



The Opening (Surah 1)

READING QUESTIONS

1. What do you think is meant by "the straight path"?
2. How does the story of the creation and fall differ from the story in Genesis?
3. What is Allah like?
4. What is wrong with idolatry?
5. What does *surah* 5 reveal about early Islamic attitudes toward Judaism and Christianity?
6. What do you find more interesting about the moral commandments given in *surah* 17?
7. To whom are the laws about women addressed? Why?
8. In your opinion, how do the Pillars of Islam promote spirituality?
9. Why is *jihad* an obligation?
10. How does the *surah* on the resurrection try to convince doubters?

1:1

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH THE COMPASSIONATE THE MERCIFUL

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Creation,
The Compassionate, the Merciful,
King of Judgement-day!
You alone we worship, and to You alone
we pray for help.

Guide us to the straight path

- 1:7 The path of those whom You have favoured,
Not of those who have incurred Your wrath,
Nor of those who have gone astray.



Creation (Surahs 15:1–48, 2:28–39)

In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

- 15:1 Alif lam ra. These are the versus of the Book, the Glorious Koran:

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The day will surely come when the unbelievers will wish that they were Muslims. Let them feast and make merry; and let their hopes beguile them. They shall know the truth.

Never have We destroyed a nation whose term of life was not ordained beforehand. Men cannot forestall their doom, nor can they retard it.

They say: "You to whom the warning was revealed, you are surely possessed. Bring down the angels, if what you say be true."

We shall send down the angels only when Our judgement has been passed. Then they shall never be reprieved.

It was We that revealed the Koran, and shall Ourselves 15:9 preserve it. We have sent forth apostles before you to the older nations: but they scoffed at each apostle We sent them. Thus We will put doubt in the hearts of the guilty: they will deny their apostle despite the example of the ancients.

If We opened for the unbelievers a gate in heaven and they ascended through it higher and higher, still they would say: "Our eyes were dazzled: truly, we must have been bewitched."

We have decked the heavens with constellations and guarded them from all accursed devils. Eavesdroppers are pursued by fiery comets.

We have spread out the earth and set upon it immovable mountains. We have planted it with every seasonable fruit, thus providing sustenance for man and beast. We hold the store of every blessing and send it down in appropriate measure. We let loose the fertilizing winds and bring down water from the sky for you to drink; its stores are beyond your reach. 15:20 15:21

We ordain life and death. We are the Heir of all things.

We know those who have gone before you, and those who will come hereafter. Your Lord will gather them all before Him. He is wise and all-knowing.

We created man from dry clay, from black moulded loam, and before him Satan from smokeless fire. Your Lord said to the angels: "I am creating man from dry clay, from black moulded loam. When I have fashioned him and breathed of My spirit into him, kneel down and prostrate yourselves before him."

All the angels prostrated themselves, except Satan. He refused to prostrate himself.

"Satan," said Allah, "why do you not prostrate yourself?" 15:32

He replied: "I will not bow to a mortal created of dry clay, of black moulded loam."

"Begone," said Allah, "you are accursed. My curse shall be on you till Judgement-day."

"Lord," said Satan, "reprieve me till the Day of Resurrection."

He answered: "You are reprieved till the Appointed Day."

"Lord," said Satan, "since you have led me astray, I will seduce mankind on earth: I will seduce them all, except those that faithfully serve you."

He replied: "This is the right course for Me. You shall have no power over My servants, except the sinners who follow you. They are all destined for Hell. It has seven gates, and through these they shall come in separate bands. But the righteous shall dwell amongst gardens and fountains; in peace and safety they shall enter them. We shall remove all hatred from their hearts, and they shall recline on couches face to face, a band of brothers. Toil shall not weary them, nor shall they ever leave their Paradise." . . .

2:28 How can you deny Allah? Did He not give life when you were dead, and will He not cause you to die and then restore you to life? Will you not return to Him at last? He created for you all that the earth contains; then, ascending to the sky, fashioned it into seven heavens. He has knowledge of all things.

When your Lord said to the angels: "I am placing on the earth one that shall rule as My deputy," they replied: "Will You put there one that will do evil and shed blood, when we have for so long sung Your praises and sanctified Your name?"

He said: "I know what you do not know."

He taught Adam the names of all things and then set them before the angels, saying: "Tell Me the names of these, if what you say be true."

2:32 "Glory to You," they replied, "we have no knowledge except that which You have given us. You alone are wise and all-knowing."

Then said He to Adam: "Tell them their names." And when Adam had named them, He said: "Did I not tell you that I know the secrets of heaven and earth, and all that you hide and all that you reveal?"

And when We said to the angels: "Prostrate yourselves before Adam," they all prostrated themselves except Satan, who in his pride refused and became an unbeliever.

To Adam We said: "Dwell with your wife in Paradise and eat of its fruits to your hearts' content wherever you will. But never approach this tree or you shall both become transgressors."

But Satan made them fall from Paradise and brought about their banishment. "Go hence," We said, "and may

your offspring be enemies to each other. The earth will for a while provide your sustenance and dwelling-place."

Then Adam received commandments from his Lord, 2:37 and his Lord relented towards him. He is the Forgiving One, the Merciful.

"Go down hence, all," We said. "When Our guidance is revealed those that accept it shall have nothing to fear or to regret; but those that deny and reject Our revelations shall be the heirs of Hell, and there they shall abide for ever." . . .



Allah Reveals Himself (Surahs 2:255-257, 112:1-4)

Allah: there is no god but Him, the Living, the Eternal 2:255 One. Neither slumber nor sleep overtakes Him. His is what the heavens and the earth contain. Who can intercede with Him except by His permission? He knows what is before and behind men. They can grasp only that part of His knowledge which He wills. His throne is as vast as the heavens and the earth, and the preservation of both does not weary Him. He is the Exalted, the Immense One.

There shall be no compulsion in religion. True guidance is now distinct from error. He that renounces idol-worship and puts his faith in Allah shall grasp a firm handle that will never break. Allah hears all and knows all. 2:256

Allah is the Patron of the faithful. He leads them from darkness to the light. As for the unbelievers, their patrons are false gods, who lead them from light to darkness. They are the heirs of Hell and shall abide in it for ever. . . .

UNITY

In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Say: "Allah is One, the Eternal God. He begot none, 112:1 nor was He begotten. None is equal to Him." 112:4



Evils of Idolatry (Surah 10:26-38)

Allah invites you to the Home of Peace. He guides whom He will to a straight path. Those that do good works shall be rewarded with abundant blessings. Neither blackness nor misery shall cover their faces. They are the heirs of Paradise: in it they shall abide for ever.

10:27 As for those that have earned evil, evil shall be rewarded with like evil. Misery will cover them (they shall have none to defend them from Allah), as though their faces were veiled with the night's black darkness. They are the heirs of Hell: in it they shall abide for ever.

10:28 On the day when We assemble them all together, We shall say to the idolaters: "Keep to your places, you and your idols!" We will separate them one from another, and then their idols will say to them: "It was not us that you worshipped. Allah is our all-sufficient witness: we were unaware of your worship."

Thereupon each soul will know what it has done. They shall be sent back to Allah, their true Lord, and the idols they invented will forsake them.

Say: "Who provides for you from heaven and earth? Who has endowed you with sight and hearing? Who brings forth the living from the dead, and the dead from the living? Who ordains all things?"

They will reply: "Allah."

Say: "Will you not take heed, then? Such is Allah, your true Lord. That which is not true must needs be false. How then can you turn away from him?"

Thus the word of your Lord is made good. The evil-doers have no faith.

10:34 Say: "Can any of your idols conceive Creation, then renew it? Allah conceives Creation, then renews it. How is it that you are so misled?"

Say: "Can any of your idols guide you to the truth? Allah can guide you to the truth. Who is more worthy to be followed: He that can guide to the truth or he that cannot and is himself in need of guidance? What has come over you that you cannot judge?"

Most of them follow nothing but mere conjecture. But conjecture is no substitute for Truth. Allah is cognizant of all their actions.

This Koran could not have been composed by any but Allah. It confirms what was revealed before it and fully explains the Scriptures. It is beyond doubt from the Lord of the Creation.

If they say: "It is your own invention," say: "Compose one chapter like it. Call on your false gods to help you, if what you say be true!" . . .



People of the Book (Surah 5:44-51, 65-78)

There is guidance, and there is light, in the Torah which We have revealed. By it the prophets who surrendered themselves to Allah judged the Jews, and so did the rabbis and the divines; they gave judgement according to Allah's scriptures which had been committed to their keeping and to which they themselves were witnesses. 5:44

Have no fear of man; fear Me, and do not sell My revelations for a paltry end. Unbelievers are those who do not judge in accordance with Allah's revelations.

In the Torah We decreed for them a life for a life, an eye for an eye, a nose for a nose, an ear for an ear, a tooth for a tooth, and a wound for a wound. But if a man charitably forbears from retaliation, his remission shall atone for him. Transgressors are those that do not judge in accordance with Allah's revelations. 5:45

After those prophets We sent forth Jesus, the son of Mary, confirming the Torah already revealed, and gave him the Gospel, in which there is guidance and light, corroborating that which was revealed before it in the Torah, a guide and an admonition to the righteous. Therefore let the followers of the Gospel judge in accordance with what Allah has revealed therein. Evil-doers are those that do not base their judgements on Allah's revelations.

And to you We have revealed the Book with the truth. It confirms the Scriptures which came before it and stands as a guardian over them. Therefore give judgement among men in accordance with Allah's revelations and do not yield to their fancies or swerve from the truth that has been made known to you. 5:48

We have ordained a law and assigned a path for each of you. Had Allah pleased, He could have made you one nation: but it is His wish to prove you by that which He has bestowed upon you. Vie with each other in good works, for to Allah you shall all return and He will declare to you what you have disagreed about.

Pronounce judgement among them in accordance with Allah's revelations and do not be led by their de- 5:49

sires. Take heed lest they should turn you away from a part of that which Allah has revealed to you. If they reject your judgement, know that it is Allah's wish to scourge them for their sins. Many of them are wrongdoers.

Is it pagan laws that they wish to be judged by? Who is a better judge than Allah for men whose faith is firm?

Believers, take neither Jews nor Christians for your friends. They are friends with one another. Whoever of you seeks their friendship shall become one of their number. Allah does not guide the wrongdoers. . . .

If the People of the Book accept the true faith and keep from evil, We will pardon them their sins and admit them to the gardens of delight. If they observe the Torah and the Gospel and what is revealed to them from Allah, they shall be given abundance from above and from beneath.

Some of them are righteous men; but many of them do nothing but evil.

Apostle, proclaim what is revealed to you from your Lord; if you do not, you will surely fail to convey His message. Allah will protect you from all men. He does not guide the unbelievers.

Say: "People of the Book, you shall not be guided until you observe the Torah and the Gospel and that which is revealed to you from your Lord."

That which is revealed to you from your Lord will surely increase the wickedness and unbelief of many of them. But do not grieve for the unbelievers.

Believers, Jews, Sabaeans, or Christians—whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does what is right—shall have nothing to fear or to regret.

We made a covenant with the Israelites and sent forth apostles among them. But whenever an apostle came to them with a message that did not suit their fancies they either rejected him or slew him. They thought no harm would come to them: they were blind and deaf. Allah turned to them in mercy, but many of them again became blind and deaf. Allah is ever watching over their actions.

Unbelievers are those that say: "Allah is the Messiah, the son of Mary." For the Messiah himself said: "Children of Israel, serve Allah, my Lord and your Lord." He that worships other gods besides Allah shall be forbidden Paradise and shall be cast into the fire of Hell. None shall help the evil-doers.

Unbelievers are those that say: "Allah is one of three." There is but one God. If they do not desist from so saying, those of them that disbelieve shall be sternly punished.

Will they not turn to Allah in repentance and seek forgiveness of Him? He is forgiving and merciful.

The Messiah, the son of Mary, was no more than an apostle: other apostles passed away before him. His mother was a saintly woman. They both ate earthly food.

See how We make plain to them Our revelations. See how they ignore the truth. . . .



Ethics (Surah 17:21–37)

Serve no other gods besides Allah, lest you incur disgrace and ruin. Your Lord has enjoined you to worship none but Him, and to show kindness to your parents. If either or both of them attain old age in your dwelling, show them no sign of impatience, nor rebuke them; but speak to them kind words. Treat them with humility and tenderness and say: "Lord, be merciful to them. They nursed me when I was an infant."

Your Lord best knows what is in your hearts; He knows if you are good. He will forgive those that turn to Him.

Give to the near of kin their due, and also to the destitute and to the wayfarers. Do not squander your substance wastefully, for the wasteful are Satan's brothers; and Satan is ever ungrateful to his Lord. But if, while waiting for your Lord's bounty, you lack the means to assist them, then at least speak to them kindly.

Be neither miserly nor prodigal, for then you should either be reproached or be reduced to penury.

Your Lord gives abundantly to whom He will and sparingly to whom He pleases. He knows and observes His servants.

You shall not kill your children for fear of want.¹ We will provide for them and for you. To kill them is a great sin.

You shall not commit adultery, for it is foul and indecent.

You shall not kill any man whom Allah has forbidden you to kill, except for a just cause. If a man is slain unjustly, his heir is entitled to satisfaction. But let him not carry his vengeance too far, for his victim will in turn be assisted and avenged.

Do not interfere with the property of orphans except with the best of motives, until they reach maturity.

¹In allusion to the pre-Islamic custom of burying alive unwanted newborn girls.

Keep your promises; you are accountable for all that you promise.

Give full measure, when you measure, and weigh with even scales. That is fair, and better in the end.

Do not follow what you do not know. Man's eyes, ears, and heart—each of his senses shall be closely questioned.

17:37 Do not walk proudly on the earth. You cannot cleave the earth, nor can you rival the mountains in stature.

All this is evil; odious in the sight of your Lord.

These injunctions are but a part of the wisdom with which your Lord has inspired you. Serve no other god besides Allah, lest you should be cast into Hell, despised and helpless. . . .



Laws on Marriage (*Surah 4:13–25, 34–35,* 128–135)

4:13 Such are the bounds set by Allah. He that obeys Allah and His apostle shall dwell for ever in gardens watered by running streams. That is the supreme triumph. But he that defies Allah and His apostle and transgresses His bounds, shall be cast into Hell-fire and shall abide in it for ever. A shameful punishment awaits him.

If any of your women commit fornication, call in four witnesses from among yourselves against them; if they testify to their guilt confine them to their houses till death overtakes them or till Allah finds another way for them.

If two men among you commit indecency punish them both. If they repent and mend their ways, let them be. Allah is forgiving and merciful.

4:17 Allah forgives those who commit evil in ignorance and then quickly turn to Him in repentance. He will pardon them. Allah is wise and all-knowing. But Allah will not forgive those who do evil all their lives and, when death comes to them, say: "Now we repent!" Nor will He forgive those who die unbelievers. For these We have prepared a woeful scourge.

Believers, it is unlawful for you to inherit the women of your deceased kinsmen against their will, or to bar them from re-remarrying, in order that you may force them to give up a part of what you have given them, unless they be guilty of a proven crime. Treat them with kindness; for even if you do not love them, it may well

be that you may dislike a thing which Allah has meant for your own good.

If you wish to divorce a woman in order to wed another, do not take from her the dowry you have given her even if it be a talent of gold. That would be improper and grossly unjust; for how can you take it back when you have lain with each other and entered into a firm contract?

Henceforth you shall not marry the women who were married to your fathers. That was an evil practice, indecent and abominable.

You are forbidden to take in marriage your mothers, 4:23 your daughters, your sisters, and your paternal and maternal aunts, the daughters of your brothers and sisters, your foster-mothers, your foster sisters, the mothers of your wives, your step-daughters who are in your charge, born of the wives with whom you have lain (it is no offence for you to marry your step-daughters if you have not consummated your marriage with their mothers), and the wives of your own begotten sons. Henceforth you are also forbidden to take in marriage two sisters at one and the same time. Allah is forgiving and merciful.

You are also forbidden to take in marriage married 4:24 women, except captives whom you own as slaves. Such is the decree of Allah. All women other than these are lawful to you, provided you seek them with your wealth in modest conduct, not in fornication. Give them their dowry for the enjoyment you have had of them as a duty; but it shall be no offence for you to make any other agreement among yourselves after you have fulfilled your duty. Allah is wise and all-knowing.

If any one of you cannot afford to marry a free believing woman, let him marry a slave-girl who is a believer (Allah best knows your faith: you are born one of another). Marry them with the permission of their masters and give them their dowry in all justice, provided they are honourable and chaste and have not entertained other men. If after marriage they commit adultery, they shall suffer half the penalty inflicted upon free adulteresses. Such is the law for those of you who fear to commit sin: but if you abstain, it will be better for you. Allah is forgiving and merciful. . . .

Men have authority over women because Allah has 4:34 made the one superior to the others, and because they spend their wealth to maintain them. Good women are obedient. They guard their unseen parts because Allah has guarded them. As for those from whom you fear disobedience, admonish them and send them to beds apart and beat them. Then if they obey you, take no further action against them. Allah is high, supreme.

If you fear a breach between a man and his wife, ap- 4:35 point an arbiter from his people and another from hers.

If they wish to be reconciled Allah will bring them together again. Allah is wise and all-knowing. . . .

4:128 If a woman fear ill-treatment or desertion on the part of her husband, it shall be no offence for them to seek a mutual agreement, for agreement is best. Man is prone to avarice. But if you do what is right and guard yourselves against evil, know then that Allah is cognizant of all your actions.

4:129 Try as you may, you cannot treat all your wives impartially. Do not set yourself altogether against any of them, leaving her, as it were, in suspense. If you do what is right and guard yourselves against evil, you will find Allah forgiving and merciful. If you separate, Allah will compensate you both out of His own abundance: He is munificent and wise.

4:131 To Allah belongs all that the heavens and the earth contain. We exhort you, as We have exhorted those to whom the Book was given before you, to fear Allah. If you deny Him, know that to Allah belongs all that the heavens and the earth contain. He is self-sufficient and worthy of praise.

To Allah belongs all that is in heaven and earth. Allah is your all-sufficient guardian. If He pleased, He could destroy you all and replace you by other men. This He has power to do.

Let the man who seeks the reward of this life know that Allah holds the rewards of this life and of the next. He hears all and sees all.

4:135 Believers, conduct yourselves with justice and bear true witness before Allah, even though it be against yourselves, your parents, or your kinsfolk. Whether the man concerned be rich or poor, know that Allah is nearer to him than you are. Do not be led by passion, lest you should swerve from the truth. If you distort your testimony or decline to give it, know that Allah is cognizant of all your actions.

Believers, have faith in Allah and His apostle, in the Book He has revealed to His apostle, and in the Scriptures He formerly revealed. He that denies Allah, His angels, His Scriptures, His apostles, and the Last Day, has strayed far from the truth. . . .



Pillars of Islam and Jihad (*Surah 2:144-150,* *183-200, 216-218*)

Many a time We have seen you turn your face towards heaven. We will make you turn towards a *qiblah* that will please you. Turn towards the Holy Mosque; wherever you be face towards it. 2:144

Those to whom the Scriptures were given know this to be the truth from their Lord. Allah is watching over all their actions. But even if you gave them every proof they would not accept your *qiblah*, nor would you accept theirs; nor would any of their sects accept the *qiblah* of the other. If after all the knowledge you have been given you yield to their desires, then you will surely become an evil-doer.

Those to whom We gave the Scriptures know Our apostle as they know their own sons. But some of them deliberately conceal the truth. This is the truth from your Lord: therefore never doubt it.

Each one has a goal towards which he turns. But wherever you be, emulate one another in good works. Allah will bring you all before Him. He has power over all things.

Whichever way you depart, face towards the Holy Mosque. This is surely the truth from your Lord. Allah is never heedless of what you do.

Whichever way you depart, face towards the Holy Mosque: and wherever you face, face towards it, so that men will have no cause to reproach you, except the evil-doers among them. Have no fear of them; fear Me, so that I may perfect My favour to you and that you may be rightly guided. . . . 2:150

Believers, fasting is decreed for you as it was decreed for those before you; perchance you will guard yourselves against evil. Fast a certain number of days, but if any one of you is ill or on a journey let him fast a similar number of days later on; and for those that can afford it there is a ransom: the feeding of a poor man. He that does good of his own account shall be well rewarded; but to fast is better for you, if you but knew it. 2:183

In the month of Ramadhan the Koran was revealed, a book of guidance with proofs of guidance distinguishing right from wrong. Therefore whoever of you is present in that month let him fast. But he who is ill or on a journey shall fast a similar number of days later on. 2:184

Allah desires your well-being, not your discomfort. He desires you to fast the whole month so that you may

magnify Him and render to Him for giving you His guidance.

2:186 When My servants question you about Me, tell them that I am near. I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he calls to Me; therefore let them answer My call and put their trust in Me, that they may be rightly guided.

It is now lawful for you to lie with your wives on the night of the fast; they are a comfort to you as you are to them. Allah knew that you were deceiving yourselves. He has relented towards you and pardoned you. Therefore you may now lie with them and seek what Allah has ordained for you. Eat and drink until you can tell a white thread from a black one in the light of the coming dawn. Then resume the fast till nightfall and do not approach them, but stay at your prayers in the mosques.

These are the bounds set by Allah; do not come near them. Thus He makes known His revelations to mankind that they may guard themselves against evil.

Do not usurp one another's property by unjust means, nor bribe with it the judges in order that you may knowingly and wrongfully deprive others of their possessions.

2:189 They question you about the phases of the moon. Say: "They are seasons fixed for mankind and for the pilgrimage."

Righteousness does not consist in entering your dwellings from the back.¹ The righteous man is he that fears Allah. Enter your dwellings by their doors and fear Allah, so that you may prosper.

2:190 Fight for the sake of Allah those that fight against you, but do not attack them first. Allah does not love the aggressors.

Kill them wherever you find them. Drive them out of the places from which they drove you. Idolatry is worse than carnage. But do not fight them within the precincts of the Holy Mosque unless they attack you there; if they attack you put them to the sword. Thus shall the unbelievers be rewarded: but if they mend their ways, know that Allah is forgiving and merciful.

Fight against them until idolatry is no more and Allah's religion reigns supreme. But if they mend their ways, fight none except the evil-doers.

2:194 A sacred month for a sacred month: sacred things too are subject to retaliation. If any one attacks you, attack him as he attacked you. Have fear of Allah, and know that Allah is with the righteous.

Give generously for the cause of Allah and do not with your own hands cast yourselves into destruction. Be charitable; Allah loves the charitable.

Make the pilgrimage and visit the Sacred House for His sake. If you cannot, send such offerings as you can afford and do not shave your heads until the offerings have reached their destination. But if any of you is ill or suffers from an ailment of the head, he must pay a ransom either by fasting or by alms-giving or by offering a sacrifice.

If in peacetime anyone of you combines the visit with the pilgrimage, he must offer such gifts as he can afford; but if he lacks the means let him fast three days during the pilgrimage and seven when he has returned; that is, ten days in all. That is incumbent on him whose family are not present at the Holy Mosque. Have fear of Allah: know that He is stern in retribution.

Make the pilgrimage in the appointed months. He 2:197 that intends to perform it in those months must abstain from sexual intercourse, obscene language, and acrimonious disputes while on pilgrimage. Allah is aware of whatever good you do. Provide yourselves well: the best provision is piety. Fear Me, then, you that are endowed with understanding.

It shall be no offence for you to seek the bounty of your Lord by trading. When you come running from Arafat remember Allah as you approach the sacred monument. Remember Him that gave you guidance when you were in error. Then go out from the place whence the pilgrims will go out and implore the forgiveness of Allah. He is forgiving and merciful. And when you have fulfilled your sacred duties, remember Allah as you remember your forefathers or with deeper reverence. . . .

Fighting is obligatory for you, much as you dislike it. 2:216 But you may hate a thing although it is good for you, and love a thing although it is bad for you. Allah knows, but you do not.

They ask you about the sacred months. Say: "To 2:217 fight in this month is a grave offence; but to debar others from the path of Allah, to deny Him, and to expel His worshippers from the Holy Mosque, is far more grave in His sight. Idolatry is worse than carnage."

They will not cease to fight against you until they force you to renounce your faith—if they are able. But whoever of you recants and dies an unbeliever, his works shall come to nothing in this world and in the world to come. Such men shall be the tenants of Hell, and there they shall abide for ever.

Those that have embraced the faith and those that have fled their land and fought for the cause of Allah, may hope for Allah's mercy. Allah is forgiving and merciful. . . .

¹ It was the custom of pagan Arabs, on returning from pilgrimage, to enter their homes from the back.



The Resurrection (Surah 75)

In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

75:1 I swear by the Day of Resurrection, and by the self-reproaching soul!

Does man think We shall never put his bones together again? Indeed, We can remould his very fingers!

Yet man would ever deny what is to come. "When will this be," he asks, "this day of Resurrection?"

But when the sight of mortals is confounded and the moon eclipsed; when sun and moon are brought together—on that day man will ask: "Whither shall I flee?"

No, there shall be no escape. For on that day all shall return to your Lord.

On that day man shall be informed of all that he has done and all that he has failed to do. He shall become his own witness; his pleas shall go unheeded.

75:16 (You need not move your tongue too fast to learn this revelation. We Ourselves shall see to its collection and recital. When We read it, follow its words attentively; We shall Ourselves explain its meaning.)

Yet you love this fleeting life and are heedless of the life to come.

On that day there shall be joyous faces, looking towards their Lord. On that day there shall be mournful faces, dreading some great affliction.

But when a man's soul is about to leave him and those around him cry: Will no one save him? When he knows it is the final parting and the pangs of death assail him—on that day to your Lord he shall be driven. For in this life he neither believed nor prayed; he denied the truth and, turning his back, went to his kinsfolk elated with pride.

75:34 Well have you deserved this doom; well have you deserved it. Well have you deserved this doom: too well have you deserved it!

75:40 Does man think that he lives in vain? Was he not a drop of ejected semen? He became a clot of blood; then Allah formed and moulded him and gave him male and female parts. Is He then not able to raise the dead to life?

12.2.2 Hadith

Hadith means "report," and it refers to a collection of narratives reporting the sayings and actions of Muhammad. Next to the Qur'an, it is the second most authoritative collection of texts in Islam.

During the first two hundred years after Muhammad's death, booklets of *hadith* began to appear on a variety of topics. The number of *hadith* grew substantially and, when systematically compiled in the ninth and tenth centuries, filled 12 multivolume collections.

The *Sunnis*, the majority sect of Islam, recognize nine different collections, but the most widely accepted are the *Two Sahih* (authentic): *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*. The first was carefully compiled and authenticated by al-Bukhari (810–870), a noted Islamic scholar. The second was compiled by a student of al-Bukhari named Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj (d. 875).

There are three Shi'a collections (called *akhbar* rather than *hadith*). According to tradition, they originated with *Ali* and the first *imams* (leaders).

Hadith sayings typically have two parts. The first is the story itself, and the second is a list of names constituting the chain of sources that establish its authenticity. Some stories are considered especially sacred because they contain divine revelations, and others, the noble *hadith* or *hadith sharif*, relate to Muhammad's personal life. *Hadith* were used to answer questions of law, to serve political needs, and to support one or another religious faction. Thousands were rejected as inauthentic, and critical scholarship still debates the authenticity of those that have been accepted.

Below we sample four selections from the *Sahih al-Bukhari*. The first is called "The Night Journey," and it expands on a verse in the Qur'an that reads, "Glory be to him who made his servant go by night from the sacred temple [of Mecca] to the farther temple [of Jerusalem] whose surroundings we have blessed, that we might show him some of our signs" (*surah* 17:1). Some Muslims interpret the night journey as a vision, but others take it literally. In commemoration of this event, Muslims built the famous shrine "The Dome of the Rock" on the former site of the Jewish temple.

Memorization and recitation of the Qur'an is a pious act. Muhammad ritually recited its passages and praised his companions who did the same. Special reciters memorized the Qur'an in its entirety and recited it daily in prescribed tonal songlike vocalizations. However, as the second selection indicates, variations of vocalization were permitted.

Muhammad died in the house of his favorite wife, *A'isha*. His death, described in the third selection,

prompted concerns about a new leader of the Muslim community and fear that Muhammad might become an object of worship. While Muslims have argued and divided over Muhammad's legitimate successor, the following *hadith*, attributed to A'isha herself, claims he appointed no successor.

The last selection from the *Hadith* tells the story of how the third caliph, Uthman, ordered the compilation of the definitive edition of the Qur'an.



The Night Journey (Sahih al-Bukhari, 5:227)

READING QUESTIONS

1. What do you think is the religious significance for Muslims of "The Night Journey"?
2. Why do you think reciting the Qur'an became a religious act?
3. Explain why you think the concern to recite the Qur'an correctly became so religiously significant.
4. Why do you think there was so much concern about both a successor to Muhammad and the possibility of people worshipping him?
5. What advantages can you see in having one written version of the Qur'an?

Narrated Anas ibn Malik from Malik ibn Sa'sa'a that Allah's Apostle described to them his Night Journey saying, While I was lying in Al-Hatim or Al-Hijr, suddenly someone came to me and cut my body open from here to here [across the chest]. He then took out my heart. Then a gold tray full of Belief was brought to me and my heart was washed and was filled (with Belief) and then returned to its original place. Then a white animal which was smaller than a mule and bigger than a donkey was brought to me. . . . The animal's step (was so wide that it) reached the nearest heaven. When he asked for the gate to be opened it was asked, "Who is it?" Gabriel answered, "Gabriel." It was asked, "Who was accompanying you?" Gabriel replied, "Muhammad." It was asked, "Has Muhammad been called?" Gabriel replied

in the affirmative. Then it was said, "He is welcomed. What an excellent visit his is!" The gate was opened, and when I went over the first heaven, I saw Adam there. Gabriel said (to me), "This is your father, Adam; pay him your greetings." So I greeted him and he returned the greeting to me and said, "You are welcomed, o pious son and pious Prophet." Then Gabriel ascended with me till we reached the second heaven. . . . There I saw Yahya (i.e., John) and 'Isa (i.e., Jesus) who were cousins of each other. . . . Then Gabriel ascended with me to the third heaven and . . . there I saw Joseph. . . . Then Gabriel ascended with me to the fourth heaven and . . . there I saw Idris. . . .

Then Gabriel ascended with me to the fifth heaven and . . . there I saw Harun (i.e., Aaron). Then Gabriel ascended with me to the sixth heaven and . . . there I saw Moses. . . . When I left him (i.e., Moses) he wept. Someone asked him, "What makes you weep?" Moses said, "I weep because after me there has been sent (as Prophet) a young man whose followers will enter Paradise in greater numbers than my followers." Then Gabriel ascended with me to the seventh heaven and . . . there I saw Abraham. . . . Then I was made to ascend to Sidrat-ul-Muntaha (i.e., the Lote Tree of the farthest limit). Behold! Its fruits were like the jars of Har (i.e., a place near Medina) and its leaves were as big as the ears of elephants. Gabriel said, "This is the Lote Tree of the farthest limit." Behold! There ran four rivers, two were hidden and two were visible. I asked, "What are these two kinds of rivers, O Gabriel?" He replied, "As for the hidden rivers, they are two rivers in Paradise, and the visible rivers are the Nile and the Euphrates." Then Al-Bait-ul-Ma'mur (i.e., the Sacred House) was shown to me and a container full of wine and another full of milk and a third full of honey were brought to me. I took the milk. Gabriel remarked, "This is the Islamic religion which you and your followers are following." Then the prayers were enjoined on me: They were fifty prayers a day.

When I returned, I passed by Moses who asked (me), "What have you been ordered to do?" I replied, "I have been ordered to offer fifty prayers a day." Moses said, "Your followers cannot bear fifty prayers a day, and by Allah, I have tested people before you, and I have tried my level best with Bani Israil (in vain). Go back to your Lord and ask for reducing your followers' burden." So I went back, and Allah reduced ten prayers for me. Then again I went back to Allah and he reduced ten more prayers. When I came back to Moses he said the same, I went back to Allah and he ordered me to observe ten prayers a day. When I came back to Moses, he repeated the same advice, so I went back to Allah and was ordered to observe five prayers a day. When I came back to

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Moses, he said . . . go back to your Lord and ask for reducing your followers' burden." I said, "I have requested so much of my Lord that I feel ashamed, but I am satisfied now and surrender to Allah's Order." When I left, I heard a voice saying, "I have passed My Order and have reduced the burden of My Worshippers."



Reciting the Qur'an (Sahih al-Bukhari, 6:514)

Narrated Umar ibn Al-Khattab: I heard Hisham ibn Hakim reciting *surah* Al-Furqan during the lifetime of Allah's Apostle and I listened to his recitation and noticed that he recited in several different ways which Allah's Apostle had not taught me. I was about to jump over him during his prayer, but I controlled my temper, and when he had completed his prayer, I put his upper garment around his neck and seized him by it and said, "Who taught you this Surah which I heard you reciting?" He replied, "Allah's Apostle taught it to me." I said, "You have told a lie, for Allah's Apostle has taught it to me in a different way from yours." So I dragged him to Allah's Apostle and said (to Allah's Apostle), "I heard this person reciting Surah Al-Furqan in a way which you haven't taught me!" On that Allah's Apostle said, "Release him (O 'Umar)! Recite, O Hisham!" Then he recited in the same way as I heard him reciting. Then Allah's Apostle said, "It was revealed in this way," and added "Recite, O 'Umar!" I recited it as he had taught me. Allah's Apostle then said, "It was revealed in this way. This Koran has been revealed to be recited in seven different ways, so recite of it whichever is easier for you."



The Death of Muhammad (Sahih al-Bukhari, 5:727, 730, 736)

A'isha, the wife of the Prophet said, When the ailment of Allah's Apostle became aggravated, he requested his wives to permit him to be treated in my house, and they gave him permission. He came out (to my house), walk-

ing between two men with his feet dragging on the ground. . . . When Allah's Apostle entered my house and his disease became aggravated, he said, "Pour on me the water of seven waterskins, the mouths of which have not been untied, so that I may give advice to the people." So we let him sit in a big basin . . . and then started to pour water on him from these waterskins till he started pointing to us with his hands intending to say "You have done your job." . . . Then he went out to the people and led them in prayer and preached to them. . . .

When Allah's Apostle became ill seriously, he started covering his face with his woolen sheet, and when he felt short of breath, he removed it from his face and said, "That is so! Allah's curse be on the Jews and the Christians, as they took the graves of their prophets as (places of worship)," intending to warn (the Muslims) of what they had done. . . . I argued with Allah's Apostle repeatedly about the matter (i.e., his order that Abu Bakr should lead the people in prayer in his place when he was ill), and what made me argue so much was that it never occurred to my mind that after the Prophet, the people would ever love a man who had taken his place, and I felt that anybody standing in his place would be a bad omen to the people, so I wanted Allah's Apostle to give up the idea of choosing Abu Bakr (to lead his people in prayer).

Narrated A'isha: It was one of favors towards me that Allah's Apostle expired in my house on the day of my turn while leaning against my chest and Allah made my saliva mix with his saliva at his death. 'Abdur-Rahman entered upon me with a Siwak in his hand and I was supporting (the back of) Allah's Apostle (against my chest). I saw the Prophet looking at the Siwak and I knew that he loved the Siwak, so I said (to him), "Shall I take it for you?" He nodded in agreement. So I took it and it was too stiff for him to use, so I said, "Shall I soften it for you?" He nodded his approval. So I softened it and he cleaned his teeth with it. In front to him there was a jug or a tin containing water. He started dipping his hand in the water and rubbing his face with it. He said, "None has the right to be worshipped except Allah. Death has its agonies." He then lifted his hands (towards the sky) and started saying, "With the highest companion," till he expired and his hand dropped down.

Narrated Al-Aswad: It was mentioned in the presence of A'isha that the Prophet had appointed Ali as successor by will. Thereupon she said, "Who said so? I saw the Prophet while I was supporting him against my chest. He asked for a tray, and then fell on one side and expired, and I did not feel it. So how (do the people say) he appointed Ali as his successor?"
