a painful punishment. [21]

Any good they do is wasted both in this life and the next, and they'll have no one to help them. [22]

Allah Decides His Response

Background on verses 23-25: This passage was revealed on an occasion when the Jews asked Muhammad's opinion about a legal judgment, and they refused to accept his ruling even

though it was congruent with their religion.
(*Ibn Kathir*)

Have you ever considered (the case of the Jews of Medina) who received a portion of the scripture in the past? Now they're being called to the (last) Book of Allah to settle their disagreements; yet, some of them turn away and decline (the offer of help)! [23]

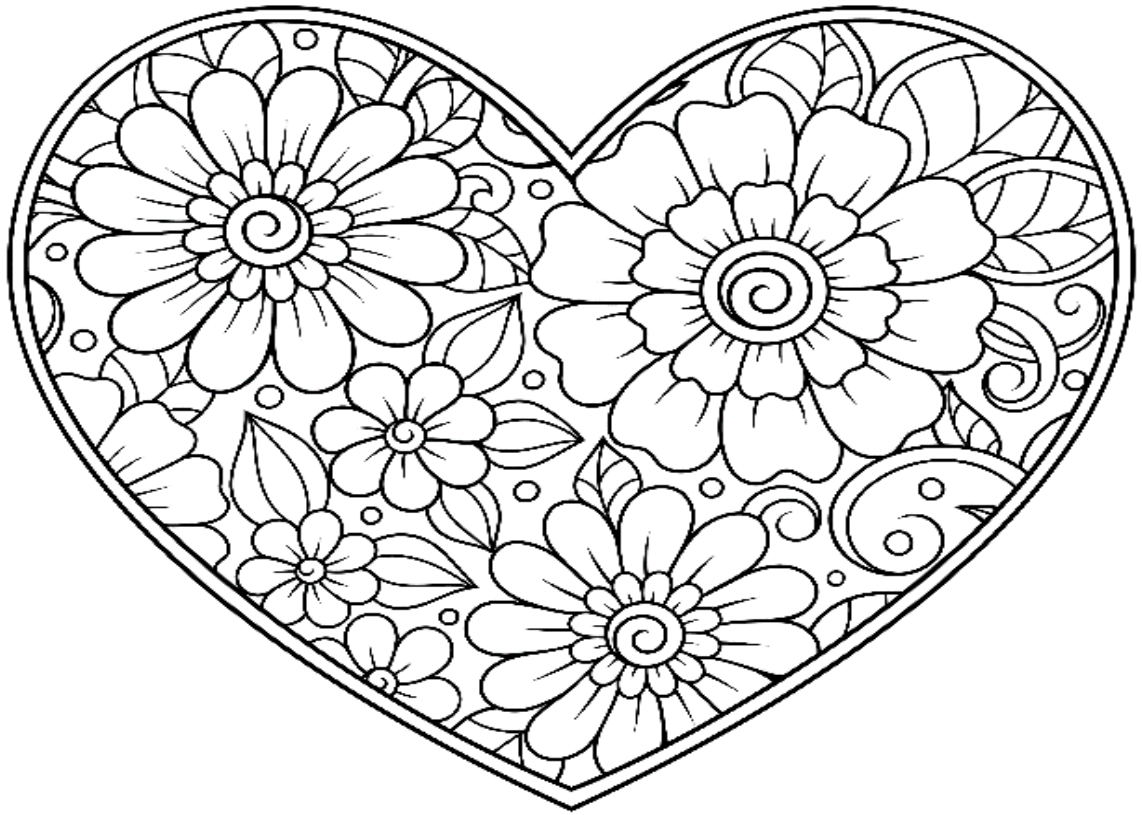
That's because their excuse is to say, *"Our punishment (from Allah) will only last a set number of days,"* but they're deceived in their religion by the very (lies) they themselves have fabricated! [24]

How will it be when We gather them all together on that day of which there is no doubt, when every soul will get what it deserves without any unfairness? [25]

The Call of the Lord will Triumph

Background on verses 26-27: When the Muslims were busy digging a trench around Medina just before the Battle of the Trench, a large stone was encountered in one of the digging pits. Some companions called the Prophet over to see what could be done about it, and he came to examine it. Then he took up a pick, struck at it, and it shattered sending sparks in several directions. The Prophet then told his men that in those sparks of light he saw visions of Islam triumphing over Persia, Byzantium and Yemen. The hypocrites and Jews of the city scoffed when they heard about what he said and teased the Muslims about it. This passage was revealed in response.
(*Bayhaqi*)

Proclaim (this supplication so they can understand what your beliefs are):



"Lord of All Dominion! You grant authority to whom You please and bring down whom You will. You empower whom You please and weaken whom You will."

"In Your hand is all good, and You have power over all that is. [26] You make the night merge into day and the day merge into night. You bring life from death and death from life, and You grant resources to whomever You want without any limit." [27]

Know a Person by the Company He Keeps

The believers should never take as close allies those who suppress (their awareness of the truth), in preference to those who believe, unless it's absolutely necessary in order to protect yourselves from them (by keeping them close).

Whoever does that (without that one, valid excuse) will find no help from Allah. Allah personally cautions you (against disobeying Him), for the final destination (of all things) is back to Allah. [28]

Say (to them), *"Whether you hide or reveal your inner-most thoughts, Allah knows them, even as He knows everything within the heavens and on the earth, for Allah has power over all things."* [29]

A day (will come) when every soul will be confronted with the good that it's done and also with the evil that it's done, and it will wish that its evil were far away!

Allah is (personally) warning you (to beware) of Him (and His judgment), though He's kind to His servants. [30]

Say (to them): "If you truly love Allah, then follow me, so Allah can love you and forgive you your faults, for Allah is forgiving and merciful." [31]

Then say, "*Now follow Allah and His Messenger.*" If they turn away, (then know that) Allah has no love for those who reject (Him). [32]

Allah can
love you
and
forgive
you your
faults, for
Allah is
forgiving
and
merciful

The Continuity of Allah's Message

Background on verses 33-120: A large number of verses in this chapter (most of those whose content is about Jesus, Judaism or Christianity) were revealed to the Prophet during a series of particularly intense interfaith dialogues in the year 631 with the Jews of Medina, but principally with a visiting delegation of Christians from Najran the following year. Najran was a district in Arabia several hundred miles to the south.

The Christians had come (around sixty in number) with their chief priest, al-'Aqib, aka '*Abdul Masih*, and several high officials who had the favor of the Byzantine Roman Emperor. They had received a letter from the Prophet asking for their submission to the Islamic way of life, but they wanted to find out more about this new faith called *Islam*, and the Prophet graciously invited them to Medina.

When they arrived some weeks later, their officials and even laymen were dressed in such fine vestments of silk and gold that the people of Medina remarked that a delegation of its like had never been seen before. They entered the main mosque and then held a prayer service, facing towards the East. When the Prophet came out to meet them, he saw their clothes and refused to speak to them and left. The Christians were confused, and so asked what was wrong.

'Ali ibn Abi Talib told them that their clothes were too rich and ostentatious, and he advised them to change into simpler clothes. So they left and then returned to the mosque wearing simple robes, and when the Prophet saw them, he exclaimed, "By Allah! When I saw you at first, I saw Satan among you and he was wearing the same clothes as you, so I didn't look at you." Then the dialogue began. The Prophet invited them to join Islam, but the Christians claimed that they were already submitted to God. Then the Prophet challenged them to a public debate the next day. (*Ibn Hisham & Ibn Is-haq*)

When morning came, Salman al Farsi seated the Christians on one side of an open field. The Prophet arrived some moments later carrying his infant grandson Husayn, while his other young grandson Hassan held his finger. His daughter Fatimah and her husband 'Ali also

sat behind the Prophet. When the discussions began, the Prophet brought up a number of points, including the doctrines of trinity and salvation, along with some lesser issues like the eating of pork, the drinking of alcohol and the use of the cross as a symbol.

Among the questions he asked were: "Don't you know that Allah is eternal while Jesus is subject to dying?" "Don't you know that our Lord has control over everything and that He sustains them all. Does Jesus have any of this kind of power?" "Don't you know that nothing is hidden from Allah in the earth and heaven. Does Jesus know any of these things other than what he was taught?" "Don't you know that Allah neither eats, drinks nor eliminates waste, yet the mother of Jesus gave birth to him like other women do, and that he ate and drank and eliminated waste? So how can it be what you claim (that Jesus is God too)?" (*Al-Razi*)

Relevant verses from this chapter were revealed sometimes within the meetings and other times during rest breaks. (Verses 33-34 were perhaps the first revelations recited to the crowd.) Surviving accounts indicate that the Prophet got the better in these debates and that some of the visitors even accepted Islam. The remainder, who chose to continue in their religion, concluded an amicable treaty with the Prophet and returned home with a healthy respect for the new faith.

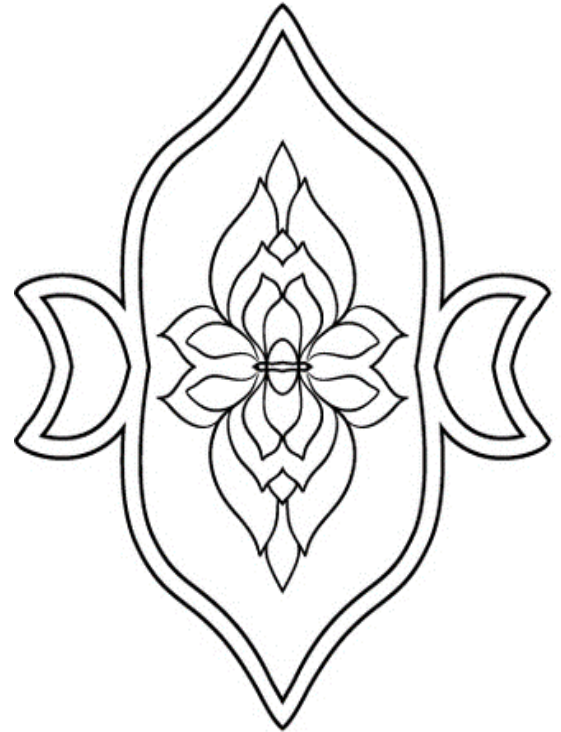
Truly, Allah chose Adam, Nuh (Noah) and the families of Ibrahim and Amrām above all others in the world. [33]

They were all descended from one line, and Allah hears and knows all (about such) things. [34]

The Story of Maryam

A woman of the family of Amrām prayed, "My Lord, I dedicate my unborn child to Your service (as a priest). So accept this from me, for You're the Hearing and the Knowing." [35]

After she gave birth, she cried, "Oh my Lord, I've delivered a girl, (so how can she ever be a priest)!"



Allah knew better (the value of that child) she bore. "A male is not the same as a female," she said, "and so I will call her Maryam, and I commend her and her children to Your protection against Shaytan, the Outcast." [36]

Her Lord **accepted** (the child) graciously, and she grew up healthy and well under the sponsorship of Zachariah to whom she was assigned (as a dependent). Whenever he would enter her room, he would find her provided with food.

"Maryam," he would ask, "where did all this (food) come from?"

"It's from Allah," she would reply, "and Allah provides to whomever He wants without any limit." [37]

Then Zachariah, (seeing the virtue of Mary), called to his Lord, saying, *"My Lord, give me a pure and virtuous descendant of my own, for You hear all requests." [38]*

Then the angels (appeared before him), even as he was standing there in his room.

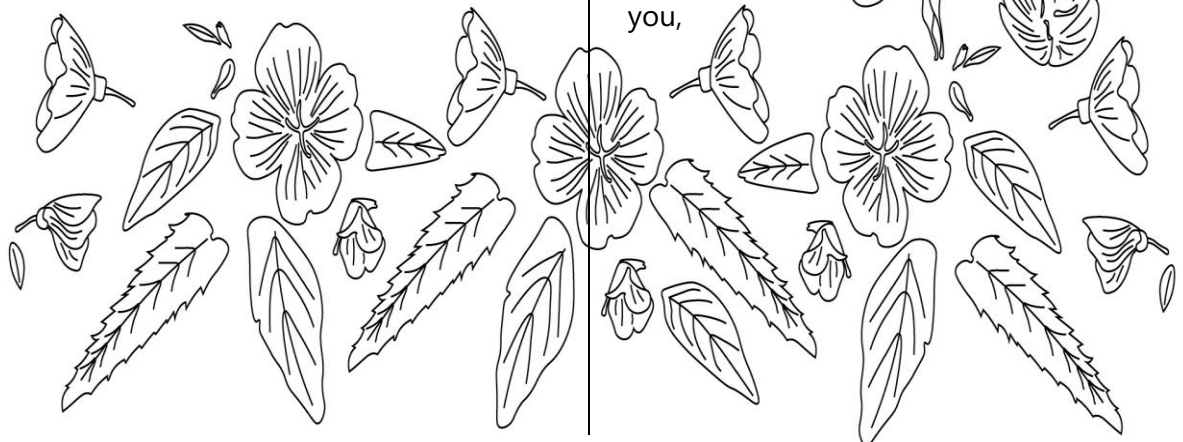
They said to him, *"Allah sends you the good news of (a son) named Yahiya (John). He's going to announce the truth of a word from Allah, and he'll be a disciplined prophet in the tradition of the morally righteous." [39]*

(Zachariah, being astonished,) asked, *"How can I have a son, my Lord, when I'm old and my wife is barren?"*

"So it will be," (the angel) replied. *"Allah does whatever He wills." [40]*

"But my Lord!" (Zachariah) pleaded. *"Give me a sign."*

"Your sign," he replied, *"will be that for three days you will be unable to speak to anyone, except through gestures."*



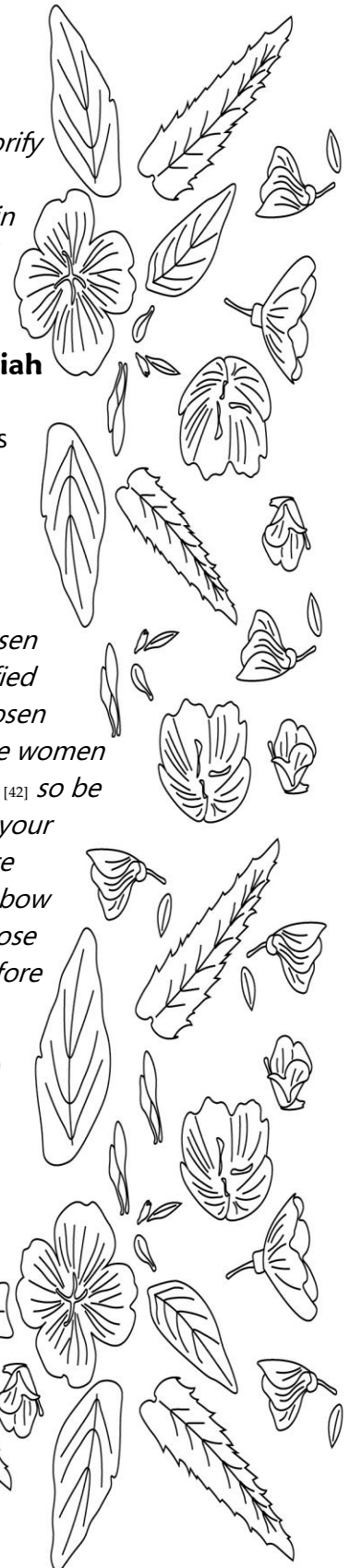
"Remember your Lord frequently (during this time), and glorify Him in the evening and in the morning." [41]

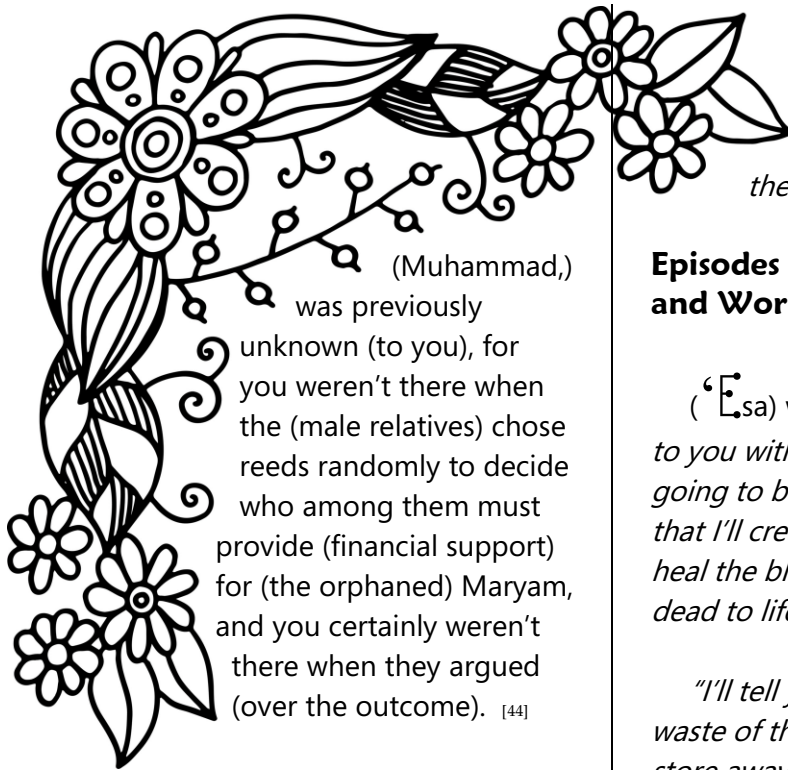
The Birth of the Messiah

The angels (appeared) to Maryam and said:

"Maryam! Allah has chosen you and purified you. He's chosen you above the women of all nations, [42] so be compliant to your Lord, prostrate yourself, and bow down with those who bow (before Allah)." [43]

(This story) that We're revealing to you,





(Muhammad,) was previously unknown (to you), for you weren't there when the (male relatives) chose reeds randomly to decide who among them must provide (financial support) for (the orphaned) Maryam, and you certainly weren't there when they argued (over the outcome). [44]

When the angels (again returned to Maryam after some time had passed), they said, "Maryam! Allah gives you the good news of a word from Him. He's going to be called the Messiah, 'Esa (Jesus), the son of Maryam. He'll be honored in this world, as well as in the next, where he'll be among those nearest (to Allah)." [45]

"He will speak to people in childhood and also when he's grown, and he's going to be one of the morally righteous." [46]

"But my Lord!" she cried out. "How can I have a son when no man has touched me?"

"And so it is that Allah creates whatever He wants," the angels replied. "When He decides something, He only has to say, 'Be' and it is." [47]

"He will teach him scripture and fill him with wisdom (by teaching him) the Torah

and the Injeel (Gospel). [48] (Thereafter He's going to appoint) him as a messenger to the Children of Israel."

Episodes from the Life and Work of 'Esa (Jesus)

('Esa) will tell (his people), "I've come to you with a sign from your Lord. I'm going to breathe life into a lifeless clay bird that I'll create by Allah's command, and I'll heal the blind and the lepers and bring the dead to life, all by Allah's command.

"I'll tell you what you consume (and waste of the world), as well as what you store away (of good deeds for Judgment Day). (Know that) in all of these things is a great sign if you really have faith." [49]

"I've also come to verify the truth of the Torah that was revealed before me and to make lawful some things that were forbidden to you before. I'm coming to you with proof from your Lord, so be mindful of Allah and obey me. [50] Truly, Allah is my Lord and your Lord, so serve Him. That's a straight way (of life)." [51]

When 'Esa (began his mission and) noticed the disbelief (of his people), he (looked for helpers), saying, "Who will help me (call the people) to Allah?"

(Then a group of) disciples (began to follow him, and), they said, "We'll help (you call people) to Allah, for we believe in Allah, and you can be our witness that we're truly surrendered (to His will). [52] Our Lord, We believe in what You've revealed, and we

follow this messenger, so record us among those who bear witness." [53]

However, it wasn't long before (the faithless) contrived a plot, though Allah did the same - *and Allah is the best planner of all!* [54]

(After his people rejected him,) Allah said, "*'Esa, I'm going to take you completely and lift you up to Myself. I will purify (your reputation which has been tarnished) by those who reject (the truth). I will make those who follow you superior to those who suppress (their awareness of the truth), even until the Day of Resurrection. Then all of you will come back to Me, and I'll judge between you in those matters in which you differed.*" [55]

"As for those who reject (the truth), I'm going to punish them with a harsh penalty in this world, as well as in the next, and they'll have no one to help them. [56] As for those who believe and do what's morally right, they'll be paid their reward. (Know that) Allah has no love for those who do wrong." [57]

Allah is
the **BEST**
planner
of all!



Let's **R**eview what we've read so far from verses 1-57. Answer the questions that follow:

How do verses 2-4 demonstrate that Islam is the most tolerant faith regarding other religions?

According to verse 7, how should we approach the Qur'an's verses?

How do verse 14-17 relate to your understanding of your own life?

Verses 18-27 make a definitive argument. What is it?

Based on the stories of Maryam and 'Esa, what are two key differences between Islam and Christianity regarding the role of 'Esa in the world?