

## QUR'AN: GOD'S CULMINATING GIFT TO HUMANKIND

### QUR'AN 1

The first seven verses of the Qur'an are called "The Opening" or "The Opening of the Book." After this brief opening, the suras of the Qur'an arrange themselves into an order descending roughly by length. All observant Muslims memorize this sura because it is repeated a total of seventeen times during the five daily periods of prayer. In addition to this liturgical use, "The Opening" is often invoked to secure God's blessing when undertaking or completing any significant task. Belief in its curative and protective powers inspires its repetition by the ill and prompts its inscription on amulets to ward off evil. Frequently, it is repeated simply to thank God for his generosity.

Every word and phrase of the sura has generated extensive commentary, and some traditions of interpretation find the quintessence of Muslim faith expressed in its brief verses.

#### PRONOUNCING GLOSSARY

Qur'an: *qor-ahn'* (not *ko-ran'*)

### SURA 1

#### The Opening

##### *Revealed at Mecca*

1. In the name of God, the beneficent, the merciful.<sup>1</sup>
2. Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds,
3. The beneficent, the merciful.
4. Owner of the day of judgment,
5. You (alone) do we worship; You (alone) do we ask for help.
6. Show us the straight path,
7. The path of those whom You have favored; not the (path) of those who earn Your anger nor of those who go astray.

TRANSLATED BY Marmaduke Pickthall; revised by Jane Dammen McAuliffe.

1. Known as the *basmala*, this phrase occurs at the beginning of each sura except the ninth. Scholars differ about the scriptural status of the *basmala*: some consider it to be a Qur'anic verse; some do not, but still deem it part of the Qur'an.

Others insist that it simply serves as a divider between suras or as a benediction before suras. Muslim scholarly consensus holds that the *basmala* counts as a verse in this sura.

### QUR'AN 4

The aptly named fourth chapter (sura) of the Qur'an, "Women" (*al-Nisa'*), addresses several issues involving women but does not restrict itself solely to these. It also touches on other topics, such as the ritual prayer and relations with non-Muslims in Arabia.

According to classical Muslim sources, the sura's revelation began in 626, about four years after Muhammad's emigration to Medina, and shortly after the Muslim defeat at the Battle of Uhud (625). With regard to gender relations, this sura defines the conditions of polygamy (Qur'an 4:3), allots male heirs a larger share than females (4:11), delineates permissible marriages (4:23–24), positions men as caretakers of women (4:34), and allows the disciplining of a disobedient wife (4:34). Understandably, it has generated endless exegetical debate among generations of premodern and modern scholars, such as Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817–1898), 'Ali Shari'ati (1933–1977), Fatima Mernissi (b. 1940), and Amina Wadud (b. 1952), who seek to reconcile the text of the Qur'an with contemporary societal norms.

Muslim scholarship explains some of the thematic emphases of this sura in light of the losses suffered by the Muslims in the Battle of Uhud. The exhortations to treat orphans kindly (Qur'an 4:1–10) and the account of inheritance law (4:11–12) are thus motivated by the daunting number of battleground deaths. The context of battle also explains the reference to a shortened form of the ritual prayer if an attack was feared and the dispensation to perform ritual purification with earth when no water is available. Finally, this sura inveighs against hypocrites who accept Islam for personal gain but lack true faith in their hearts (e.g., 4:88, 4:137–145).

#### PRONOUNCING GLOSSARY

Muhammad: *moo-ham'-mad* (not *moh-ha'-med*; heavy *h*) Uhud: *oo'-hood* (not *oo-hood'*; heavy *h*)

### SURA 4

#### Women

##### *Revealed at Medina*

In the name of God the beneficent, the merciful.

1. O mankind! Be careful of your duty to your Lord who created you from a single soul and from it created its mate and from the two has spread abroad a multitude of men and women. Be careful of your duty toward God in whom you claim (your rights) of one another, and toward the wombs (that bear you). God has been a watcher over you.

2. Give to orphans their wealth. Do not exchange the good for the bad (in your management of it) nor absorb their wealth into your own wealth. That would be a great sin.

3. And if you fear that you will not deal fairly by the orphans, marry of the women, who seem good to you, two or three or four; and if you fear that you cannot do justice (to so many) then one (only) or (the captives) that your right hands possess.<sup>1</sup> Thus it is more likely that you will not do injustice.

1. This has typically been understood as referring to female slaves made to serve as concubines.

4. And give to the women (whom you marry) free gift of their marriage portions; but if they of their own accord remit to you a part of it, then you are welcome to absorb it (in your wealth).

5. Do not give to the foolish (what is in) your (keeping of their) wealth, which God has given you to maintain; but feed and clothe them from it, and speak kindly to them.

6. Test orphans until they reach the marriageable age; then, if you find them of sound judgment, deliver over to them their fortune; and do not devour it by squandering and in haste for fear that they should grow up. Whoever (of the guardians) is rich, let him abstain generously (from taking of the property of orphans); and whoever is poor let him take of it in reason (for his guardianship). And when you deliver up their fortune to orphans, have (the transaction) witnessed in their presence. God suffices as a reckoner.

7. To the men (of a family) belongs a share of what parents and near kindred leave, and to the women a share of what parents and near kindred leave, whether it be little or much—a legal share.

8. And when relatives and orphans and the needy are present at the division (of the heritage), bestow on them from it and speak kindly to them.

9. And let those fear (in their behavior toward orphans) who if they left behind them weak offspring would be afraid for them. So let them mind their duty to God, and speak justly.

10. Those who devour the wealth of orphans wrongfully, they only swallow fire into their bellies, and they will be exposed to burning flame.

11. God charges you concerning (the provision for) your children: to the male the equivalent of the portion of two females, and if there be more than two women, then theirs is two-thirds of the inheritance, and if there be one (only) then the half. And to each of his<sup>2</sup> parents a sixth of the inheritance, if he has a son; and if he has no son and his parents are his heirs, then to his mother appertains the third; and if he has brothers, then to his mother appertains the sixth, after any legacy he may have bequeathed, or debt (has been paid). Your parents or your children: You do not know which of them is nearer to you in usefulness. It is an injunction from God. God is knower, wise.

12. And to you belongs a half of what your wives leave, if they have no child; but if they have a child then to you the fourth of what they leave, after any legacy they may have bequeathed, or debt (they may have contracted, has been paid). And to them belongs the fourth of what you leave if you have no child, but if you have a child then the eighth of what you leave, after any legacy you may have bequeathed, or debt (you may have contracted, has been paid). And if a man or a woman has a distant heir (having left neither parent nor child), and he (or she) has a brother or a sister (only on the mother's side) then to each of the two (the brother and the sister) the sixth, and if they are more than two, then they shall be sharers in the third, after any legacy that may have been bequeathed or debt (contracted) has been paid, not injuring (the heirs by willing away more than a third of the heritage). A commandment from God. God is knower, indulgent.

13. These are the limits (imposed by) God. Whoever obeys God and His messenger, He will make him enter gardens underneath which rivers flow, where such will dwell for ever. That will be the great success.

2. The deceased [Pickthall's note].

14. And whoever disobeys God and His messenger and transgresses His limits, He will make him enter fire, where such will dwell for ever; his will be a shameful doom.

15. As for those of your women who are guilty of lewdness, call to witness four of you against them. And if they testify (to the truth of the allegation) then confine them to the houses until death take them or (until) God appoint for them a way (through new legislation).<sup>3</sup>

16. And as for the two of you who are guilty of it, punish them both. And if they repent and improve, then let them be. God is relenting, merciful.

17. Forgiveness is only incumbent on God toward those who do evil in ignorance (and) then turn quickly (in repentance) to God. These are they toward whom God relents. God is ever knower, wise.

18. The forgiveness is not for those who do ill deeds until, when death attends upon one of them, he says: "I repent now"; nor yet for those who die while they are disbelievers. For such We have prepared a painful doom.

19. O you who believe! It is not lawful for you forcibly to inherit the women (of your deceased kinsmen), nor (that) you should put constraint upon them that you may take away a part of what you have given them, unless they be guilty of flagrant lewdness. But consort with them in kindness, for if you hate them it may happen that you hate a thing in which God has placed much good.

20. And if you wish to exchange one wife for another and you have given to one of them a sum of money (however great), take nothing from it. Would you take it by the way of calumny and open wrong?

21. How can you take it (back) after one of you has gone in to<sup>4</sup> the other, and they have taken a strong pledge from you?

22. And do not marry those women whom your fathers married, except what has already happened (of that nature) in the past. It was ever lewdness and abomination, and an evil way.

23. Forbidden to you are your mothers, and your daughters, and your sisters, and your father's sisters, and your mother's sisters, and your brother's daughters and your sister's daughters, and your foster-mothers, and your foster-sisters, and your mothers-in-law, and your step-daughters who are under your protection (born) of your women to whom you have gone in—but if you have not gone in to them, then it is no sin for you (to marry their daughters)—and the wives of your sons who (spring) from your own loins. And (it is forbidden to you) that you should have two sisters together, except what has already happened (of that nature) in the past. God is ever forgiving, merciful.

24. And all married women (are forbidden to you) except those (captives) whom your right hands possess. It is a decree of God for you. Lawful to you are all beyond those mentioned, so that you seek them with your wealth in honest wedlock, not debauchery. And those of whom you seek enjoyment (by marrying them), give to them their portions as a duty. And there is no sin for you in what you do by mutual agreement after the duty (has been done). God is ever knower, wise.

25. And whoever is not able to afford to marry free, believing women, let them marry from the believing slave girls whom your right hands possess.

<sup>3</sup> See Q 24:2–10 [Pickthall's note].

4. Has had sexual intercourse with.

God knows best (concerning) your faith. You (proceed) one from another,<sup>5</sup> so wed them by permission of their people, and give to them their portions in kindness, they being honest, not debauched nor of loose conduct. And if when they are honorably married they commit lewdness they shall incur the half of the punishment (prescribed) for free women (in that case). This is for him among you who fears to commit sin. But to have patience would be better for you. God is forgiving, merciful.

26. God would explain to you and guide you by the examples of those who were before you, and would turn to you in mercy. God is knower, wise.

27. And God would turn to you in mercy; but those who follow vain desires would have you go tremendously astray.

28. God would make the burden light for you, for man was created weak.

29. O you who believe! Do not squander your wealth among yourselves in vanity, except it is a trade by mutual consent, and do not kill one another. God is ever merciful to you.

30. Whoever does that through aggression and injustice, We shall cast him into fire, and that is ever easy for God.

31. If you avoid the great (things) which you are forbidden, We will remit from you your evil deeds and make you enter at a noble gate.

32. And do not covet the thing in which God has made some of you excel others. To men a fortune from what they have earned, and to women a fortune from what they have earned. (Do not envy one another) but ask God of His bounty. God is ever knower of all things.

33. And to each We have appointed heirs of what parents and near kindred leave; and as for those with whom your right hands have made a covenant, give them their due. God is ever witness over all things.

34. Men are in charge of women, because God has made the one of them to excel the other,<sup>6</sup> and because they spend of their property (for the support of women). So good women are the obedient, guarding in secret what God has guarded. As for those from whom you fear rebellion, admonish them and banish them to beds apart, and scourge them.<sup>7</sup> Then if they obey you, do not seek a way against them. God is ever high exalted, great.

35. And if you fear a breach between the two (the man and wife), appoint an arbiter from his people and an arbiter from her people. If they desire amendment God will make them of one mind. God is ever knower, aware.

36. And serve God. Ascribe nothing as partner to Him. (Show) kindness to parents, and to near kindred, and orphans, and the needy, and to the neighbor who is related (to you) and the neighbor who is not related, and the fellow-traveller and the wayfarer and (the slaves) whom your right hands possess. God does not love such as are proud and boastful.

37. Who hoard their wealth and enjoin avarice on others, and hide what God has bestowed on them of His bounty. For disbelievers We prepare a shameful doom;

5. This expression, which recurs in the Qur'an, is a reminder to men that women are of the same human status as themselves [Pickthall's note].

6. Interpretations of male "excelling" include greater physical strength, greater financial

capacity, and ontological superiority.

7. This is ordinarily understood as a gradual series of chastisements. "Scourging" or "beating" is a physical reprimand, variously interpreted as ranging from slight to severe.

38. And (also) those who spend their wealth in order to be seen of men, and do not believe in God or the last day. Whoever takes Satan for a comrade has a bad comrade.

39. What have they (to fear) if they believe in God and the last day and spend (rightly) of what God has bestowed upon them, when God is ever aware of them (and all they do)?

40. God does no wrong even of the weight of an ant; and if there is a good deed, He will double it and will give (the doer) from His presence an immense reward.

41. But how (will it be with them) when We bring of every people a witness, and We bring you (O Muhammad) as a witness against these?

42. On that day those who disbelieved and disobeyed the messenger will wish that they were level with the ground, and they can hide no fact from God.

43. O you who believe! Do not draw near to prayer when you are drunken,<sup>8</sup> until you know what you utter, nor when you are polluted, except when journeying on the road, until you have bathed. And if you are ill, or on a journey, or one of you comes from the toilet, or you have touched women, and you do not find water, then go to high clean soil and rub your faces and your hands (with it). God is benign, forgiving.

44. Do you not see those to whom a portion of the scripture has been given, how they purchase error, and seek to make you (Muslims) err from the right way?

45. God knows best (who are) your enemies. God is sufficient as a friend, and God is sufficient as a helper.

46. Some of those who are Jews change words from their context and say: "We hear and disobey; hear as one who hears not" and "Listen to us!"<sup>9</sup> distorting with their tongues and slandering religion. If they had said: "We hear and we obey; hear, and look at us" it would have been better for them, and more upright. But God has cursed them for their disbelief, so they do not believe, except a few.

47. O you to whom the scripture has been given, believe in what We have revealed confirming what you possess, before We destroy countenances so as to confound them, or curse them as We cursed the sabbath-breakers. The commandment of God is always executed.

48. God does not forgive that a partner should be ascribed to Him. He forgives (all) except that to whom He will. Whoever ascribes partners to God, he has indeed invented a tremendous sin.

49. Have you not seen those who praise themselves for purity? No, God purifies whom He will, and they will not be wronged even the hair on a date-stone.<sup>1</sup>

50. See, how they invent lies about God! That of itself is flagrant sin.

51. Have you not seen those to whom a portion of the scripture has been given, how they believe in idols and false deities, and how they say of those

8. The prohibition of alcohol is generally understood to have been implemented gradually in the Qur'an. Islamic law extends the prohibition to all intoxicants.

9. Devices of some of the Jews of Medina to annoy the Muslims by distorting words of Scripture. *Raina* (meaning "listen to us"), by which

the Muslims used to call the Prophet's notice, they turned by slight mispronunciation into a Hebrew word of insult [Pickthall's note].

1. The Qur'an mentions dates and the date palm frequently. Here the Arabic expression means "the tiniest amount."

(idolaters) who disbelieve: "These are more rightly guided than those who believe?"

52. Those are they whom God has cursed, and he whom God has cursed, you (O Muhammad) will find for him no helper.

53. Or have they even a share in the sovereignty? Then in that case, they would not give mankind even the speck on a date-stone.

54. Or are they jealous of mankind because of what God of His bounty has bestowed on them? For We bestowed on the house of Abraham (of old) the scripture and wisdom, and We bestowed on them a mighty kingdom.

55. And of them were (some) who believed in it and of them were (some) who turned away from it. Hell is sufficient for (their) burning.

56. Those who disbelieve Our revelations, We shall expose them to the fire. As often as their skins are consumed We shall exchange them for fresh skins that they may taste the torment. God is ever mighty, wise.

57. And as for those who believe and do good works, We shall make them enter gardens underneath which rivers flow—to dwell there for ever; there for them are pure companions—and We shall make them enter plentiful shade.

58. God commands you that you restore deposits to their owners, and, if you judge between mankind, that you judge justly. How good is this which God admonishes you! God is ever hearer, observer.

59. O you who believe! Obey God, and obey the messenger and those of you who are in authority;<sup>2</sup> and if you have a dispute concerning any matter, refer it to God and the messenger if you are (in truth) believers in God and the last day. That is better and more seemly in the end.

60. Have you not seen those who pretend that they believe in what is revealed to you and what was revealed before you, how they would go for judgment (in their disputes) to false deities when they have been ordered to abjure them? Satan would mislead them far astray.

61. And when it is said to them: "Come to what God has revealed and to the messenger," you see the hypocrites turn from you with aversion.

62. How would it be if a misfortune struck them because of what their own hands have sent before (them)? Then they would come to you, swearing by God that they were seeking nothing but harmony and kindness.

63. Those are they, the secrets of whose hearts God knows. So oppose them and admonish them, and address them in plain terms about their souls.

64. We sent no messenger except that he should be obeyed by God's permission. And if, when they had wronged themselves, they had only come to you and asked forgiveness of God, and asked forgiveness of the messenger, they would have found God forgiving, merciful.

65. But no, by your Lord, they will not believe (in truth) until they make you judge of what is in dispute between them and find within themselves no dislike of what you decide, and submit with full submission.

66. And if We had decreed for them: "Lay down your lives or go forth from your dwellings," only a few of them would have done it; though if they did what they are exhorted to do it would be better for them, and more strengthening;

2. The Arabic *ulu l-amr*, "those of you who are in authority," has often been understood by Sunnis to mean scholars, military commanders,

Muhammad's companions, the four caliphs, or the actual rulers of Muslim lands. For Shi'is it usually means the infallible imams.

67. And then We would bestow on them from Our presence an immense reward,

68. And would guide them to a straight path.

69. Whoever obeys God and the messenger, they are with those to whom God has shown favor, of the prophets and the true-hearted and the martyrs and the righteous. The best of company are they!

70. Such is the bounty of God, and God suffices as knower.

71. O you who believe! Take your precautions, then advance the proven ones, or advance all together.

72. Among you there is he who loiters; and if disaster overtook you, he would say: "God has been gracious to me since I was not present with them."

73. And if a bounty from God befell you, he would surely cry, as if there had been no love between you and him: "Oh, would that I had been with them, then I should have achieved a great success!"

74. Let those fight in the way of God who sell the life of this world for the other. Whoever fights in the way of God, be he slain or be he victorious, on him We shall bestow a vast reward.

75. How should you not fight for the cause of God and of the feeble among men and of the women and the children who are crying: "Our Lord! Bring us forth from this town<sup>3</sup> of which the people are oppressors! Oh, give us from Your presence some protecting friend! Oh, give us from Your presence some defender!"

76. Those who believe do battle for the cause of God; and those who disbelieve do battle for the cause of idols. So fight the minions of the devil. The devil's strategy is ever weak.

77. Have you not seen those to whom it was said: "Withhold your hands, establish worship and pay the poor tax," but when fighting was prescribed for them behold! a party of them fear mankind even as they fear God or with greater fear, and say: "Our Lord! Why have you ordained fighting for us? If only You would give us respite for a while!" Say (to them, O Muhammad): "The comfort of this world is scant; the hereafter will be better for him who wards off (evil); and you will not be wronged the down upon a date-stone."

78. Wherever you may be, death will overtake you, even though you were in lofty towers." Yet if a happy thing befalls them they say: "This is from God"; and if an evil thing befalls them they say: "This is of your doing (O Muhammad)." Say (to them): "All is from God." What is amiss with these people that they do not come near to understand a happening?<sup>4</sup>

79. Whatever of good befalls you (O man) it is from God, and whatever of ill befalls you it is from yourself. We have sent you (Muhammad) as a messenger to mankind and God is sufficient as witness.

80. Whoever obeys the messenger obeys God, and whoever turns away: We have not sent you as a caretaker over them.

81. And they say: "(It is) obedience"; but when they have gone forth from you a party of them spend the night in planning other than what you say. God records what they plan by night. So oppose them and put your trust in God. God is sufficient as trustee.

3. Mecca [Pickthall's note].

4. The reference is to the reverse which the Muslims suffered at Mt. Uhud which was caused by

their own disobedience to the Prophet's orders [Pickthall's note].



82. Will they not then ponder on the Qur'an? If it had been from other than God they would have found in it much incongruity.

83. And if any tidings, whether of safety or fear, come to them, they spread it abroad, whereas if they had referred it to the messenger and such of them as are in authority, those among them who are able to think out the matter would have known it. If it had not been for the grace of God upon you and His mercy you would have followed Satan, except a few (of you).

84. So fight (O Muhammad) in the way of God—You are not taxed (with the responsibility for anyone) except for yourself—and urge on the believers. Perhaps God will restrain the might of those who disbelieve. God is stronger in might and stronger in inflicting punishment.

85. Whoever intervenes in a good cause will have the reward of it, and whoever intervenes in an evil cause will bear the consequence of it. God oversees all things.

86. When you are greeted with a greeting, greet with one better than it or return it. God takes count of all things.

87. God! There is no god except Him. He gathers you all to a day of resurrection of which there is no doubt. Who is more true in statement than God?

88. What ails you that you are two parties regarding the hypocrites,<sup>5</sup> when God cast them back (to disbelief) because of what they earned? Do you seek to guide him whom God has sent astray? He whom God sends astray, for him you (O Muhammad) can not find a road.

89. They long that you should disbelieve even as they disbelieve, that you may be upon a level (with them). So do not choose friends from them until they forsake their homes in the way of God; if they turn back (to enmity) then take them and kill them wherever you find them, and choose no friend nor helper from among them,

90. Except those who seek refuge with a people between whom and you there is a covenant, or (those who) come to you because their hearts forbid them to make war on you or make war on their own people. Had God willed He could have given them power over you so that assuredly they would have fought you. So, if they hold aloof from you and do not wage war against you and offer you peace, God allows you no way against them.

91. You will find others who desire that they should have security from you, and security from their own people. So often as they are returned to hostility they are plunged into it. If they keep not aloof from you nor offer you peace nor hold their hands, then take them and kill them wherever you find them. Against such We have given you clear warrant.

92. It is not for a believer to kill a believer unless (it be) by mistake. He who has killed a believer by mistake must set free a believing slave, and pay the blood-money to the family of the slain, unless they remit it as a charity. If he (the victim) is of a people hostile to you, and he is a believer, then (the penance is) to set free a believing slave. And if he comes of a people between whom and you there is a covenant, then the blood-money must be paid to his people and (also) a believing slave must be set free. And whoever

5. According to tradition, the reference here is not to the lukewarm section of the Muslims of Medina, but to a particular group of alleged converts from among the Arabs, who after-

wards relapsed into idolatry, and concerning whom there were two opinions among the Muslims [Pickthall's note].

does not have the wherewithal must fast two consecutive months. A penance from God. God is knower, wise.

93. Whoever slays a believer of set purpose, his reward is hell forever. God is angry against him and He has cursed him and prepared for him an awful doom.

94. O you who believe! When you go forth (to fight) in the way of God, be careful to discriminate, and do not say to one who offers you peace: "You are not a believer," seeking the chance profits of this life (so that you may despoil him). With God are plenteous spoils. Even thus (as he now is) were you before; but God has since then been gracious to you. Therefore take care to discriminate. God is ever informed of what you do.

95. Those of the believers who sit still, other than those who have a (disabling) hurt, are not equal with those who strive in the way of God with their wealth and lives. God has conferred on those who strive with their wealth and lives a rank above the sedentary. To each God has promised good; but He has bestowed on those who strive a great reward above the sedentary;

96. Degrees of rank from Him, and forgiveness and mercy. God is ever forgiving, merciful.

97. As for those whom the angels take (in death) while they wrong themselves, (the angels) will ask: "In what were you engaged?" They will say: "We were oppressed in the land." (The angels) will say: "Was not God's earth spacious that you could have migrated there?" As for such, their habitation will be hell, an evil journey's end;

98. Except the feeble among men, and the women, and the children, who are unable to devise a plan and are not shown a way.

99. As for such, it may be that God will pardon them. God is ever clement, forgiving.

100. Whoever migrates for the cause of God will find much refuge and abundance in the earth, and whoever forsakes his home, a fugitive to God and His messenger, and death overtakes him, his reward is then incumbent on God. God is ever forgiving, merciful.

101. And when you go forth in the land, it is no sin for you to curtail (your) worship if you fear that those who disbelieve may attack you. In truth the disbelievers are an open enemy to you.

102. And when you (O Muhammad) are among them and arrange (their) worship for them, let only a party of them stand with you (to worship) and let them take their arms. Then when they have performed their prostrations let them fall to the rear and let another party come that has not worshipped and let them worship with you, and let them take their precaution and their arms. Those who disbelieve long for you to neglect your arms and your baggage that they may attack you once for all. It is no sin for you to lay aside your arms, if rain impedes you or you are sick. But take your precaution. God prepares for the disbelievers shameful punishment.

103. When you have performed the act of worship, remember God, standing, sitting and reclining. And when you are in safety, observe proper worship. Worship at fixed hours has been enjoined on the believers.

104. Do not relent in pursuit of the enemy. If you are suffering, they suffer even as you suffer and you hope from God that for which they cannot hope. God is ever knower, wise.

105. We reveal to you the scripture with the truth, that you may judge between mankind by what God shows you. And do not be a pleader for the treacherous;

106. And seek forgiveness of God. God is ever forgiving, merciful.

107. And do not plead on behalf of (people) who deceive themselves. God does not love one who is treacherous and sinful.

108. They seek to hide from men and do not seek to hide from God. He is with them when by night they hold discourse displeasing to Him. God ever surrounds what they do.

109. You are they who pleaded for them in the life of the world. But who will plead with God for them on the day of resurrection, or who will then be their defender?

110. Yet whoever does evil or wrongs his own soul, then seeks pardon of God, will find God forgiving, merciful.

111. Whoever commits sin commits it only against himself. God is ever knower, wise.

112. And whoever commits a delinquency or crime, then throws (the blame) of it on the innocent, has burdened himself with falsehood and a flagrant crime.

113. But for the grace of God on you (Muhammad), and His mercy, a party of them had resolved to mislead you, but they will mislead only themselves and they will not hurt you at all. God reveals to you the scripture and wisdom, and teaches you what you knew not. The grace of God toward you has been infinite.

114. There is no good in much of their secret conferences except (in) him who enjoins almsgiving and kindness and peace-making among the people. Whoever does that, seeking the good pleasure of God, We shall bestow on him a vast reward.

115. And whoever opposes the messenger after the guidance (of God) has been manifested to him, and follows other than the believer's way, We appoint for him that to which he himself has turned, and expose him to hell—an unfortunate journey's end!

116. God does not pardon that partners should be ascribed to him. All except that He pardons to whom He will. Whoever ascribes partners to God has wandered far astray.

117. They invoke in His stead only females,<sup>6</sup> they pray to none else than Satan, a rebel

118. Whom God cursed, and he said: "I will take of Your servants an appointed portion,

119. And I will lead them astray, and I will arouse desires in them, and I will command them and they will cut the cattle's ears, and surely I will command them and they will change God's creation." Whoever chooses Satan for a patron instead of God is a loser and his loss is manifest.

120. He promises them and stirs up desires in them, and Satan promises them only to beguile.

121. For such, their habitation will be hell, and they will find no refuge from it.

122. But as for those who believe and do good works We shall bring them into gardens underneath which rivers flow, in which they will abide

6. The idols which the pagan Arabs worshipped were all female [Pickthall's note].

for ever. It is a promise from God in truth; and who can be more truthful than God in utterance?

123. It will not be in accordance with your desires, nor the desires of the People of the Scripture.<sup>7</sup> He who does wrong will have the recompense of it, and will not find against God any protecting friend or helper.

124. And whoever does good works, whether of male or female, and he (or she) is a believer, such will enter paradise and they will not be wronged the speck on a date-stone.

125. Who is better in religion than he who surrenders his purpose to God while doing good (to men) and follows the tradition of Abraham, the upright? God (Himself) chose Abraham for friend.

126. To God belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. God ever surrounds all things.

127. They consult you concerning women. Say: "God gives you decree concerning them, and the scripture which has been recited to you (gives decree), concerning female orphans to whom you do not give what is ordained for them though you desire to marry them,<sup>8</sup> and (concerning) the weak among children, and that you should deal justly with orphans." Whatever good you do, God is ever aware of it.

128. If a woman fears ill-treatment from her husband, or desertion, it is no sin for the two if they make terms of peace between themselves. Peace is better. But greed has been made present in the minds (of men). If you do good and keep from evil, God is ever informed of what you do.

129. You will not be able to deal equally between (your) wives, however much you wish (to do so). But do not turn altogether away (from one), leaving her as in suspense. If you do good and keep from evil, God is ever forgiving, merciful.

130. But if they separate, God will compensate each out of His abundance. God is ever all-embracing, all-knowing.

131. To God belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. And We charged those who received the scripture before you, and (We charge) you, that you keep your duty toward God. And if you disbelieve, to God belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth, and God is ever absolute, owner of praise.

132. To God belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. And God is sufficient as defender.

133. If He will, He can remove you, O people, and produce others (in your stead). God is able to do that.

134. Whoever desires the reward of the world, (let him know that) with God is the reward of the world and the hereafter. God is ever hearer, observer.

135. O you who believe! Be staunch in justice, witnesses for God, even though it be against yourselves or (your) parents or (your) kindred, whether (the case be of) a rich man or a poor man, for God is nearer to both (than you are). So do not follow passion for fear that you lapse (from truth) and if you lapse or fall away, then God is ever informed of what you do.

136. O you who believe! Believe in God and His messenger and the scripture which He has revealed to His messenger, and the scripture which

7. Or "People of the Book": Jews and Christians.

8. The Qur'an often speaks about the duty to be just in dealings with orphans, addressing particularly those in charge of an orphan's property.

Here the warning is to guardians who would unjustly hold on to a female orphan's wealth either by refusing to allow her to marry or by marrying her themselves.

He revealed before. Whoever disbelieves in God and His angels and His scriptures and His messengers and the last day, he has wandered far astray.

137. Those who believe, then disbelieve and then (again) believe, then disbelieve, and then increase in disbelief, God will never pardon them, nor will He guide them to a way.

138. Bear to the hypocrites the tidings that for them there is a painful doom;

139. Those who choose disbelievers for their friends instead of believers! Do they look for power at their hands? All power belongs to God.

140. He has already revealed to you in the scripture that, when you hear the revelations of God rejected and derided, (you) do not sit with them (who disbelieve and mock) until they engage in some other conversation. In that case (if you stayed) you would be like them. God will gather hypocrites and disbelievers, all together, into hell;

141. Those who wait upon occasion in regard to you and, if a victory comes to you from God, say: "Are we not with you?" and if the disbelievers meet with a success say: "Had we not the mastery of you, and did we not protect you from the believers?" God will judge between you at the day of resurrection, and God will not give the disbelievers any way (of success) against the believers.

142. The hypocrites seek to beguile God, but it is God who beguiles them. When they stand up to worship they perform it languidly and to be seen by people, and are but little mindful of God;

143. Swaying between this (and that), (belonging) neither to these nor to those. He whom God causes to go astray, you (O Muhammad) will not find a way for him:

144. O you who believe! Do not choose disbelievers for (your) friends in place of believers. Would you give God a clear warrant against you?

145. The hypocrites (will be) in the lowest deep of the fire, and you will find no helper for them;

146. Except those who repent and amend and hold fast to God and make their religion pure for God (only). Those are with the believers, And God will bestow on the believers an immense reward.

147. What concern has God for your punishment if you are thankful (for His mercies) and believe (in Him)? God was ever responsive, aware.

148. God does not love the utterance of harsh speech except by one who has been wronged. God is ever hearer, knower.

149. If you do good openly or keep it secret, or forgive evil, God is forgiving, powerful.

150. Those who disbelieve in God and His messengers, and seek to make distinction between God and His messengers, and say: "We believe in some and disbelieve in others, and seek to choose a way in between";

151. Such are disbelievers in truth; and for disbelievers We prepare a shameful doom.

152. But those who believe in God and His messengers and make no distinction between any of them, to them God will give their wages; and God was ever forgiving, merciful.

153. The People of the Scripture ask of you that you should cause an (actual) book to descend on them from heaven. They asked a greater thing of Moses before, for they said: "Show us God plainly." The storm of lightning

seized them for their wickedness. Then (even after that) they chose the calf (for worship) after clear proofs (of God's sovereignty) had come to them.<sup>9</sup> And We forgave them that! And We bestowed on Moses evident authority.

154. And We caused the mount to tower above them at (the taking of) their covenant: and We bade them: "Enter the gate, prostrate!" and We bade them: "Do not transgress the Sabbath!" and We took from them a firm covenant.

155. Then because of their breaking of their covenant, and their disbelieving in the revelations of God, and their slaying of the prophets wrongfully, and their saying: "Our hearts are hardened"—No, but God has set a seal upon them for their disbelief, so that only a few of them believe—

156. And because of their disbelief and of their speaking against Mary a tremendous calumny;<sup>1</sup>

157. And because of their saying: "We slew the Messiah Jesus son of Mary, God's messenger"—They did not kill him nor crucify him, but it appeared so to them; and those who disagree concerning it are in doubt of it; they have no knowledge of it except pursuit of a conjecture; for certain they did not slay him.

158. But God took him up to Himself. God was ever mighty, wise.

159. There is not one of the People of the Scripture but will believe in Him before his death, and on the day of resurrection He will be a witness against them—

160. Because of the wrongdoing of the Jews We forbade them good things which were (before) made lawful to them, and because of their much hindering from God's way,

161. And of their taking usury when they were forbidden it, and of their devouring people's wealth by false pretences. We have prepared for those of them who disbelieve a painful doom.

162. But those of them who are firm in knowledge and the believers believe in what is revealed to you, and what was revealed before you, especially the diligent in prayer and those who pay the poor-due, the believers in God and the last day. Upon these We shall bestow immense reward.

163. We inspire you as We inspired Noah and the prophets after him, as We inspired Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and Jesus and Job and Jonah and Aaron and Solomon, and as we imparted to David the Psalms;

164. And messengers We have mentioned to you before and messengers We have not mentioned to you; and God spoke directly to Moses;

165. Messengers of good cheer and of warning, in order that mankind might have no argument against God after the messengers. God was ever mighty, wise.

166. But God (Himself) testifies concerning what He has revealed to you; in His knowledge has He revealed it; and the angels also testify. And God is sufficient witness.

167. Those who disbelieve and hinder (others) from the way of God, they have wandered far astray.

<sup>9</sup> See Exodus 32.

<sup>1</sup> This passage criticizes the Jews for insulting the chastity of Mary.

168. Those who disbelieve and deal in wrong, God will never forgive them, neither will He guide them to a road,

169. Except the road of hell, in which they will abide for ever. And that is ever easy for God.

170. O mankind! The messenger has come to you with the truth from your Lord. Therefore believe; (it is) better for you. But if you disbelieve, still, to God belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth. God is ever knower, wise.

171. O People of the Scripture! Do not exaggerate in your religion nor utter anything concerning God except the truth. The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only a messenger of God, and His word which He conveyed to Mary, and a spirit from Him. So believe in God and His messengers, and say not "Three"<sup>2</sup>—Cease! (it is) better for you!—God is only one god. Far is it removed from His transcendent majesty that He should have a son. His is all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth. And God is sufficient as defender.

172. The Messiah will never scorn to be a servant to God, nor will the favored angels. Whoever scorns His service and is proud, all such will He assemble to Him;

173. Then, as for those who believed and did good works, to them will He pay their wages in full, adding to them of His bounty; and as for those who were scornful and proud, them will He punish with a painful doom.

174. And they will not find for them, against God, any protecting friend or helper.

175. O mankind! Now has a proof from your Lord come to you, and We have sent down to you a clear light;

176. As for those who believe in God, and hold fast to Him, them He will cause to enter into His mercy and grace, and will guide them to Him by a straight road.

177. They ask you for a pronouncement. Say: "God has pronounced for you concerning distant kindred. If a man die childless and he has a sister, hers is half the heritage, and he would have inherited from her had she died childless. And if there are two sisters, then theirs are two-thirds of the heritage, and if they are brothers, men and women, to the male is the equivalent of the share of two females." God expounds to you, so that you do not err. God is knower of all things.

2. That is, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

## QUR'AN 12

This sura offers the longest sustained narrative in the Qur'an as it presents the story of Joseph (in Arabic, *Yusuf*), who is also a famous figure in the Hebrew Bible.

The story tells the trials that Joseph endures in fulfilling a childhood vision, one in which eleven stars, the sun, and the moon prostrate before him. When informed of it, his father, Jacob, understands the dream as a sign of God's favor on Joseph but warns him not to reveal it to his brothers (Qur'an 12:4-5). Although

he follows Jacob's advice, Joseph's brothers envy him, believing him to be their father's favorite son. While together one day, they cast him into a well and fake his death (12:15). Joseph is rescued by a traveling caravan, taken to Egypt, and sold into slavery.

Two episodes define Joseph as an adult character. The first finds him rejecting the sexual advances of his master's wife (12:23-32), unnamed in the Qur'an but identified as Zulaykha in the commentary literature. He is cast into prison, where his gift for dream analysis reveals itself and wins him the Pharaoh's favor. He is appointed to a high administrative post after successfully interpreting the Pharaoh's dreams (12:47-55). Sometime later, Joseph's brothers arrive in Egypt but fail to recognize him. Joseph, however, engineers a plan to reunite his family, and they are all reconciled. At the end of the chapter, Joseph's vision is realized: the celestial objects were his eleven brothers and two parents, who now bow before Joseph out of respect (12:100).

Joseph's story has provided a thematic treasure trove for poets and writers throughout the Muslim world. The patience with which Joseph endures his trials, his constant devotion to God, and his ultimate success are oft-repeated motifs. Similarly, Jacob's grief at the loss of Joseph, a grief that literally blinds him (12:84), is often drawn on by writers exploring loss and separation. The brief account of Joseph's rejection of Zulaykha's advances generated countless expansions and amplifications. Both exegetical and literary works embellished the story to explore the meaning of virtue and the nature of love. Many authors celebrated Joseph's self-control, while others memorialized Zulaykha's intoxication at the very sight of him.

### PRONOUNCING GLOSSARY

Alif Lām Rā: *a'-lif lam rah* (not *a-leef*)

## SŪRA 12

### Joseph

#### *Revealed at Mecca*

In the name of God the beneficent, the merciful.

1. Alif. Lām. Rā.<sup>1</sup> These are verses of the scripture that makes plain.
2. We have revealed it, a Qur'an in Arabic, that you may understand.
3. We narrate to you (Mubammad) the best of narratives in that We have inspired in you this Qur'an, though before you were of the heedless.
4. When Joseph said to his father: "O my father! I saw in a dream eleven planets and the sun and the moon, I saw them prostrating themselves to me."<sup>2</sup>
5. He said: "O my dear son! Do not tell your brothers of your vision, for fear that they plot a plot against you. Satan is for man an open foe.
6. Thus your Lord will prefer you and will teach you the interpretation of events, and will perfect His grace upon you and upon the family of Jacob as He perfected it upon your forefathers, Abraham and Isaac. Your Lord is knower, wise."
7. In Joseph and his brothers are signs (of God's sovereignty) for the inquiring.
8. When they said: "Joseph and his brother are dearer to our father than we are, many though we be. Our father is in plain error."

1. Twenty-nine suras begin with letters of the Arabic alphabet; there is no consensus on their significance.

2. Compare Genesis 37:9-11 (more generally, see Genesis 37-46).



9. (One said:) "Kill Joseph or cast him to some (other) land, so that your father's favor may be all for you, and (that) you may afterward be righteous people."

10. One among them said: "Do not kill Joseph but, if you must be doing, fling him into the depth of the pit; some caravan will find him."

11. They said: "O our father! Why will you not trust us with Joseph, when we are good friends to him?"

12. Send him with us to-morrow that he may enjoy himself and play. We shall take good care of him."

13. He said: "In truth it saddens me that you should take him with you, and I fear that the wolf may devour him while you are heedless of him."

14. They said: "If the wolf should devour him when we are (so strong) a band, then surely we should have already perished."

15. Then, when they led him off, and were of one mind that they should place him in the depth of the pit, We inspired in him: You will tell them of this deed of theirs when they know (you) not.

16. And they came weeping to their father in the evening.

17. Saying: "O our father! We went racing one with another, and left Joseph by our things, and the wolf devoured him, and you do not believe our saying even when we speak the truth."

18. And they came with false blood on his shirt. He said: "No, but your minds have beguiled you into something. (My course is) becoming patience. And God it is whose help is to be sought in that (predicament) which you describe."

19. And there came a caravan, and they sent their waterdrawer. He let down his pail (into the pit). He said: "Good luck! Here is a youth." And they hid him as a treasure, and God was aware of what they did.

20. And they sold him for a low price, a number of silver coins; and they attached no value to him.

21. And he of Egypt who purchased him said to his wife: "Receive him honorably. Perhaps he may prove useful to us or we may adopt him as a son." Thus We established Joseph in the land that We might teach him the interpretation of events. And God was predominant in his career, but most of mankind did not know.

22. And when he reached his prime We gave him wisdom and knowledge. Thus We reward the good.

23. And she, in whose house he was, asked of him an evil act. She bolted the doors and said: "Come!" He said: "I seek refuge in God! He is my Lord, who has treated me honorably. Wrong-doers never prosper."

24. She desired him, and he would have desired her if it had not been that he saw the illumination from his Lord. Thus it was, that We might ward off from him evil and lewdness. He was of Our chosen servants.

25. And they raced with one another to the door, and she tore his shirt from behind, and they met her lord and master at the door. She said: "What shall be his reward, who wishes evil to your people, except prison or a painful doom?"

26. (Joseph) said: "It was she who asked of me an evil act." And a witness of her own people testified: "If his shirt is torn from before, then she speaks truth and he is of the liars."

27. And if his shirt is torn from behind, then she has lied and he is of the truthful."

28. So when he [Pharaoh] saw his shirt torn from behind, he said: "This is of the guile of you women. The guile of you is very great."

29. O Joseph! Turn away from this, and you, (O woman), ask forgiveness for your sin. You are of the sinful."

30. And women in the city said: "The ruler's wife is asking of her slave-boy an ill deed. Indeed he has smitten her to the heart with love. We behold her in plain error."

31. And when she heard of their sly talk, she sent to them and prepared for them a cushioned couch (to lie on at the feast) and gave to every one of them a knife and said (to Joseph): "Come out to them!" And when they saw him they exalted him and cut their hands, exclaiming: "God forbid! This is not a human being. This is no other than some gracious angel."

32. She said: "This is he on whose account you blamed me. I asked of him an evil act, but he proved continent, but if he does not do my bidding he shall be imprisoned, and shall be of those brought low."

33. He said: "O my Lord! Prison is more dear than that to which they urge me, and if You do not fend off their wives from me I shall incline to them and become of the foolish."

34. So his Lord heard his prayer and fended off their wives from him. He is hearer, knower.

35. And it seemed good to them (the men) after they had seen the signs (of his innocence) to imprison him for a time.

36. And two young men went to prison with him. One of them said: "I dreamed that I was pressing wine." The other said: "I dreamed that I was carrying upon my head bread of which the birds were eating. Announce to us the interpretation, for we see you of those good (at interpretation)."

37. He said: "The food which you are given (daily) shall not come to you but I shall tell you the interpretation before it comes to you. This is of what my Lord has taught me: I have forsaken the religion of people who do not believe in God and are disbelievers in the hereafter."

38. And I have followed the religion of my fathers, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. It never was for us to attribute anything as partner to God. This is of the bounty of God to us (the seed of Abraham) and to mankind; but most men do not give thanks.

39. O my two fellow-prisoners! Are diverse lords better, or God the one, the almighty?

40. Those whom you worship beside Him are but names which you have named, you and your fathers. God has revealed no sanction for them. The decision rests with God only, Who has commanded you that you worship none except Him. This is the right religion, but most men know not.

41. O my two fellow-prisoners! As for one of you, he will pour out wine for his lord to drink; and as for the other, he will be crucified so that the birds will eat from his head. Thus is the case judged concerning which you did inquire."

42. And he said to him of the two who he knew would be released: "Mention me in the presence of your lord." But Satan caused him to forget to mention it to his lord, so he (Joseph) stayed in prison for some years.

43. And the king said: "I saw in a dream seven fat cows which seven lean were eating, and seven green ears of corn and another (seven) dry. O notables! Expound for me my vision, if you can interpret dreams."

44. They answered: "Jumbled dreams! And we are not knowledgeable in the interpretation of dreams."

45. And he of the two who was released, and (now) at length remembered, said: "I am going to announce to you the interpretation, therefore send me forth."

46. (And when he came to Joseph in the prison, he exclaimed): "Joseph! O you truthful one! Expound for us the seven fat cows which seven lean were eating and the seven green ears of corn and another (seven) dry, that I may return to the people, so that they may know."

47. He said: "You shall sow seven years as usual, but that which you reap, leave it on the ear, all except a little which you eat."

48. Then after that will come seven hard years which will devour all that you have prepared for them, except a little of that which you have stored.

49. Then, after that, will come a year when the people will have plenteous crops and when they will press (wine and oil)."

50. And the king said: "Bring him to me." And when the messenger came to him, he (Joseph) said: "Return to your lord and ask him what was the case of the women who cut their hands. My lord knows their guile."

51. He (the king) (then sent for those women and) said: "What happened when you asked an evil act of Joseph?" They answered: "God forbid! We know no evil of him." The wife of the ruler said: "Now the truth is out. I asked of him an evil act, and he is surely of the truthful."

52. (Then Joseph said: "I asked for) this, that he (my lord) may know that I did not betray him in secret, and that surely God does not guide the snare of the betrayers.

53. I do not exculpate myself. The (human) soul enjoins to evil, except that on which my Lord has mercy. My Lord is forgiving, merciful."

54. And the king said: "Bring him to me that I may attach him to my person." And when he had talked with him he said: "You are today in our presence established and trusted."

55. He said: "Set me over the storehouses of the land. I am a skilled custodian."

56. Thus We gave power to Joseph in the land. He was the owner of it where he pleased. We reach with Our mercy whom We will. We do not lose the reward of the good.

57. And the reward of the hereafter is better, for those who believe and ward off (evil).

58. And Joseph's brothers came and presented themselves before him, and he knew them but they knew him not.

59. And when he provided them with their provision he said: "Bring to me a brother of yours from your father. Do you not see that I fill up the measure and I am the best of hosts?"

60. And if you do not bring him to me, then there shall be no measure for you with me, nor shall you draw near."

61. They said: "We will try to win him from his father: that we will surely do."

62. He said to his young men: "Place their merchandise in their saddlebags, so that they may know it when they go back to their people, and so will come again."

63. So when they went back to their father they said: "O our father! The measure is denied us, so send with us our brother that we may obtain the measure, surely we will guard him well."

64. He said: "Can I entrust him to you except as I entrusted his brother to you before? God is better at guarding, and He is the most merciful of those who show mercy."

65. And when they opened their belongings they discovered that their merchandise had been returned to them. They said: "O our father! What (more) can we ask? Here is our merchandise returned to us. We shall get provision for our people and guard our brother, and we shall have the extra measure of a camel (load). This (that we bring now) is a light measure."

66. He said: "I will not send him with you until you give me an undertaking in the name of God that you will bring him back to me, unless you are surrounded." And when they gave him their undertaking he said: "God is the warden over what we say."

67. And he said: "O my sons! Do not go in by one gate; go in by different gates. I can avail you nothing as against God. The decision rests with God only. In Him do I put my trust, and in Him let all the trusting put their trust."

68. And when they entered in the manner which their father had enjoined, it would have availed them nothing as against God; it was but a need of Jacob's soul which he thus satisfied;<sup>3</sup> and he was a lord of knowledge because We had taught him; but most of mankind do not know.

69. And when they went in before Joseph, he took his brother to himself, saying: "I, even I, am your brother, therefore do not sorrow for what they did."

70. And when he provided them with their provision, he put the drinking-cup in his brother's saddlebag, and then a crier cried: "O camel-riders! You are surely thieves!"

71. They cried, coming toward them: "What is it you have lost?"

72. They said: "We have lost the king's cup, and he who brings it shall have a camel-load," and "I" (said Joseph) "am answerable for it."

73. They said: "By God, well you know we did not come to do evil in the land, and are no thieves."

74. They said: "And what shall be the penalty for it, if you prove liars?"

75. They said: "The penalty for it! He in whose bag (the cup) is found, he is the penalty for it. Thus we requite wrong-doers."

76. Then he (Joseph) began the search with their bags before his brother's bag, then he produced it from his brother's bag. Thus did We contrive for Joseph. He could not have taken his brother according to the king's law unless God willed. We raise by grades (of mercy) whom We will, and over every lord of knowledge there is one more knowing.

77. They said: "If he steals, a brother of his stole before." But Joseph kept it secret in his soul and did not reveal it to them. He said (within himself): "You are in worse case, and God knows best (the truth of) that which you allege."

78. They said: "O ruler of the land! He has an aged father, so take one of us instead of him. We behold you to be of those who do kindness."

79. He said: "God forbid that we should seize anyone but him with whom we found our property; then truly we should be wrong-doers."

3. There is a prevalent superstition in the East that the members of a large family ought not to appear all together, for fear of the ill luck that comes from envy in the hearts of others [Pickthall's note].

80. So, when they despaired of (moving) him, they conferred together apart. The eldest of them said: "Do you not know how your father took an undertaking from you in God's name and how you failed in the case of Joseph before? Therefore I shall not go forth from the land until my father gives leave or God judges for me. He is the best of judges."

81. Return to your father and say: 'O our father! Your son has stolen. We testify only to that which we know; we are not guardians of the unseen."

82. Ask the township where we were, and the caravan with which we travelled here. We speak the truth."

83. (And when they came to their father and had spoken thus to him) he said: "No, but your minds have beguiled you into something. (My course is) becoming patience! It may be that God will bring them all to me. He, only He, is the knower, the wise."

84. And he turned away from them and said: "Alas, my grief for Joseph!" And his eyes were whitened with the sorrow that he was suppressing.

85. They said: "By God, you will never cease remembering Joseph until your health is ruined or you are of those who perish!"

86. He said: "I expose my distress and anguish only to God, and I know from God what you know not."

87. Go, O my sons, and ascertain concerning Joseph and his brother, and do not despair of the spirit of God. None despairs of the spirit of God except disbelieving people."

88. And when they came (again) before him (Joseph) they said: "O ruler! Misfortune has touched us and our people, and we bring but poor merchandise, so fill for us the measure and be charitable to us. God will requite the charitable."

89. He said: "Do you know what you did to Joseph and his brother in your ignorance?"

90. They said: "Is it indeed you who are Joseph?" He said: "I am Joseph and this is my brother. God has shown us favor. He who wards off (evil) and endures (finds favor); for God does not lose the wages of the kindly."

91. They said: "By God, God has preferred you above us, and we were indeed sinful."

92. He said: "Have no fear this day! May God forgive you, and He is the most merciful of those who show mercy."

93. Go with this shirt of mine and lay it on my father's face, he will become (again) one who sees; and come to me with all your people."

94. When the caravan departed their father had said: "Truly I am conscious of the scent of Joseph, though you call me a foolish babblers."

95. (Those around him) said: "By God, you are in your old error."

96. Then, when the bearer of glad tidings came, he laid it on his face and he became one who sees once more. He said: "Did I not say to you that I know from God what you know not?"

97. They said: "O our father! Ask forgiveness of our sins for us, for we were sinful."

98. He said: "I shall ask forgiveness for you of my Lord. He is the forgiving, the merciful."

99. And when they came in before Joseph, he took his parents to him, and said: "Come into Egypt safe, if God will!"

100. And he placed his parents on the daïs and they fell down before him prostrate, and he said: "O my father! This is the interpretation of my dream of old. My Lord has made it true, and He has shown me kindness, since He took me out of the prison and has brought you from the desert after Satan had made strife between me and my brethren. My Lord is tender to whom He will. He is the knower, the wise."

101. O my Lord! You have given me (something) of sovereignty and have taught me (something) of the interpretation of events—creator of the heavens and the earth! You are my protecting friend in the world and the hereafter. Make me to die submissive (to You), and join me to the righteous."

102. This is of the tidings of the unseen which We inspire in you (Muhammad). You were not present with them when they fixed their plan and they were scheming.

103. And though you try much, most men will not believe.

104. You ask them no fee for it. It is nothing else than a reminder to the peoples.

105. How many a sign is there in the heavens and the earth which they pass by with face averted!

106. And most of them do not believe in God except that they attribute partners (to Him).

107. Do they think themselves secure from the coming on them of a pall of God's punishment, or the coming of the hour suddenly while they are unaware?

108. Say: "This is my way: I call on God with sure knowledge, I and whoever follows me—Glory be to God!—and I am not of the idolaters."

109. We did not send before you (any messengers) except men whom We inspired from among the people of the townships—Have they not travelled in the land and seen the nature of the consequence for those who were before them? And the abode of the hereafter, for those who ward off (evil), is best. Have you then no sense?—

110. Until, when the messengers despaired and thought that they were denied, then Our help came to them, and whom We would was saved. And Our wrath cannot be warded from the guilty.

III. In their history there is a lesson for men of understanding. It is no invented story but a confirmation of the existing (scripture) and a detailed explanation of everything, and a guidance and a mercy for people who believe.

## QUR'AN 55

Sura 55 takes its name from its first verse, which is simply the divine name, "The Beneficent" (*al-Rahman*). When recited in Arabic its repetitive rhymes create a mesmerizing effect, an effect heightened by the constant refrain: "Which is it, of the favors of your Lord, that you deny?" This chapter of the Qur'an is unusual both in having a pervasive refrain and in using a dual address throughout.

The refrain accounts for more than a third of the sura's seventy-eight verses. It begins at verse 13 and repeats every second or third verse until verse 44. It then

alternates with every subsequent verse until the end of the sura. Such repetition is rare in the Qur'an; indeed, only three other suras, Qur'an 26, 57, and 77, have comparable refrains. Their recitative quality has sparked considerable scholarly interest.

Scholars undertaking intertextual study of the Bible and the Qur'an have noted the resonance between numerous passages of the Qur'an and of the Psalms. Psalm 136 and Qur'an 55, for example, are alike in their antiphonal structure, and in Psalm 136 the refrain "For his kindness endures forever" appears at the end of every verse. Like Qur'an 55, Psalm 136 begins with the glorification of God (Psalm 136:1-3; Qur'an 55:1), moves to the creation of heaven and earth (Psalm 136:5-6; Qur'an 55:7, 10), and then continues to the creation of celestial objects (Psalm 136:7-8; Qur'an 55:5-6).

Qur'an 55's use of a dual form for the pronoun "you"—impossible to convey in English translation—opens another line of analysis and interpretation. It must be remembered that the Qur'an addresses not only humans but also a second species of creation who, like humans, are called to obey the qur'anic message. These are the jinn, who occupy a rich and fascinating place in Islamic lore; they also give their name to a chapter title of the Qur'an (Qur'an 72).

Unlike humans, who are created from clay, and the angels, who are made of light, the jinn are composed of a smokeless fire (Qur'an 55:14). Muslim writers often drew on these differences in composition to sharpen their descriptions of each group. The jinn are generally invisible to humans, and although they possess no knowledge of future events (34:14), their mental and physical abilities easily outstrip those of normal humans. Some jinn can ascend to the heavens (72:8-9); others are incredibly strong or can speed across vast distances (27:39-40). Yet despite the jinns' strength and their status as creatures of the divine, whether obedient or disobedient (72:1-14), God clearly favors humans, designating them as his representatives on the earth (2:30; 6:165; 33:72). While other qur'anic passages address humans and jinn (e.g., 6:130), Sura 55 is unique in addressing both for an extended series of verses.

Commentators on this sura have usually concluded that its use of the dual is grammatically mandated by the combined address to humans and jinn. A contemporary German scholar, Angelika Neuwirth, finds a deeper rationale, suggesting that the dual here mirrors an underlying theme of the sura: the balanced symmetry of creation. The expressive clarity of God's speech mimics the harmonious order of material existents. Both creation and revelation manifest the divine, and both can be read as God's text. The use of the dual throughout the sura reflects this deeper meaning, one that is reinforced in its description of heaven and earth (Qur'an 55:7-12) and its reference to sunrise and sunset at the summer and the winter solstice (55:17).

## SŪRA 55

### The Beneficent

#### *Revealed at Mecca*

In the name of God, the beneficent, the merciful.

1. The beneficent
2. Has made known the Qur'an.
3. He has created man.
4. He has taught him utterance.
5. The sun and the moon are made punctual.
6. The stars and the trees adore.
7. And the sky He has uplifted; and He has set the measure,

8. That you exceed not the measure,
9. But observe the measure strictly, nor fall short of it.
10. And the earth He has appointed for (His) creatures,
11. In which are fruit and sheathed palm-trees,
12. Husked grain and scented herb.
13. Which is it, of the favors of your Lord, that you deny?
14. He created man of clay like the potter's,
15. And the jinn he created of smokeless fire.
16. Which is it, of the favors of your Lord, that you deny?
17. Lord of the two easts,<sup>1</sup> and Lord of the two wests!<sup>2</sup>
18. Which is it, of the favors of your Lord, that you deny?
19. He has loosed the two seas.<sup>3</sup> They meet.
20. There is a barrier between them. They do not encroach (one upon the other).
21. Which is it, of the favors of your Lord, that you deny?
22. There comes forth from both of them the pearl and coral-stone.
23. Which is it, of the favors of your Lord, that you deny?
24. His are the ships displayed upon the sea, like banners.<sup>4</sup>
25. Which is it, of the favors of your Lord, that you deny?
26. Everyone that is on it will pass away;
27. There remains but the countenance of your Lord of might and glory.
28. Which is it, of the favors of your Lord, that you deny?
29. All that are in the heavens and the earth entreat Him. Every day He exercises (universal) power.
30. Which is it, of the favors of your Lord, that you deny?
31. We shall dispose of you, O you two dependents (man and jinn).
32. Which is it, of the favors of your Lord, that you deny?
33. O company of jinn and men, if you have power to penetrate (all) regions of the heavens and the earth, then penetrate (them)! You will never penetrate them except with (Our) sanction.
34. Which is it, of the favors of your Lord, that you deny?
35. There will be sent, against you both, heat of fire and flash of brass, and you will not escape.
36. Which is it, of the favors of your Lord, that you deny?
37. And when the heaven splits asunder and becomes rosy like red hide—
38. Which is it, of the favors of your Lord, that you deny?—
39. On that day neither man nor jinn will be questioned of his sin.
40. Which is it, of the favors of your Lord, that you deny?
41. The guilty will be known by their marks, and will be taken by the forelocks and the feet.
42. Which is it, of the favors of your Lord, that you deny?
43. This is hell which the guilty deny.
44. They go circling round between it and fierce, boiling water.
45. Which is it, of the favors of your Lord, that you deny?

1. The two points where the sun rises in winter and in summer [all notes in this sura are Pick-thall's].

2. The two points where the sun sets in winter

and in summer.

3. That is, the salt water and the sweet.

4. The usual explanation of the commentators is "built into the sea like mountains."



46. But for him who fears the standing before his Lord there are two gardens.
47. Which is it, of the favors of your Lord, that you deny?
48. Of spreading branches.
49. Which is it, of the favors of your Lord, that you deny?
50. In which are two fountains flowing
51. Which is it, of the favors of your Lord, that you deny?
52. In which is every kind of fruit in pairs.
53. Which is it, of the favors of your Lord, that you deny?
54. Reclining upon couches lined with silk brocade, the fruit of both the gardens near to hand.
55. Which is it, of the favors of your Lord, that you deny?
56. Therein are those of modest gaze, whom neither man nor jinn will have touched before them,
57. Which is it, of the favors of your Lord, that you deny?
58. (In beauty) like the jacinth and the coral-stone.
59. Which is it, of the favors of your Lord, that you deny?
60. Is the reward of goodness other than goodness?
61. Which is it, of the favors of your Lord, that you deny?
62. And beside them are two other gardens,
63. Which is it, of the favors of your Lord, that you deny?
64. Dark green with foliage.
65. Which is it, of the favors of your Lord, that you deny?
66. In which are two abundant springs.
67. Which is it, of the favors of your Lord, that you deny?
68. In which is fruit, the date-palm and pomegranate.
69. Which is it, of the favors of your Lord, that you deny?
70. In which (are found) the good and beautiful—
71. Which is it, of the favors of your Lord, that you deny?—
72. Fair ones, close-guarded in pavilions—
73. Which is it, of the favors of your Lord, that you deny?—
74. Whom neither man nor jinn will have touched before them—
75. Which is it, of the favors of your Lord, that you deny?—
76. Reclining on green cushions and fair carpets.
77. Which is it, of the favors of your Lord, that you deny?
78. Blessed be the name of your Lord, mighty and glorious!

## QUR'AN 78-114

Although the basic units of the Qur'an are chapter (suras) and verses (*ayat*), Muslims have devised others for recitational and liturgical purposes. Most notable is the division of the Qur'an into thirty equal parts (*ajza'*, sing. *juz'*), which is helpful for those wishing to complete the recitation of the Qur'an in a single month. It becomes particularly useful during Ramadan, the month of fasting, when many Muslims recite a *juz'* per night.

The most famous *juz'* of the Qur'an is the final one, named *juz' amma*. It comprises chapters 78-114 and takes its name from the first words of chapter 78: "About what (*amma*) do they question one another?" While few Muslims memorize the entire Qur'an, almost all try to commit all or most of this *juz'* to memory. Indeed, the first chapters that Muslim children learn are from this section. Most of these suras are short, with easily memorized rhyming verses, and date to the Meccan period of Islam—that is, before Muhammad emigrated to Medina in 622.

Much of this *juz'* captures the Prophet's early preaching, which contained calls to repentance before the prospect of final judgment. Moral exhortations abound, with threats of divine retribution for those who cheat and oppress and the promise of divine favor for those who give charity, look after orphans, and reflect on God's signs in creation. The stories of ancient Arabian tribes and of people who ignored their prophets are presented as evidence that those who ignore God's warnings will suffer fearsome consequences.

Special qualities adhere to the last three suras of this *juz'*. Sura 112, "The Unity" (*al-Tawhid*), is seen as expressing the essence of Islamic theology—that there is one God. For many pious Muslims, reciting this sura is equivalent to the reward gained from reciting a third of the Qur'an. Suras 113 ("The Daybreak," *al-Falaq*) and 114 ("Mankind," *al-Nas*) begin, respectively, with the phrases "I seek refuge in the Lord of the daybreak" and "I seek refuge in the Lord of mankind." For this reason, they are referred to collectively as "the two prayers of refuge" (*al-mu'awwidhatan*), and according to numerous reports Muhammad urged his companions to recite these two suras, sometimes in conjunction with Sura 112, to ward off malevolent forces, magic, the evil eye, and general harm.

### PRONOUNCING GLOSSARY

Abu Lahab: a-boo la'-hab  
 'Illyin: il-lee-yeen'  
 Iram: i'-ram  
 Quraysh: qoo-raysh'

Sijjin: sij-jeen'  
 Tasnim: tas-neem'  
 Thamud: tha-mood'  
 Tuwa: too-wa'

## SŪRA 78

### The Tidings

#### Revealed at Mecca

In the name of God, the beneficent, the merciful.

- About what do they question one another?
- (It is) of the awful tidings,
- Concerning which they are in disagreement.
- No, but they will come to know!
- No, again, but they will come to know!
- Have We not made the earth an expanse,
- And the high hills bulwarks?
- And We have created you in pairs,
- And have appointed your sleep for repose,
- And have appointed the night as a cloak,
- And have appointed the day for livelihood,
- And We have built above you seven strong (heavens),

13. And have appointed a dazzling lamp,
14. And have sent down from the rainy clouds abundant water,
15. Thereby to produce grain and plant,
16. And gardens of thick foliage.
17. The day of decision is a fixed time,
18. A day when the trumpet is blown, and you come in multitudes,
19. And the heaven is opened and becomes as gates,
20. And the hills are set in motion and become as a mirage.
21. Hell lurks in ambush,
22. A home for the rebellious.
23. They will abide there for ages.
24. Therein they taste neither coolness nor (any) drink
25. Except boiling water and a paralyzing cold:
26. Reward proportioned (to their evil deeds).
27. For they did not look for a reckoning;
28. They called Our revelations false with strong denial.
29. Everything have We recorded in a book.
30. So taste (of what you have earned). No increase do We give you except of torment.
31. For the dutiful is achievement—
32. Gardens enclosed and vineyards,
33. And maidens for companions,
34. And a full cup.
35. There they hear neither vain discourse, nor lying—
36. Requital from your Lord—a gift in payment—
37. Lord of the heavens and the earth, and (all) that is between them, the beneficent; with whom none can converse.
38. On the day when the angels and the spirit stand arrayed, they do not speak, except him whom the beneficent allows and who speaks right.
39. That is the true day. So whoever will should seek recourse to his Lord.
40. We warn you of a doom at hand, a day in which a man will look on that which his own hands have sent before, and the disbeliever will cry: "Would that I were dust!"

## SŪRA 79

## Those Who Drag Forth

*Revealed at Mecca*

In the name of God, the beneficent, the merciful.

1. By those who drag forth to destruction,
2. By the meteors rushing,
3. By the lone stars floating,<sup>1</sup>
4. By the angels hastening,

1. Some commentators take verses 2 and 3 also as referring to angels and explain them thus: "By those who console (the spirits of the righteous) tenderly." "By those who come floating (down

from heaven with their Lord's command)." The rendering given in the text above is the more obvious [Pickthall's note].

5. And those who govern the event,
6. On the day when the first trumpet resounds
7. And the second follows it,
8. On that day hearts beat painfully
9. While eyes are downcast
10. (Now) they are saying: "Shall we really be restored to our first state
11. Even after we are crumbled bones?"
12. They say: "Then that would be a vain proceeding."
13. Surely it will need but one shout,
14. And they will be awakened.
15. Has there come to you the history of Moses?
16. How his Lord called him in the holy valley of Tuwa,<sup>2</sup>
17. (Saying:) "Go you to Pharaoh—he has rebelled—
18. And say (to him): 'Have you (will) to grow (in grace)?
19. Then I will guide you to your Lord and you shall fear (Him).'"
20. And he showed him the tremendous sign.
21. But he denied and disobeyed,
22. Then turned he away in haste,
23. Then gathered he and summoned
24. And proclaimed: "I (Pharaoh) am your lord the highest."
25. So God seized him (and made him) an example for the after (life) and for the former.
26. Here is indeed a lesson for him who fears.
27. Are you the harder to create, or is the heaven that He built?
28. He raised its height and ordered it;
29. And He made dark its night, and He brought forth its morn,
30. And after that He spread the earth,
31. And from it produced its water and its pasture,
32. And He made fast the hills,
33. A provision for you and for your cattle.
34. But when the great disaster comes,
35. The day when man will call to mind his (whole) endeavor,
36. And hell will stand forth visible to him who sees,
37. Then, as for him who rebelled
38. And chose the life of the world,
39. Hell will be his home.
40. But as for him who feared to stand before his Lord and restrained his soul from lust,
41. The garden will be his home.
42. They ask you about the hour: "When will it come to port?"
43. Why (ask they)? What have you to tell of it?
44. To your Lord belongs (knowledge of) its term.
45. You are but a warner to him who fears it.
46. On the day when they behold it, it will be as if they had but tarried for an evening or the morning of it.

2. Commentators differ on this reference; some suggest that it denotes a valley near Mount Sinai.

## SŪRA 80

## He Frowned

*Revealed at Mecca*

In the name of God, the beneficent, the merciful.

1. He frowned and turned away
2. Because the blind man came to him.
3. What could inform you but that he might grow (in grace)
4. Or take heed and so the reminder might avail him?
5. As for him who thinks himself independent,
6. To him you pay regard.
7. Yet it is not your concern if he does not grow (in grace).
8. But as for him who comes to you with earnest purpose
9. And has fear,
10. From him you are distracted.
11. No, but it is an admonishment,
12. So let whoever wishes pay heed to it,
13. On honored leaves
14. Exalted, purified,
15. (Set down) by scribes
16. Noble and righteous.
17. Man is (self-)destroyed: how ungrateful!
18. From what thing does He create him?
19. From a drop of seed He creates him and proportions him,
20. Then makes the way easy for him,
21. Then causes him to die, and buries him;
22. Then, when He will, He brings him again to life.
23. No, but (man) has not done what He commanded him.
24. Let man consider his food:
25. How We pour water in showers
26. Then split the earth in clefts
27. And cause the grain to grow in it
28. And grapes and green fodder
29. And olive-trees and palm-trees
30. And garden-closes of thick foliage
31. And fruits and grasses:
32. Provision for you and your cattle.
33. But when the shout comes
34. On the day when a man flees from his brother
35. And his mother and his father
36. And his wife and his children,
37. Every man that day will have concern enough to make him heedless (of others).
38. On that day faces will be bright as dawn,
39. Laughing, rejoicing at good news;
40. And other faces, on that day, with dust upon them,
41. Veiled in darkness,
42. Those are the disbelievers, the wicked.

## SŪRA 81

## The Overthrowing

*Revealed at Mecca*

In the name of God, the beneficent, the merciful.

1. When the sun is overthrown,
2. And when the stars fall,
3. And when the hills are moved,
4. And when the camels big with young are abandoned,
5. And when the wild beasts are herded together,
6. And when the seas rise,
7. And when souls are reunited,
8. And when the girl-child who was buried alive is asked
9. For what sin she was slain,
10. And when the pages are laid open,
11. And when the sky is torn away,
12. And when hell is lighted,
13. And when the garden is brought near,
14. (Then) every soul will know what it has made ready.
15. Oh, but I call to witness the planets,
16. The stars which rise and set,
17. And the close of night,<sup>1</sup>
18. And the breath of mornings<sup>2</sup>
19. That this is in truth the word of an honored messenger,
20. Mighty, established in the presence of the Lord of the throne,
21. (One) to be obeyed, and trustworthy;
22. And your comrade is not mad.
23. Surely he beheld him<sup>3</sup> on the clear horizon.<sup>4</sup>
24. And he is not a withholder of the unseen.
25. Nor is this the utterance of a devil worthy to be stoned.
26. Then where do you go?
27. This is nothing else than a reminder to creation,
28. To whoever of you wills to walk straight.
29. And you do not will, unless (it be) that God wills, the Lord of creation.

## SŪRA 82

## The Cleaving

*Revealed at Mecca*

In the name of God, the beneficent, the merciful.

1. When the heaven is cleft asunder,
2. When the planets are dispersed,

1. Lit. "And the night when it closes" [Pickthall's note].  
 2. Lit. "And the morning when it breathes" [Pickthall's note].

3. Usually understood to be the angel Gabriel.  
 4. The reference is to the Prophet's vision at Mt. Hira' [Pickthall's note].

3. When the seas are poured forth,
4. And the sepulchres are overturned,
5. A soul will know what it has sent before (it) and what left behind,
6. O man! What has made you careless concerning your Lord, the bountiful,
7. Who created you, then fashioned, then proportioned you?
8. Into whatever form He wills, He casts you.
9. No, but you deny the judgment.
10. There are above you guardians,
11. Generous and recording,
12. Who know (all) that you do.
13. The righteous will be in delight.
14. And the wicked will be in hell;
15. They will burn there on the day of judgment,
16. And will not be absent from it.
17. Ah, what will convey to you what the day of judgment is!
18. Again, what will convey to you what the day of judgment is!
19. A day on which no soul has power at all for any (other) soul. The (absolute) command on that day is God's.

## SŪRA 83

## Defrauding

*Revealed at Mecca*

In the name of God, the beneficent, the merciful.

1. Woe to the defrauders:
2. Those who when they take the measure from mankind demand it full,
3. But if they measure for them or weigh for them, they cause them loss.
4. Do such (men) not consider that they will be raised again
5. To an awful day,
6. The day when (all) mankind stand before the Lord of the worlds?
7. No, but the record of the vile is in Sijjin<sup>1</sup>—
8. Ah! what will convey to you what Sijjin is!—
9. A written record.
10. Woe to the repudiators on that day!
11. Those who deny the day of judgment
12. Which none denies except each criminal transgressor,
13. Who, when you read to him Our revelations, say: "(Mere) fables of the men of old."
14. No, but that which they have earned is rust upon their hearts.
15. No, but surely on that day they will be covered from (the mercy of) their Lord.
16. Then they will burn in hell,
17. And it will be said (to them): "This is that which you used to deny."
18. No, but the record of the righteous is in 'Illyin<sup>2</sup>—

1. A pit in which the register of the deeds of the wicked is kept. Also, the registry itself.

2. A celestial realm and, by extension, the register in which the deeds of the pious are written.

19. Ah, what will convey to you what 'Illyin is!—
20. A written record,
21. Attested by those who are brought near (to their Lord).
22. The righteous are in delight,
23. On couches, gazing,
24. You will know in their faces the radiance of delight.
25. They are given to drink of a pure wine, sealed,
26. Whose seal is musk—For this let (all) those strive who strive for bliss—
27. And mixed with water of Tasnim,<sup>3</sup>
28. A spring from which those brought near (to God) drink.
29. The guilty used to laugh at those who believed,
30. And wink one to another when they passed them;
31. And when they returned to their own people, they returned jesting;
32. And when they saw them they said: "These have gone astray."
33. Yet they were not sent as guardians over them.
34. This day it is those who believe who have the laugh of disbelievers,
35. On high couches, gazing.
36. Are not the disbelievers paid for what they used to do?

## SŪRA 84

## The Sundering

*Revealed at Mecca*

In the name of God, the beneficent, the merciful.

1. When the heaven is split asunder
2. And attentive to her Lord in fear,
3. And when the earth is spread out
4. And has cast out all that was in her, and is empty
5. And attentive to her Lord in fear!
6. You, O man, are working toward your Lord a work which you will meet (in His presence).
7. Then whoever is given his account in his right hand
8. He truly will receive an easy reckoning
9. And will return to his folk in joy.
10. But whoever is given his account behind his back,
11. He surely will invoke destruction
12. And be thrown to scorching fire.
13. He lived joyous with his folk,
14. He thought that he would never return (to God).
15. No, but his Lord is ever looking on him!
16. Oh, I swear by the afterglow of sunset,
17. And by the night and all that it enshrouds,
18. And by the moon when she is at the full,
19. That you shall journey on from plane to plane.
20. What ails them, then, that they do not believe

3. A well or fountain in paradise.



21. And, when the Qur'an is recited to them, do not worship (God)?
22. No, but those who disbelieve will deny;
23. And God knows best what they are hiding.
24. So give them tidings of a painful doom,
25. Except those who believe and do good works, for theirs is a reward unailing.

## SŪRA 85

## The Mansions of the Stars

*Revealed at Mecca*

In the name of God, the beneficent, the merciful.

1. By the heaven, holding mansions of the stars,
2. And by the promised day.
3. And by the witness and that to which he bears testimony,
4. (Self-)destroyed were the owners of the ditch
5. Of the fuel-fed fire,
6. When they sat by it,
7. And were themselves the witnesses of what they did to the believers.<sup>1</sup>
8. They had nothing against them except that they believed in God, the mighty, the owner of praise,
9. Him to whom belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth, and God is of all things the witness.
10. They who persecute believing men and believing women and do not repent, theirs will be the doom of hell, and theirs the doom of burning.
11. Those who believe and do good works, theirs will be gardens underneath which rivers flow. That is the great success.
12. The punishment of your Lord is stern.
13. He it is who produces, then reproduces,
14. And He is the forgiving, the loving,
15. Lord of the throne of glory,
16. Doer of what He will.
17. Has there come to you the story of the hosts
18. Of Pharaoh and (the tribe of) Thamud?<sup>2</sup>
19. No, but those who disbelieve live in denial
20. And God, all unseen, surrounds them.
21. No, but it is a glorious Qur'an.
22. On a guarded tablet.

1. Or it might be: "(Self-)destroyed were the owners of the trench of fuel-fed fire (i.e. hell) when they took their ease on earth and were themselves the witnesses," etc. [Pickthall's note].

2. A once-prominent Arabian tribe; according to traditional Islamic accounts, they were destroyed because they refused to worship Allah.

## SŪRA 86

## The Morning Star

*Revealed at Mecca*

In the name of God, the beneficent, the merciful.

1. By the heaven and the morning star<sup>1</sup>
2. —Ah, what will tell you what the morning star is!
3. —The piercing star!
4. Every human soul has a guardian over it.
5. So let man consider from what he is created.
6. He is created from a gushing fluid
7. That issued from between the loins and ribs.
8. He is able to return him (to life)
9. On the day when hidden thoughts shall be searched out.
10. Then he will have no might nor any helper.
11. By the heaven which gives the returning rain,
12. And the earth which splits (with the growth of trees and plants)
13. This (Qur'an) is a conclusive word,
14. It is no pleasantry.
15. They plot a plot (against you, O Muhammad)
16. And I plot a plot (against them).
17. So give a respite to the disbelievers. Deal gently with them for a while.

## SŪRA 87

## The Most High

*Revealed at Mecca*

In the name of God, the beneficent, the merciful.

1. Praise the name of your Lord the most high,
2. Who creates, then disposes;
3. Who measures, then guides;
4. Who brings forth the pasturage,
5. Then turns it to russet stubble.
6. We shall make you read (O Muhammad) so that you shall not forget
7. Except that which God wills. He knows the disclosed and that which still is hidden;
8. And We shall ease your way to the state of ease.
9. Therefore remind (men), for of use is the reminder.
10. He who fears will heed,
11. But the most wretched will flout it,
12. He who will be flung to the great fire
13. In which he will neither die nor live.
14. He is successful who grows,
15. And remembers the name of his Lord, so prays.

1. The Arabic word means originally "that which comes at night" or "one who knocks at the door" [Pickthall's note].

16. But you prefer the life of the world
17. Although the hereafter is better and more lasting.
18. This is in the former scrolls,
19. The scrolls of Abraham and Moses.

## SŪRA 88

## The Overwhelming

*Revealed at Mecca*

In the name of God, the beneficent, the merciful.

1. Have there come to you tidings of the overwhelming?
2. On that day (many) faces will be downcast,
3. Toiling, weary,
4. Scorched by burning fire,
5. Drinking from a boiling spring,
6. No food for them but bitter thorn-fruit
7. Which does not nourish or release from hunger.
8. In that day other faces will be calm,
9. Glad for their effort past,
10. In a high garden
11. Where they hear no idle speech,
12. In which is a gushing spring,
13. In which are couches raised
14. And goblets set at hand
15. And cushions ranged
16. And silken carpets spread.
17. Will they not regard the camels, how they are created?
18. And the heaven, how it is raised?
19. And the hills, how they are set up?
20. And the earth, how it is spread?
21. Remind them, for you are but a reminder,
22. You are not at all a warder over them.
23. But whoever is averse and disbelieves,
24. God will punish him with direst punishment.
25. To Us is their return
26. And Ours their reckoning.

## SURA 89

## The Dawn

*Revealed at Mecca*

In the name of God, the beneficent, the merciful.

1. By the dawn
2. And ten nights,<sup>1</sup>

1. Of the month of pilgrimage [Pickthall's note].

3. And the even and the odd,
4. And the night when it departs,
5. There surely is an oath for a thinking man.
6. Do you not consider how your Lord dealt with (the tribe of) 'Ad,<sup>2</sup>
7. With many-columned<sup>3</sup> Iram,
8. The like of which was not created in the lands;
9. And with (the tribe of) Thamud,<sup>4</sup> who clove the rocks in the valley;
10. And with Pharaoh, firm of might,
11. Who (all) were rebellious (to God) in these lands,
12. And multiplied iniquity in them?
13. Therefore your Lord poured on them the disaster of His punishment.
14. Your Lord is ever watchful.
15. As for man, whenever his Lord tests him by honoring him, and is gracious to him, he says: "My Lord honors me."
16. But whenever He tests him by restricting his means of life, he says: "My Lord despises me."
17. No, but you (for your part) do not honor the orphan
18. And do not urge the feeding of the poor,
19. And you devour heritages with devouring greed
20. And love wealth with abounding love.
21. No, but when the earth is ground to atoms, grinding, grinding,
22. And your Lord shall come with angels, rank on rank,
23. And hell is brought near that day; on that day man will remember, but how will the remembrance (then avail him)?
24. He will say: "Ah, would that I had sent before me (some provision) for my life!"
25. None punishes as He will punish on that day!
26. None binds as He then will bind.
27. But ah! you soul at peace!
28. Return to your Lord, content in His good pleasure!
29. Enter among My bondmen!
30. Enter My garden!

## SŪRA 90

## The City

*Revealed at Mecca*

In the name of God, the beneficent, the merciful.

1. No, I swear by this city—
2. And you are an indweller of this city!<sup>1</sup>

2. An ancient tribe to whom the prophet Hud was sent (Qur'an 11:50–60); they ruled from Iram.

3. I had written "many-columned," following the run of commentators, who take the word 'imad to mean columns, pillars, when I happened upon Ibn Khaldun's diatribe against that rendering and all the legends to which it has given rise, in the preface to the *Prolegomena*. The word meant "tent-poles" to the Arabs of the Prophet's day, as

Ibn Khaldun points out. In view of recent discoveries in the Yemen, however, I prefer the usual rendering [Pickthall's note; on Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406), see below].

4. Nabatean descendants of 'Ad who left rock inscriptions in their settlements in northern Arabia.

1. Or "when you have control over this city" (prophetically) [Pickthall's note].

3. And the begetter and that which he begat,
4. We have created man in an atmosphere:<sup>2</sup>
5. Does he think that none has power over him?
6. And he says: "I have destroyed vast wealth,"
7. Does he think that none beholds him?
8. Did We not assign to him two eyes
9. And a tongue and two lips,
10. And guide him to the parting of the mountain ways?
11. But he has not attempted the ascent—
12. Ah, what will convey to you what the ascent is!—
13. (It is) to free a slave,
14. And to feed in the day of hunger
15. An orphan near of kin,
16. Or some poor wretch in misery,
17. And to be of those who believe and exhort one another to perseverance and exhort one another to pity.
18. Their place will be on the right hand.
19. But those who disbelieve our revelations, their place will be on the left hand.
20. Fire will be an awning over them.

## SŪRA 91

## The Sun

*Revealed at Mecca*

In the name of God, the beneficent, the merciful.

1. By the sun and its brightness,
2. And the moon as it follows it,
3. And the day when it reveals it,
4. And the night when it enshrouds it,
5. And the heaven and Him who built it,
6. And the earth and Him who spread it,
7. And a soul and Him who perfected it
8. And inspired it (with conscience of) what is wrong for it and (what is) right for it.
9. He is indeed successful who causes it to grow,
10. And he is indeed a failure who stunts it.
11. (The tribe of) Thamud denied (the truth) in their rebellious pride,
12. When the basest of them broke forth
13. And the messenger of God said: "It is the she-camel of God, so let her drink!"
14. But they denied him, and they hamstrung her, so their Lord doomed them for their sin and razed (their dwellings).
15. He does not dread the sequel (of events).

2. Or "in affliction" [Pickthall's note].

## SŪRA 92

## The Night

*Revealed at Mecca*

In the name of God, the beneficent, the merciful.

1. By the night enshrouding
2. And the day resplendent
3. And him who has created male and female,
4. Your effort is dispersed (toward diverse ends).
5. As for him who gives and is dutiful (toward God)
6. And believes in goodness;
7. Surely we will ease his way to the state of ease.
8. But as for him who hoards and thinks himself independent,
9. And denies goodness;
10. Surely we will ease his way to adversity.
11. His riches will not save him when he perishes.
12. Ours it is (to give) the guidance
13. And to Us belong the latter portion and the former.
14. Therefore have I warned you of the flaming fire
15. Which only the most wretched must endure,
16. He who denies and turns away.
17. Far removed from it will be the righteous
18. Who gives his wealth that he may grow (in goodness),
19. And none has with him any favor for reward,
20. Except as seeking (to fulfill) the purpose of his Lord most high.
21. He will be content.

## SŪRA 93

## The Morning Hours

*Revealed at Mecca*

In the name of God, the beneficent, the merciful.

1. By the morning hours
2. And by the night when it is stillest,
3. Your Lord has not forsaken you nor does He hate you,
4. And the latter portion will be better for you than the former,
5. And your Lord will give to you so that you will be content.
6. Did He not find you an orphan and protect (you)?
7. Did He not find you wandering and direct (you)?
8. Did He not find you destitute and enrich (you)?
9. Therefore do not oppress the orphan,
10. Therefore do not drive away the beggar,
11. Therefore of the bounty of your Lord be your discourse.

## SŪRA 94

## Solace

*Revealed at Mecca*

In the name of God, the beneficent, the merciful.

1. Have We not caused your breast to dilate,
2. And eased you of the burden
3. Which weighed down your back;
4. And exalted your fame?
5. But with hardship goes ease,
6. With hardship goes ease;
7. So when you are relieved, still toil
8. And strive to please your Lord.

## SŪRA 95

## The Fig

*Revealed at Mecca*

In the name of God, the beneficent, the merciful.

1. By the fig and the olive,
2. By Mount Sinai,
3. And by this land made safe;
4. Surely We created man of the best stature
5. Then We reduced him to the lowest of the low,
6. Except those who believe and do good works, and theirs is a reward unfailing.
7. So who henceforth will give the lie to you about the judgment?
8. Is not God the most conclusive of all judges?

## SŪRA 96

## The Clot

*Revealed at Mecca*

In the name of God, the beneficent, the merciful.

1. Read: In the name of your Lord who created,
2. Created man from a clot.
3. Read: And your Lord is the most bounteous,
4. Who teaches by the pen,
5. Teaches man what he knew not.
6. No, but truly man is rebellious
7. That he thinks himself independent!
8. To your Lord is the return.
9. Have you seen him who dissuades
10. A servant (of God) when he prays?

11. Have you seen if he relies on the guidance (of God)

12. Or enjoins piety?

13. Have you seen if he denies (God's guidance) and turns away?

14. Is he then unaware that God sees?

15. No, but if he does not cease We will seize him by the forelock—

16. The lying, sinful forelock—

17. Then let him call upon his henchmen!

18. We will call the guards of hell.

19. No! Do not obey him. But prostrate yourself, and draw near (to God).

## SŪRA 97

## Power

*Revealed at Mecca*

In the name of God, the beneficent, the merciful.

1. We revealed it on the night of power.
2. Ah, what will convey to you what the night of power is!
3. The night of power is better than a thousand months.
4. The angels and the spirit<sup>1</sup> descend in it, by the permission of their Lord, with all decrees.
5. (That night is) peace until the rising of the dawn.

## SŪRA 98

## The Clear Proof

*Revealed at Medina*

In the name of God, the beneficent, the merciful.

1. Those who disbelieve among the People of the Book<sup>1</sup> and the idolaters could not have left off (erring) until the clear proof came to them,
2. A messenger from God, reading purified pages
3. Containing correct scriptures.
4. Nor were the People of the Book divided until after the clear proof came to them.
5. And they are ordered only to serve God, keeping religion pure for Him, as men by nature upright, and to establish worship and to pay the poor-tax. That is true religion.
6. Those who disbelieve, among the People of the Book and the idolaters, will abide in hell's fire. They are the worst of created beings.
7. (And) those who believe and do good works are the best of created beings.
8. Their reward is with their Lord: gardens of Eden underneath which rivers flow, in which they dwell forever. God has pleasure in them and they have pleasure in Him. This is (in store) for him who fears his Lord.

<sup>1</sup> That is, Gabriel or, as some commentators think, a general term for angels of the highest

rank [Pickthall's note].  
1. Jews and Christians.



## SŪRA 99

## The Earthquake

*Revealed at Mecca*

In the name of God, the beneficent, the merciful.

1. When earth is shaken with her (final) earthquake
2. And earth yields up her burdens,
3. And man says: "What ails her?"
4. That day she will relate her chronicles,
5. Because your Lord inspires her.
6. That day mankind will issue forth in scattered groups to be shown their deeds.
7. And whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it then,
8. And whoever does an atom's weight of ill will see it then.

## SŪRA 100

## The Coursers

*Revealed at Mecca*

In the name of God, the beneficent, the merciful.

1. By the snorting coursers,<sup>1</sup>
2. Striking sparks of fire
3. And scouring to the raid at dawn,
4. Then, therewith, with their trail of dust,
5. Cleaving, as one, the center (of the foe),<sup>2</sup>
6. Man is an ingrate to his Lord
7. And he is a witness to that;
8. And in the love of wealth he is violent.
9. Does he not know that, when the contents of the graves are poured forth
10. And the secrets of the breasts are made known,
11. On that day will their Lord be perfectly informed concerning them.

## SŪRA 101

## The Calamity

*Revealed at Mecca*

In the name of God, the beneficent, the merciful.

1. The calamity!
2. What is the calamity?
3. Ah, what will convey to you what the calamity is!
4. A day in which mankind will be as thickly-scattered moths

1. Fast-running horses.

2. The meaning of the first five verses is by no

means clear. The above is a probable rendering [Pickthall's note].

5. And the mountains will become as carded wool.
6. Then, as for him whose scales are heavy (with good works),
7. He will live a pleasant life.
8. But as for him whose scales are light,
9. The bereft and hungry one will be his mother.
10. Ah, what will convey to you what she is!—
11. Raging fire.

## SŪRA 102

## Rivalry in Worldly Increase

*Revealed at Mecca*

In the name of God, the beneficent, the merciful.

1. Rivalry in worldly increase distracts you
2. Until you come to the graves.
3. No, but you will come to know!
4. No, but you will come to know!
5. No, would that you knew (now) with a sure knowledge!
6. For you will behold hell-fire.
7. Yes, you will behold it with sure vision.
8. Then, on that day, you will be asked concerning pleasure.

## SŪRA 103

## The Declining Day

*Revealed at Mecca*

In the name of God, the beneficent, the merciful.

1. By the declining day,
2. Man is in a state of loss,
3. Except those who believe and do good works, and exhort one another to truth and exhort one another to endurance.

## SŪRA 104

## The Traducer

*Revealed at Mecca*

In the name of God, the beneficent, the merciful.

1. Woe to every slandering fault-finder,
2. Who has gathered wealth (of this world) and arranged it.
3. He thinks that his wealth will render him immortal.
4. No, but he will be flung to the consuming one.
5. Ah, what will convey to you what the consuming one is!
6. (It is) the fire of God, kindled,

7. Which leaps up over the hearts (of men).
8. It is closed in on them
9. In outstretched columns.

## SŪRA 105

## The Elephant

*Revealed at Mecca*

In the name of God, the beneficent, the merciful.

1. Have you not seen how your Lord dealt with the owners of the elephant?<sup>1</sup>
2. Did he not bring their stratagem to nothing,
3. And send against them swarms of flying creatures,
4. Which pelted them with stones of baked clay,
5. And made them like green crops devoured (by cattle)?

## SŪRA 106

## "Winter" or "Quraysh"

*Revealed at Mecca*

In the name of God, the beneficent, the merciful.

1. For the taming<sup>1</sup> of Quraysh<sup>2</sup>
2. For their taming (We cause) the caravans to set forth in winter and summer.
3. So let them worship the Lord of this house,
4. Who has fed them against hunger
5. And has made them safe from fear.

## SŪRA 107

## Small Kindnesses

*Revealed at Mecca*

In the name of God, the beneficent, the merciful.

1. Have you observed him who denies religion?
2. That is he who repels the orphan,
3. And does not urge the feeding of the needy.
4. Ah, woe to worshippers
5. Who are heedless of their prayer;
6. Who would be seen (at worship)
7. Yet refuse small kindnesses!

1. The Abyssinians, who were attempting to attack Mecca; Abraha, their leader, unsuccessfully directed his elephant to destroy the Ka'ba

(the sacred cubical shrine in Mecca).  
1. That is, "civilizing" [Pickthall's note].  
2. The tribe that ruled Mecca.

## SŪRA 108

## Abundance

*Revealed at Mecca*

In the name of God, the beneficent, the merciful.

1. We have given you abundance;
2. So pray to your Lord, and sacrifice.
3. It is your insulter (and not you) who is without posterity.

## SŪRA 109

## The Disbelievers

*Revealed at Mecca*

In the name of God, the beneficent, the merciful.

1. Say: O disbelievers!
2. I do not worship what you worship;
3. Nor do you worship what I worship.
4. And I shall not worship what you worship.
5. Nor will you worship what I worship.
6. To you your religion, and to me my religion.

## SŪRA 110

## Succour

*Revealed at Medina*

In the name of God, the beneficent, the merciful.

1. When God's help and the triumph comes
2. And you see mankind entering the religion of God in bands,
3. Then hymn the praises of your Lord, and seek forgiveness of Him. He is ever ready to show mercy.

## SŪRA 111

## Palm Fibre

*Revealed at Mecca*

In the name of God, the beneficent, the merciful.

1. The power of Abu Lahab<sup>1</sup> will perish, and he will perish.
2. His wealth and gains will not exempt him.
3. He will be plunged in flaming fire,

1. An uncle of the Prophet but not a supporter. Abu Lahab and his wife tormented Muhammad.

4. And his wife, the wood-carrier,
5. Will have upon her neck a halter of palm-fibre.

## SŪRA 112

## The Unity

*Revealed at Mecca*

In the name of God, the beneficent, the merciful.

1. Say: He is God, the one!
2. God, the eternally besought of all!
3. He begets not nor was begotten.
4. And there is none comparable to Him.

## SŪRA 113

## The Daybreak

*Revealed at Mecca*

In the name of God, the beneficent, the merciful.

1. Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of the daybreak
2. From the evil of that which He created;
3. From the evil of the darkness when it is intense,
4. And from the evil of malignant witchcraft,<sup>1</sup>
5. And from the evil of the envier when he envies.

## SŪRA 114

## Mankind

*Revealed at Mecca*

In the name of God, the beneficent, the merciful.

1. Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of mankind,
2. The king of mankind,
3. The God of mankind,
4. From the evil of the sneaking whisperer,
5. Who whispers in the hearts of mankind,
6. Of the jinn and of mankind.

1. Lit. "from the evil of blowers (feminine) upon knots," it having been a common form of witchcraft in Arabia for women to tie knots in a cord and blow upon them with an imprecation [Pickthall's note].

## SIRA: THE LIFE STORY OF THE PROPHET

## IBN HISHAM

d. 833

Muhammad ibn Ishaq (ca. 704–767) was a historian whose biography of Muhammad has become his most famous work. Yet this biography comes to us not directly from his pen but in the recension of a later scholar, Muhammad ibn Hisham. Though their lives are separated by several generations, their names are forever linked to a book that remains Islam's most trusted source for the life of the Prophet.

Ibn Ishaq was born in Medina, where his father and paternal uncles, like many scholars of their time, devoted themselves to collecting and transmitting as many accounts (in Arabic, *akhbar*) of Islam's early history as possible. Their tastes were catholic and their range was broad. They were interested in the history of Arabia before Islam and in the fables and folktales that circulated among the peninsula's tribes. They questioned local Jews and Christians, including those who followed Muhammad, about earlier prophets and the biblical stories that spoke of them. They sought out those who could recall the expeditions and early battles of the first generation of Muslims.

Ibn Ishaq continued in this family tradition, initially studying and then teaching in Medina. For reasons that are not clear, he ran afoul of some local scholars, most notably Malik ibn Anas (ca. 715–795), the eponymous founder of the Maliki legal school. Though the basis for Malik's strong dislike of Ibn Ishaq is uncertain, stories abound. According to one, when Malik completed his *The Well-Trodden Path*, Ibn Ishaq asked that the work be presented to him so that he could examine it. Malik apparently took offense at Ibn Ishaq's arrogance and called him an "anti-Christ" (in Arabic, *dajjal*). Another account stresses methodological differences. During Ibn Ishaq's lifetime, those who, like Malik, assessed traditions (*hadith*) for authenticity were gaining ascendancy over those who rather indiscriminately amassed early historical reports. Malik may well have objected to the reliability of Ibn Ishaq's collection (no longer extant) of traditions about Muhammad.

Prompted by this animosity or other reasons, Ibn Ishaq left Medina and eventually settled in Baghdad. There, the 'Abbasid caliph al-Mansur (r. 754–75) asked him to write a universal history commencing with the creation of Adam. To fulfill this request, Ibn Ishaq produced four volumes. The first, titled *The Beginning*, starts with the creation of the world and then covers the prophets before Muhammad and the pre-Islamic history of Arabia. The second volume, *The Mission*, recounts the life of Muhammad until his hijra to Medina. The third volume, *Battles*, focuses on the Medinan phase of Muhammad's career and preserves the earliest covenant in Islamic history, the so-called Constitution of Medina. Ibn Ishaq's final volume carries us through the reigns of the early caliphs who led the Muslim community following Muhammad's death.

Later scholars, most notably Ibn Hisham and the historians al-Tabari (d. 923; see below) and Ibn Kathir (ca. 1300–1373), edited and incorporated Ibn Ishaq's material into their own compositions, and it is through their work and that of other later authors that Ibn Ishaq's writings survive. Their use of this material involved