

TIMELINE (Continued)

630	Muhammad captures Mecca
632	Death of Muhammad; Abu Bakr chosen as Caliph
633–642	Muslim conquests of Fertile Crescent and North Africa
650	Qur'an written down
656	Ali becomes fourth Caliph
661	Ali murdered; Mu'awiyah becomes Caliph
680	Shi'a sect emerges
710–732	Muslim armies enter Spain from North Africa, halted at Battle of Tours
765	Shi'a sect divided between Twelvers and Seveners
800	Efforts begun to compile the <i>Hadith</i>
1100–1200	Sufism founded
1299	Ottoman Empire founded
1918	Fall of Ottoman Empire

GLOSSARY

Allah Literally, "God"; the Muslim name for the single Deity who is creator and judge.

Caliph Literally, "Successor." The political successors to Muhammad according to the Sunni tradition.

Companions *Sahaba* in Arabic; Muhammad's closest followers during his life who assumed leadership roles after his death.

Hadith Literally, "Speech"; sacred collections of short narratives about Muhammad that are thought to have originated with his early companions.

Imam Literally, "He" who stands before; spiritual leaders of the Shi'a tradition beginning with Ali and continuing through a line of his descendants.

Ka'bah Literally, "Cube"; a cubelike building in the open-air Mosque of Mecca, which is the central shrine of Islam.

Mahdi Literally, "The Guided One"; the final and awaited Imam in Shi'a tradition who will establish an era of peace.

Muslim Literally, "One Who Surrenders"; a follower of Islam.

Qur'an Literally, "to recite"; Islam's holiest text, consisting of Muhammad's collected revelations.

Shi'a Literally, "Separate Party"; branch of Islam, comprising 10 percent of all Muslims, whose members honor the spiritual leadership of Ali and the other Imams.

Sufi Literally, "Wool Clad"; practitioners of Sufism, Islam's mystical tradition, which emphasizes the mystical union of the believer with God.

Sunni From the Arabic *sunnah*, meaning "custom"; branch of Islam, comprising 90 percent of all Muslims, whose members accept the leadership role of the Caliphate.

Twelver From the Arabic *Ithna 'Ashariyya*, meaning "followers of the twelve Imams"; division of Shi'a Islam, comprising 80 percent of its number, whose members acknowledge the leadership of twelve specific Imams.

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QUR'AN: MUHAMMAD IN MECCA**NIGHT OF POWER**

Muhammad's first revelation occurred on the Night of Power when on retreat in a cave near Mecca. It is recorded in the Clot (surah 96). An early sequel to this surah, called the Power (surah 97), celebrates Muhammad's call to prophethood on the Night of Power. Both appear below.

96: Clots of Blood

Recite in the name of your Lord who created—created man from clots of blood
Recite! Your Lord is the Most Bountiful One, who by the pen taught man
what he did not know.

Indeed, man transgresses in thinking himself his own master: for to your Lord all things return.

Observe the man who rebukes Our servant when he prays.

Think: does he follow the right guidance or enjoin true piety?

Think: if he denies the Truth and gives no heed, does he not know that God observes all things?

No. Let him desist, or We will drag him by the forelock, his lying, sinful forelock.

Then let him call his helpmates. We, in Our turn, will call the guards of Hell.

No, never obey him! Prostrate yourself and come nearer.

97: Qadr (Glory)

We revealed this on the Night of Qadr. Would that you knew what the Night of Qadr is like!

Better is the Night of Qadr than a thousand months.

On that night the angels and the Spirit by their Lord's leave come down with each decree.

That night is peace, till break of dawn.

Source: Surahs 96, 97, from *The Koran*, tr. N. J. Dawood (London: Penguin Books, 1990). Reprinted by permission.

DIVINE JUDGMENT

After his call to prophethood, Muhammad lived in Mecca for about twelve years, trying to convince his fellow citizens to worship only Allah. As illustrated in the following four early Meccan surahs, Muhammad's earliest revelations were short poetic declamations about punishment in hell for unbelievers. Because the context of most of the Meccan revelations was quickly lost, it is not known who the specific offenders were who incited these harsh condemnations.

101: The Disaster

The disaster! What is the Disaster?

Would that you knew what the Disaster is!

On that day men shall become like scattered moths and the mountains like tufts of carded wool.

Then he whose scales are heavy shall dwell in bliss; but he whose scales are light, the Abyss shall be his home.

Would that you knew what this is like!

It is a scorching fire.

102: Worldly Gain

Your hearts are taken up with worldly gain from the cradle to the grave.

But you shall know. You shall before long come to know.

Indeed, if you knew the truth with certainty, you would see the fire of Hell; you would see it with your very eyes.

Then, on that day, you shall be questioned about your joys.

103: The Declining Day

I swear by the declining day that perdition shall be the lot of man, except for those who have faith and do good works; who exhort each other to justice and to fortitude.

104: The Slanderer

Woe to every back-biting slanderer who amasses riches and sedulously hoards them, thinking his wealth will render him immortal!

By no means! He shall be flung to the Destroying Flame.

Would that you knew what the Destroying Flame is like!

It is God's own kindled fire, which will rise up to the hearts of men. It will close upon them from every side, in towering columns.

Source: Surahs 101–104, from *The Koran*.

OPENING

The opening surah of the Qur'an is the most commonly repeated prayer in Islam and an integral part of worship. Scholars give it an early date, from about the fourth year of Muhammad's Meccan mission.

Praise be to God, Lord of the Universe,

The compassionate, the Merciful,

Sovereign of the Day of Judgment!

You alone we worship, and to You alone we turn for help.

Guide us to the straight path,

The path of those whom You have favoured,

Not of those who have incurred Your wrath,

Nor of those who have gone astray.

Source: Surah 1, from *The Koran*.

EVILS OF IDOLATRY

The overriding theme of Muhammad's message while in Mecca was commitment to Allah and the rejection of idolatry. The following selection from Jonah (surah 10), a late Meccan surah, describes how idolaters forfeit paradise and are blind to the powers of the creator.

God invites you to the Home of Peace. He guides whom He will to a straight path. Those that do good works shall have a good reward, and more besides. Neither blackness nor misery shall overcast their faces. They are the heirs of Paradise: in it they shall abide for ever.

As for those that have done evil, evil shall be rewarded with like evil. Misery will oppress them (they shall have none to protect them from God), as though patches of the night's own darkness veiled their faces. They are the heirs of Hell: in it they shall abide for ever.

On the day We assemble them all together, We shall say to the idolaters: "Keep to your places, you had your idols!" We will separate them one from another, and then their idols will say to them: "It was not us that

you worshipped. God is our all-sufficient witness. Nor were we aware of your worship."

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

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

They will reply: "God."

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

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

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

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

Most of them follow nothing but mere conjecture. But conjecture is in no way a substitute for truth. God is cognizant of all their actions.

Source: Surah 10:26-37, from *The Koran*.

EARLY PROPHETS

The Qur'an states that every nation has its prophet (surah 13:7). About 30 prophets who preceded Muhammad are mentioned. Most of these are also mentioned in the Bible. The prophets typically spoke to unreceptive idolatrous people, and Allah subsequently destroyed the idolaters for their continued disbelief. The hillsides are scattered with the ruins of the idolaters' cities as monuments to their recalcitrance. As Muhammad's own prophetic message was met with disbelief and hostility, he warned the Meccans of the consequences. During Muhammad's late Meccan period of revelation, detailed accounts of early prophets are prominent. Surah 11, titled Hud, recounts the stories of Noah, Hud, Salih, Abraham, Lot, Shu'aib, and Moses. Noah, Abraham, Lot, and Moses are from Jewish tradition. The Qur'an's account of these prophets differs from biblical accounts, explaining in surah 6:91 that the Jews suppressed much of Moses' revelation and that Muhammad is revealing new information. Hud, Salih, and Shu'aib, unique to Qur'anic tradition, are prophets sent by Allah to the Arabs.

[Hud.] To Ad We sent their compatriot Hud. He said: "Serve God, my people; you have no god but Him. False are your inventions. I demand of you no recompense, my people, for none can reward me except the Creator. Will you not understand?"

"My people, seek forgiveness of your Lord and turn to Him in repentance. He will send from the sky abundant rain upon you; He will add strength to your strength. Do not turn away from Him with wrongdoing."

They replied: "Hud, you have given us no clear proof. We will not forsake our gods at your behest, nor will we believe in you. We can only suppose that our gods have afflicted you with evil."

He said: "God is my witness, and you are my witnesses too: I am done with your idols. Scheme against me if you will, and give me no respite. I have put my trust in God, my Lord and your Lord. There is not a living creature on the earth whose destiny He does not control. Straight is the path of my Lord."

"If you give no heed, I have made known to you my message, and my Lord will replace you by other men. You will in no way harm Him. My Lord is watching over all things."

And when our judgment came to pass, We delivered Hud through Our mercy, together with those who shared his faith. We delivered them from a horrifying scourge.

Such were Ad. They denied the revelations of their Lord, disobeyed His apostles, and did the bidding of every headstrong reprobate. Cursed were they in this world, and cursed they shall be on the Day of Resurrection.

Ad denied their Lord. Gone are Ad, the people of Hud.

[Salih.] And to Thamud We sent compatriot Salih. He said: "Serve God, my people; you have no god but Him. It was He who brought you into being from the earth and gave you means to dwell upon it. Seek forgiveness of him, and turn to Him in repentance. My Lord is near at hand and answers all."

"Salih," they replied, "great were the hopes we placed in you. Would you now forbid us to serve the gods our fathers worshipped? Truly, we strongly doubt the faith to which you call us."

He said: "Do but consider, my people! If my Lord has revealed to me His will and bestowed on me His grace, who would protect me from God if I rebelled against Him? You would surely aggravate my ruin."

"My people, here is God's she-camel, a sign for you. Leave her to graze at will in God's own land, and do not molest her lest an instant scourge should fall upon you."

Yet they slew her. He said: "You have but three days to live in your dwellings. This prophecy shall not prove false."

And when Our judgment came to pass, We delivered Salih through Our mercy from the ignominy of that day, together with those who shared his faith. Mighty is your Lord and all-powerful. A dreadful cry rang above the evil-doers, and when morning came they were prostrate in their dwellings, as though they had never prospered there.

[Abraham and Lot.] Our messengers came to Abraham with good news. They said "Peace!" "Peace!" he answered, and hastened to bring them a roasted calf. But when he saw their hands being withheld from it, he mistrusted them and was afraid of them. They said: "Have no fear. We are sent forth to the people of Lot."

His wife, who was standing by, laughed. We bade her rejoice in Isaac, and in Jacob after him.

"Alas!" she replied. "How shall I bear a child when I am old and my husband is well-advanced in years? This is indeed a strange thing."

They replied: "Do you marvel at the ways of God? May God's mercy and blessings be upon you, dear hosts! Worthy of praise is He and glorious."

And when fear left him as he pondered the good news, Abraham pleaded with Us for the people of Lot. Abraham was gracious, tenderhearted, and devout.

We said: "Abraham, plead no more. Your Lord's will must needs be done. Irrevocable is the scourge which shall smite them."

And when Our messengers came to Lot, he grew anxious about them, for he was powerless to offer them protection. "This is indeed a day of woe," he said.

His people, long addicted to evil practices, came running towards him. "My people," he said, "here are my daughters: surely they are more wholesome to you. Fear God, and do not humiliate me by insulting my guests. Is there not one good man among you?"

They replied: "You know we have no need of your daughters. You know full well what we are seeking."

He cried: "Would that I had strength enough to overcome you, or could find refuge in some mighty man!"

They said: "Lot, we are the messengers of your Lord: They shall not touch you. Depart with your kinsfolk in the dead of night and let none of you turn back, except your wife. She shall suffer the fate of the others. In the morning their hour will come. Is not the morning near?"

And when Our judgment came to pass, We turned their city upside down and let loose upon it a shower of clay-stones bearing the tokens of your Lord. The punishment of the unjust was not far off.

[*Shu'aib.*] And to the people of Midian We sent their compatriot Shu'aib. He said: "Serve God, my people; you have no god but Him. Do not give short weight or measure. Prosperous though you are, beware the torment of a fateful day!"

"My people, give just weight and measure in all fairness. Do not defraud your fellow men of their possessions, nor shall you corrupt the land with evil. Better for you is God's reward, if you are true believers. I am not your keeper."

"Shu'aib," they replied, "did your prayers teach you that we should renounce the gods of our fathers and not conduct our affairs in the manner we pleased? Truly, you are a wise and gracious man!"

He said: "Do but consider, my people! If my Lord has revealed to me His will and bestowed on me a gracious gift, should I not guide you? I do not wish to argue with you, only to practice what I forbid you. I seek only to reform you: as far as I am able. Nor can I succeed without God's help. In Him I have put my trust and to Him I turn in repentance."

"Let your dispute with me not bring upon you the doom which overtook the peoples of Noah, Hud, and Salih; nor is it long since the tribe of Lot was punished. Seek forgiveness of your lord and turn to Him in repentance. Merciful and loving is my Lord."

They replied: "Shu'aib, much of what you say we cannot comprehend. We know how weak you are in our midst. But for our tribe, we should have stoned you. You shall on no account prevail against us."

He said: "My people, have you more regard for my tribe than for God? Dare you turn your backs upon Him? My Lord has knowledge of all your actions. Do what you will, my people, and so will I. You shall know who will be punished and held up to shame, and who is lying. Wait if you will; I too am waiting."

And when our judgment was carried out We delivered Shu'aib through Our mercy, together with those who shared his faith. A dreadful cry overtook the evil-doers, and when morning came they were prostrate in their dwellings, as though they had never prospered there. Like Thamud, gone are the people of Midian.

[*Moses.*] We sent forth Moses with Our signs and with clear authority to Pharaoh and his nobles. But they followed the behests of their master; misguided were Pharaoh's behests. He shall stand at the head of his people on the Day of Resurrection, and shall lead them into the Fire. Dismal is the place they shall be led to.

A curse followed them in this world, and a curse shall follow them on the Day of Resurrection. Evil is the gift they shall receive.

We have recounted to you the annals of these nations: some have survived, while others have ceased to exist. We did not wrong them, but they wronged themselves. The gods they called on besides God availed them nothing; and when your Lord's will was done, they only added to their ruin.

Such was the scourge your Lord visited upon the nations while they sinned. Harrowing and relentless is His scourge.

Surely in this there is a sign for him that dreads the torment of the hereafter. On that day all men shall be assembled. That shall be a fateful day.

We shall defer it only to its appointed hour. And when that day arrives, no man shall speak but by His leave. Some shall be damned, and others shall be blessed. The damned shall abide as long as the heavens and the earth endure, unless our Lord ordain otherwise: your Lord shall accomplish what he will. As for the blessed, they shall abide in Paradise as long as the heavens and the earth endure, unless your Lord ordain otherwise. Theirs shall be an endless recompense.

Have no doubt as to what they worship. They serve the idols which their fathers served before them. We shall requite them in full measure.

We gave the Book to Moses, but differences arose about it. And but for a Word from your Lord, already decreed, their fate would have been long sealed. Yet they strongly doubt this.

Source: *Surah* 11:50-110, from *The Koran*.

RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

Muhammad met with resistance concerning the concept of the bodily resurrection of the dead. In the following, from two late Meccan surahs, he makes this doctrine more

palpable by offering analogies to bodily resurrection and also by illustrating Allah's power, which implies Allah's ability to resurrect even dead bodies.

Men, if you doubt the Resurrection remember that We first created you from dust, then from a living germ, then from a clot of blood, and then from a half-formed lump of flesh, so that We might manifest to you Our power.

We cause to remain in the womb whatever We please for an appointed term, and then We bring you forth as infants, that you may grow up and reach your prime. Some die young, and some live on to abject old age when all that they once knew they know no more.

You sometimes see the earth dry and barren: but no sooner do We send down rain upon it than it begins to stir and swell, putting forth every kind of radiant bloom. That is because God is Truth: He resurrects the dead and has power over all things.

The Hour of Doom is sure to come—in this there is no doubt. Those who are in the grave God will raise to life.

Some wrangle about God, though they have neither knowledge nor guidance nor divine revelation. They turn away in scorn and lead others astray from God's path. Such men shall incur disgrace in this life and taste the torment of Hell on the Day of Resurrection. "This," We shall say, "is the reward of your misdeeds. God is not unjust to His servants." . . .

We first created man from an essence of clay: then placed him, a living germ, in a safe enclosure [i.e., the womb]. The germ We made a clot of blood, and the clot a lump of flesh. This We fashioned into bones, then clothed the bones with flesh, thus bringing forth another creation. Blessed be God the noblest of creators.

You shall surely die hereafter, and be restored to life on the Day of Resurrection. We have created seven heavens above you; of Our creation We are never heedless.

We sent down water from the sky in due measure, and lodged it into the earth. But if We please, We can take it all away.

With it We caused vineyards and palm-groves to spring up, yielding abundant fruit for your sustenance. The tree which on Mount Sinai grows gives oil and a condiment for men.

In the cattle, too, you have an example of Our power. You drink of that which is in their bellies, you eat their flesh, and gain other benefits from them besides. By them, as by the ships that sail the sea, you are carried.

Source: Surahs 22:5–10, 23:12–22, from *The Koran*.

REVEALED QUR'AN

As Muhammad's revelations grew to a sizable collection within a few years, the Qur'an itself frequently became a subject of further revelation. A middle Meccan surah recounts, "We have divided the Qur'an into sections so that you may recite it to the people with deliberation. We have imparted it by gradual revelation" (surah 17:106). Another states, "We have revealed the Qur'an in the Arabic tongue that you may understand its meaning. It is a transcript of the eternal book in our keeping, sublime

and full of wisdom" (surah 43:3–4). In a late Meccan surah, Muhammad's illiteracy is offered as proof that the Qur'an was divinely revealed (surah 29:48). The following from Jonah (surah 10), of the late Meccan period, discusses the fate of those who deny the divine authority of the Qur'an.

. . . These are the verses of the Wise Book: Does it seem strange to mankind that We revealed Our will to a mortal from among themselves, saying: "Give warning to mankind, and proclaim good tidings to the faithful: their endeavors shall be rewarded by their Lord"?

The unbelievers say: "This man [i.e., Muhammad] is a skilled enchanter." Yet your Lord is God, who in six days created the heavens and the earth and then ascended His throne, ordaining all things. None has power to intercede for you, except him who has received His sanctions. Such is God, your Lord: therefore serve Him. Will you not take heed?

To Him you shall all return: God's promise shall be fulfilled. He gives being to all His creatures, and in the end he will bring them back to life, so that he may justly reward those who have believed in Him and done good works. As for the unbelievers, they shall drink scalding water and be sternly punished for their unbelief. . . .

When Our clear revelations are recited to them, those who entertain no hope of meeting Us say to you: "Give us a different Koran, or make some changes in it."

Say: "Had God pleased, I would never have recited it to you, nor would he have made you aware of it. A whole lifetime I dwelt among you before it was revealed. Will you not understand?"

Who is more wicked than the man who invents a falsehood about God or denies His revelations? Truly, the evil-doer shall not triumph. . . .

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

If they say: "He invented it himself," say: "Bring me one chapter like it. Call on whom you may besides God to help you, if what you say be true!"

Indeed, they disbelieve what they cannot grasp, for they have not yet seen its prophecy fulfilled. Likewise did those who passed before them disbelieve. But see what was the end of the wrongdoers.

Some believe in it, while others do not. But your Lord best knows the evil-doers.

Source: Surah 10:2–4, 16–18, 38–41, from *The Koran*.

QUR'AN: MUHAMMAD IN MEDINA

LAWS

In 622, Muhammad and his early followers migrated to Medina, where he became the city administrator. The focus of his revelations soon shifted from that of a lone defender of monotheism to that of a lawgiver. The following selections from the Cow