THE STUDY QURAN

A New Translation and Commentary

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Mary

Maryam

Maryam is a Makkan surah believed to have been revealed after Surah 35, Fatir, although some report that vv. 58 and 71 were revealed in Madinah (Q). The surah is named for Mary (Maryam) the mother of Jesus, whose story it recounts in detail. This is the only surah named for a female figure, and indeed Mary has the distinction of being the only woman mentioned by name in the Quran; other female figures are identified only by their relation to others, such as the wife of Adam and the mother of Moses, or by their title, such as the Queen of Sheba.

Since nearly all named figures in the Quran are considered prophets, and since Mary receives the message about her miraculous conception of Jesus, identified as God’s “Word,” from the Archangel Gabriel, the angel of revelation, a small minority of Islamic authorities, such as the Andalusian theologian Ibn Hazm (d. 456/1064) and the Persian Sufi Rūzbihān al-Baqli (d. 606/1209), consider her to be a female prophet. However, since Mary is not explicitly identified as a prophet in the Quran and Islamic tradition generally holds that all prophets are male (based on the description of prophets as “men” in 12:109), most Muslim authorities do not consider Mary a prophet, but rather an exceptionally pious woman with the highest spiritual rank among women. In a hadith, the Prophet names Mary as one of the four spiritually perfected women of the world.

Mary represents a unique point of connection between Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. She was born into a priestly Jewish family and dedicated to service in the Temple, but she was also the mother of Jesus and thus plays a central and miraculous role in the establishment of Christianity. In the Quran, Mary’s importance is indicated by the fairly substantial detail with which her story is recounted, both here and in 3:35–48. She also plays a role of significance in certain forms of Islamic piety.

This surah is reported to have played an important role in the history of the early Islamic community. After the Battle of Badr, in which many prominent Makkans were killed, the Makkan leaders sent a delegation to the Negus, the Christian king of Abyssinia, who had given refuge to a small group of the
Prophet's followers. The Makkani delegation demanded that the king hand over some of these Muslims, so that they could exact retribution upon them for the loss of those Makkans who died at Badr. The Negus summoned a delegation of the Muslims and asked them to recite something from the revelations that had been sent to the Prophet Muhammad. Ja'far ibn Abi Talib (d. 7/629), the Prophet's cousin and older brother of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, came forth and recited from this surah. Upon hearing the Quran's words regarding Mary and Jesus, the Negus and the religious leaders of his court began to weep profusely and refused to hand over the Muslims, indicating that the religious teachings of the Quran were deeply related to those of the Christian faith (Q).

Maryam has several unique characteristics that give it a distinct linguistic and thematic unity. It is one of the longest surahs to have a clearly defined rhyming pattern; sixty-seven of its ninety-eight verses end with the same final sound, and other, shorter passages contain separate, but related, rhyming patterns. Also in this surah, God is repeatedly and most commonly referred to by the Divine Name al-Rahman ("the Compassionate"); nearly a third of all instances of this Divine Name in the Quran (i.e., other than in the opening basmalah formula) are located in this surah alone.

The surah begins with substantial accounts of the related figures of Zachariah and John (vv. 2-15) and of Mary and Jesus (vv. 16-36), followed by more succinct accounts of Abraham (vv. 41-50) and Moses (vv. 51-53). These four accounts bear some common thematic elements, including God's bestowal of prophetic children or relatives upon other prophet's or sacred figures: God grants John to Zachariah, Jesus to Mary, Isaac and Jacob to Abraham, and Aaron to his brother Moses. In all four accounts these Divine "gifts" are granted only after Zachariah, Mary, Abraham, and Moses withdraw from their people and enter a state of separation from the world. The juxtaposition of speaking and silence also ties the accounts together: Zachariah and Mary's temporary silence (vv. 10-11, 26) is complemented by the infant Jesus' miraculous ability to speak (vv. 29-33). These four accounts are followed by a brief mention of other prophetic figures, including Ishmael (vv. 54-55) and Idris (vv. 56-57), and then by a warning that many who came after these prophets went astray and that only those who repent, believe, and work righteousness will enter the Garden (vv. 58-63). After a reminder in v. 64 that revelation only comes to the Prophet by God's Command, the surah proceeds to address the criticisms leveled against the Prophet and the Quranic message (vv. 65-82). Vv. 88-95 issue a strong rejection of the claims of those who say that God has begotten a child. The surah concludes in v. 98 with a sobering observation about the utter silence of earlier generations destroyed by God for their wrongdoing, from whom one no longer hears even the slightest sound.
In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

1 Kāf, Hā. Yā. ‘Ayn. Șād. 2 A reminder of the Mercy of thy Lord unto His servant, Zachariah, 3 when he cried out to his Lord with a secret cry. 4 He said, "My Lord! Verily my bones have grown feeble, and my head glistens with white hair. And in calling upon Thee, my Lord, I have never been wretched. 5 Truly I fear my relatives after me, and my wife is barren. So grant me from Thy Presence an heir 6 who will inherit from me and inherit from

1 The five Arabic letters at the beginning of this sūrah are among the "separated letters" (al-muqatta‘āt) found at the beginning of twenty-nine sūrah. Among them, this sūrah is the only one that begins with these particular letters, which constitute the longest set of such letters found in a single verse. Although the meaning of these letters is considered by most commentators to not be known clearly, some have speculated that the letters at the beginning of this sūrah may stand for various Names and Attributes of God found in the Qur'an. For example, some suggest that the Kāf stands for the Divine Name Kabīr ("Great") or Karīm ("Generous"). Alternately, some consider these five letters, strung together but pronounced individually (i.e., kāf-hā-yā‘-‘ayn-șād), to constitute one of the Names of God or the name for the Qur'an (T). For a fuller commentary on the separated letters, see 2:1c.

2–3 These verses recount the intertwined stories of Mary, Zachariah, John (the Baptist), and Jesus; see 3:35–62 for a similar account. The two stories are also connected in 21:89–91 as well as in the Biblical account found in Luke 1:5–80. The connection between John’s miraculous birth to the aged and formerly barren wife of Zachariah and Jesus’ miraculous birth to the young virgin Mary makes the point that God’s power to create transcends all ordinary, physical boundaries and that age and human limitations are irrelevant to the manifestation of God’s Will in sacred history.

2–3 Zachariah’s request for a son is also described in 3:37–41 and is mentioned briefly in 2:189–90. In 6:85, Zachariah is described as among the righteous, and he is understood to be a descendant of Aaron—that is, a member of the Jewish priestly class—as well as Mary’s paternal uncle. The text may also be read, "A reminder of the Mercy of thy Lord, His servant Zachariah," indicating that Zachariah himself was a mercy from God bestowed upon his people (R). That the sūrah begins with an account of God’s Mercy (rahmah) may be related to a significant feature of this sūrah, namely, that God is referred to throughout as al-Rahmān, "the Compassionate" (derived from the same root as rahmah); see, e.g., vv. 18, 26, 4:4–45, 58, 61.

That Zachariah cries out to God with a secret cry indicates his sincerity, since praying or supplicating in a loud voice may suggest hypocrisy (Z) or the desire to be seen of men (4:142); see 7:55, where people are enjoined to call upon their Lord humbly and in secret. His supplication may also have been in a low voice because this mode of supplication is particularly favored by God (IK), or as a result of his age and frailty (Z), or because of fear of his relatives (see v. 5; Z).

4–6 Cf. 3:38; 21:89–90; and Luke 1:15–25. In v. 4, Zachariah describes the physical effects of his age, as he was said to be between sixty and eighty-five years old at this time (Z). His statement that he has never been wretched in his supplications means that in the past God had always answered his prayers (Bd, Mw). Given that Zachariah was from a priestly Jewish family, his statement I fear my relatives after me is understood to mean that he feared that his relatives would not continue to guide the religious community or uphold the religion properly after his death (Bd). Zachariah’s relatives (mawālī) may refer to his agnatic relatives, who would inherit his position after him if he
the House of Jacob. And make him, my Lord, well-pleasing.” 7 “O Zachariah! Truly We bring thee glad tidings of a boy whose name is John; We have not given this as a name to any before him.” 8 He said, “My Lord! How shall I have a boy, when my wife is barren, and I have grown decrepit with old age?” 9 He said, “Thus shall it be. Thy Lord says, ‘It is easy for Me! I had had no son (Mw) or to other, unrelated religious scholars who might assume religious leadership of the Jewish community after him (Mw).

In v. 5, heir translates wali, which elsewhere in the Quran is translated “protector” or “friend,” but in this context refers to an heir, since it concerns Zachariah’s desire for a child of his own (Bd) who could be heir to his religious knowledge and authority and perhaps to his function of prophethood (Mw), but not necessarily to his wealth. Zachariah was a prophet, and a well-known hadith asserts that the prophets do not have heirs to their wealth (Bd).

That it is spiritual and not material inheritance that is meant here is indicated by Zachariah’s description of his heir as one who will inherit from me and inherit from the House of Jacob; see 12:6, where the House of Jacob is blessed by God; and 4:54, where God gave the House of Abraham the Book and Wisdom, and . . . a mighty sovereignty. Additionally, such a child would be an heir from Thy Presence—that is, God’s Presence—since the age of Zachariah and his wife meant that any child born to them would greatly transcend the normal limits of human childbearing and could thus be nothing other than a Divine Gift (Bd).

Zachariah also prays that this heir will be well-pleasing (rādiyān), that is, that God will be pleased with his character and deeds (Mw). The related term ridā is usually translated “contentment,” and elsewhere the Quran states that the Contentment of God is what true believers strive for (3:162, 174; 5:2, 16); it is also associated with the paradisal state (3:15; 9:21). In 5:19, the great triumph in the Hereafter belongs to those about whom it is said, God is content with them, and they are content with Him; see also 9:72, 160. Regarding the relationship between Divine and human contentment, there is also a hadith that states, “Whosoever is content with God’s Decree, God is content with him”; see also 89:28c.

7 The announcement to Zachariah is understood to be God’s response conveyed to him either directly by God or through the medium of an angelic messenger (R) or messengers (Ts; see 3:39). The Arabic for John is Yahyā, which means “he lives”; it may refer to John’s having been brought to life through Zachariah’s faith (T) or simply to his having been brought to life miraculously in his mother’s womb (Bd). Others indicate that it refers to God having enlivened his heart with faith and obedience (R).

That God Himself gives John his name is a distinct honor (R, Ts); Jesus is also given his name by God (3:45). That God has not given this as a name to any before him indicates the special favor bestowed upon John, and his virtue (Ts; see vv. 12–15). The uniqueness of his name may reflect the fact that he was named by God Himself prior to his birth, while other children are named by their parents after they are born (R). The Shiite tradition connects the story of John, whose name had no precedent and who was martyred when he was beheaded by the tyrannical Herod (see Matthew 14:1–12), with that of the grandson of the Prophet, al-Husayn ibn ‘Ali, whose name, according to Shiite sources, was given by the Prophet himself and also had no precedent and who was similarly martyred, after which his head was delivered to the Umayyad ruler, Yazid (Ts).

8 Cf. 3:40. Zachariah responds in this way either to indicate his awe and wonder at God’s creative Power or because he wishes to know how—that is, by what means—he will be granted this son, given his wife’s barrenness (IK, Mw). But as God’s response in v. 9, It is easy for Me, indicates, God has no need of “means” by which to create (Z).

Zachariah’s questioning as to how he shall have a boy is also justified, insofar as the announcement in v. 7 only indicated that Zachariah would be given a boy (ghulām), rather than a “son” (walad; R), and thus did not specify that the child would be conceived and born in the normal manner.

9 Thus shall it be translates kadbalika and might also be rendered “Thus it is.” Bringing
created thee before, when thou wast nothing!" 10) He said, "My Lord! Appoint for me a sign." He said, "Thy sign shall be that thou shalt not speak with men for three nights, [while thou art] sound." 11) So he came forth from the sanctuary unto his people, and signaled to them that they should glorify morning and evening. 12) "O John! Take the Book with strength!" And We gave him judgment as a child, 13) and a tenderness from Our Presence, and purity; and he

The wall of the mosque indicating the direction of prayer (qiblah). Mihráb derives from a root related to waging war; according to al-Tabrisi, the prayer niche is given this name, because when one turns toward it in prayer, one is spiritually waging war against Satan.

Zachariah signaled to his people, meaning that he gestured to them through signs (see 3:41) or communicated to them by writing (T, Ts). In various places the Quran enjoins people to call upon, glorify, or invoke God morning and evening (see 6:52; 18:28; 24:36; 33:42; 48:9; 76:25), which can mean either that one should do so continuously or that one should do so at these particular times, given their association with the transition between darkness and light or night and day, symbolizing the transition between life and death (see 6:52c). The "glorifying" (tasbih) of God morning and evening may be a reference to the regular morning and evening prayers, during which God is praised, or to any manner of praising God (Ts). 12) This address to John is understood to have been made immediately after his birth (Q, T); it enjoins him to take the Book—that is, the Torah— with strength, meaning to follow it in earnest and to observe its commands and prohibitions (T). Judgment here refers to the understanding of the Book that God gave John as a youth or perhaps to his prophethood (R). John’s precocious spiritual understanding reportedly made him disinterested in play as a child (T).

13) Tenderness translates banán, a term that connotes a gentle mercy or compassion. That it is from Our Presence means that it is a quality of mercy that can only be bestowed by God (T). Some suggest that a tenderness from Our Presence refers to the love and compassion God had for John (T), or to John himself, who was a "tender mercy" to Zachariah (T). Purity refers to John’s purity from sin as well as to his righteousness in
was reverent, and dutiful toward his parents. He was not domineering, rebellious. Peace be upon him the day he was born, and the day he dies, and the day he is raised alive. And remember Mary in the Book, when she withdrew from her family to an eastern place. And she veiled herself from them.

Then We sent unto her Our Spirit, and it assumed for her the likeness of a spirit, a grace, and a sign unto the Children of Israel, saying: "Peace be upon you! This is a noble son of yours. Viewed from the divine perspective, he is a son. He is in truth a sign to the Children of Israel. Nevertheless, the Children of Israel have transgressed, aside from a few of them who remember. Their sin is upon themselves. Indeed, I will make of them a seed of great worth."

And remember the blessing upon him when he is born. The blessing upon him when he is raised alive means that he will not suffer fear and dread that will overcome others on the Day of Resurrection or the eternal place. The triple blessing of peace upon him is identical to Jesus’ statement about himself in v. 33. The blessing upon him when he is born refers to God’s protection for him against the evil promptings of Satan; the blessing upon him when he is raised alive means that he will not suffer fear and dread that will overcome others on the Day of Resurrection or experience any punishment.

Maryam, the daughter of Imran, was reported to have been born in a pure and noble family of the Davidic line; see commentary on 3:35-37 for the account of her birth and dedication to the Temple by her mother’s vow. Mary’s purity is mentioned in several Quranic verses, including 3:35, where her mother’s prayer that God will protect her from Satan is considered to have been granted; and 66:12. In his commentary on this passage, Ruzbihan al-Baghi asserts that Mary’s very substance was the holy, unadulterated fitrah, or the primordial human mold itself.

Mary withdrew from her family in order to devote herself to solitary worship. An eastern place may refer to a place near the Temple or to an area east of her home. Some commentators speculate that perhaps she withdrew there after the onset of menstruation, although others report that she miraculously escaped her locked prayer room in order to seek solitude on a hillside or mountainous area near the Temple. Still others interpret this verse to refer to Mary’s spiritual withdrawal from the realm of existent beings, symbolized by her family, in order to enter the holy realm of the Spirit, the eastern place, where she would witness and encounter the Divine and the "eternal breath of union" (Rb), as she conceived Jesus after the Spirit was breathed into her. Viewed in this way, the present verse can be understood to mean that one cannot encounter the spiritual dimension of reality until one withdraws from all worldly things that distract one from the remembrance of God.

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She said, “I seek refuge from thee in the Compassionate, if you are reverent!”  

He said, “I am but a messenger of thy Lord, to bestow upon thee a pure boy.”  

She said, “How shall I have a boy when no man has touched me, nor have I been unchaste?”  

He said, “Thus shall it be. Thy Lord says, ‘It is easy for Me.’” And [it is thus] that We might make him a sign unto mankind, and a mercy from Us. And it is a matter decreed.  

So she conceived him and brought forth him pregnant with him, and she said, “If my Lord does not bestow upon me a son from His mercy, I shall be of theposteriors.”  

Mary answered, “I seek refuge from thee in the Compassionate, if you are reverent!”  

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withdraw with him to a place far off. And the pangs of childbirth drove her to the trunk of a date palm. She said, “Would that I had died before this and was a thing forgotten, utterly forgotten!” So he called out to her from below her, “Grieve not! Thy Lord has placed a rivulet beneath thee. And shake toward thyself the trunk of the date palm; fresh, ripe dates shall fall upon the angels’ proclamation in 3:39 that John would confirm a Word from God, the Word being Jesus; cf. Luke 1:14, where the baby in the womb of Zachariah’s wife, Elizabeth, “leaped” when she encountered the pregnant Mary.

Some identify the place far off to which she withdraws, like the eastern place in v. 16, as an area east of the Temple (T). However, others describe it more convincingly as a distant place where she and her family were not known. She goes far off in order to avoid embarrassing Zachariah as well as out of fear for her child and perhaps herself, anticipating that her people, among whom she had a reputation for great piety and asceticism, would not understand (R). Wahb ibn Munabbih, who was familiar with the Jewish and Christian scriptures, reports that Mary’s pregnancy was known to one of her relatives named Joseph, who also served in the Temple and helped her during her pregnancy (R, T; see also IK for a similar account not attributed to Wahb ibn Munabbih). Some accounts assert that she later fled with Joseph to Egypt as her time of delivery drew near (R, T); cf. Matthew 2:13-14, where Mary and Joseph, who are married in the Biblical account, flee to Egypt after Jesus’ birth.

23 The date palm to which Mary is driven—seeking both refuge from the sight of others and strength, by leaning on or clinging to the tree for support (R, T, Z) —is said to have been a dried-up palm trunk, devoid of fruit or green fronds because its top had been cut off. Moreover, the season is said to have been winter (R, Z), making the tree’s production of ripe dates in v. 25 particularly miraculous.

Mary’s wish to have died before this means that she wished she could have died before the onset of the difficulties she now faced as a woman giving birth to a child alone, without a husband, including both the physical pain of labor and embarrassment about what people would think of her (A, IK, T). Some commentators assert that Mary’s longing for death should not be understood to mean that she lacked patience, contentment, or trust in God (Aj). Al-Rāzi observes that longing for death is often the response of the righteous to suffering (R); as they refuse to abandon their moral or spiritual duties, but are nonetheless fearful of or saddened by the consequences that may result. Al-Rāzi gives, as one of several examples, ‘Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib’s similar statement before the Battle of the Camel (36/656), the opening battle of the First Civil War during his caliphate. Forgotten (nāsyān) and utterly forgotten (mansiyyān) translate different forms of the same root and convey Mary’s desire to be completely forgotten from memory, such that no one would look for her, all trace of her would be erased, and it would be as if she were completely unknown or had never dwelt upon the earth (IK, T). On a spiritual level, Mary’s statement can be understood as expressing the ultimate victory against the worldly ego, for it indicates that she wished not only to withdraw from and forget the world, but also to be utterly forgotten by it.

24 The voice that calls out to Mary here may be the Archangel Gabriel’s or Jesus’ (T, T, Z). Because the voice calls out from below her, many consider it more likely that it is Jesus addressing her after he has been delivered (T, T), although some point out that if it is Gabriel calling to her, then from below her (min tabihi) may mean “in front of her” (T, T). Alternately, from below her may mean from below the palm trunk (T, Z), which is also grammatically feminine and would take the feminine pronoun; or else it may mean that Gabriel was calling to her from the valley or the foot of the mountain below her (IK, T). Rivulet translates sariyyān; however, some suggest that sariyyān, which can also be an adjective meaning “noble” or “distinguished,” may be a description of Jesus himself (IK, Qur, T, Z).

25 The trunk of the date palm, which was said to have been dried out (IK, T), became a source
So eat and drink and cool thine eye. And if thou seest any human being, say, "Verily I have vowed a fast unto the Compassionate, so I shall not speak this day to any man." Then she came with him unto her people, carrying him. They said, "O Mary! Thou hast brought an amazing thing! O sister of Aaron! Thy father was not an evil man, nor was thy mother unchaste." Then she pointed to him. They said, "How shall we speak to one who is yet a child in the cradle?" He said, "Truly I am a servant of God. He has given me the Book and made me a prophet. He has made me blessed of fresh dates (T). The miracle of fresh, ripe dates falling from a dried-out tree symbolically replicates the miracle of the birth of John from his old and formerly barren mother (vv. 7–9); it also recalls the miracle of fresh fruit "out of season" that came to Mary while locked in her solitary prayer room; see 3:37c.

So eat is an injunction to Mary to nourish her body with the said dates, said to be particularly beneficial for women during childbirth (IK, Q, Z), but may also be a command to "nourish her soul" (Bd, IK) and to be consoled (Z) thereby, as the provision of miraculous food and drink are symbolic of God's love and concern for her (Rb). To cool thine eye (qarri 'ayn) is a common Arabic expression meaning to be comforted and to become at peace. A version of this expression is also used to describe the state of Moses' mother when the infant Moses is temporarily restored to her so that she might nurse him (20:40). According to some, Mary is enjoined to be at peace upon contemplating the radiant beauty of her son (Rb).

I have vowed translates nadharatu; the same word used by Mary's mother in making her vow to God regarding the child in her womb (33:35). The verb nadharu is similar to the Biblical term "Nazarene," used to describe those who had undertaken a vow to "separate themselves to the Lord" for a stated period of time (see Numbers 6:2) and refrain from speech except in the case of prayer. Some report that it was a practice among some Israelites and Jews of Mary's time to fast by abstaining from speech as well as from food and drink (T, Ts). Mary's fast of silence also evokes Zachariah's temporary inability to speak as a sign of the impending birth of his son (v. 10; 3:44); and some say her fast of silence served as a similar "sign" (T).

Her fast of silence, however, also allowed Jesus to speak on her behalf (Ts). This freed her from the burden of having to argue for her own innocence before her family (Bd).

27 Amazing thing translates farisyan, which indicates something that is serious and grave as well as unprecedented (Bd, T, Ts).

28 That Mary is addressed as sister of Aaron is not, according to commentators, meant to indicate that she was the biological sister of the prophet Aaron, brother of Moses. This would be chronologically impossible, although Mary's father's name is 'Imrān (66:12), as is that of the prophets Moses and Aaron, according to Islamic tradition. Some commentators explain that the name Aaron signified righteousness among the Jews of this time, and so the title sister of Aaron was meant to indicate that Mary was like Aaron in righteousness (T, Ts). Another explanation is that the name Aaron was common among the Israelites and that Mary had a half brother named Aaron (Th, Ts, Z). The most widely held view among the commentators is that Mary was a descendant of the prophet Aaron and the title sister of Aaron is meant as a reference to her noble lineage (Bd, Th, Ts, Z); see also 3:33–34c.

29 Mary pointed to the infant Jesus, indicating that they should speak to him (T). Their response reflects their incredulity at being instructed to speak to an infant. According to some commentators, their response suggests a tone of anger, for they initially thought Mary's instruction was meant mockingly or in jest (Q, Ts, Z). Child in the cradle here may mean a child in the mother's lap (T).

30–31 According to some commentators, Jesus' sudden ability to speak, like Zachariah's
wheresoever I may be, and has enjoined upon me prayer and almsgiving so long as I live, and [has made me] dutiful toward my mother. And He has not made me domineering, wretched. Peace be upon me the day I was born, the

sudden inability to do so in v. 10, was a temporary matter and that after delivering the statements recounted in vv. 30–33 Jesus returned to the ordinary state of an infant as yet incapable of speech (R, Q). The miraculous and temporary gift of speech was bestowed upon him in order to absolve his mother of any blame or suspicion (Q). Al-Tabri notes, however, that some claimed that Jesus' intellect was perfected and he was a prophet from this time onward, in which case his miraculous ability to speak as an infant continued beyond this encounter with his mother's family. It is significant that the first words spoken by Jesus were an assertion of his servanthood in relation to God (Q); emphasis is also placed on Jesus' servanthood in 4:172, and the idea of Jesus as "servant of God" is understood by Muslims to serve as a response to Christian claims regarding the divinity or sonship of Jesus (see 4:172–73; 5:75). The Prophet Muhammad is also repeatedly described as God's servant in the Quran (see 17:11; 25:11; 53:10; 57:9), and according to Islamic tradition, one of the Prophet's names, like the name of his father, was 'Abd Allāh ("servant of God"). Jesus' words He has given me the Book—that is, the Gospel (Z)—mean that it had been decreed that Jesus would be given the Book (T), since he was still an infant and the meaning of these words would only be fulfilled in the future (Th, Tsi). Others suggest that Jesus was taught the Torah through inspiration while he was yet in the womb (Th) or, as noted above, that he was made a prophet when he was still a child; see 3:48 regarding God's teaching the scriptures, including the Torah and Gospel, to Jesus. That Jesus had been made ... blessed is understood to mean that Jesus is a source of spiritual benefit (T, Z) for those who follow his religion (Th), that he is a "teacher of the good" (T, Th, Z), a guide for those in error, a vindicator of the oppressed, one who brings abundance to the deprived, and an enjoiner of right and forbiddor of wrong (Q, Qu, T), which the Quran describes as a characteristic of the believers in 3:104, 110, 114; 9:71, 112; 22:41; 31:17, and of the Prophet Muhammad specifically in 7:137. Prayer and almsgiving are frequently mentioned together in the Quran as pillars of correct religious practice for Muslim believers (see, e.g., 2:110, 177, 277; 4:162; 9:71) as well as for the People of the Book (e.g., 2:43, 81; 5:12). Almsgiving translates zakāh, a word that, in addition to almsgiving, may also refer to the practice of purifying oneself spiritually by avoiding sin and disobedience (T). So long as I live refers to the duration of Jesus' time on earth, for Muslims believe that Jesus has not yet died; he was taken directly to God (4:158) and will return to earth and die just prior to the end of time; see 4:158c.

32. Jesus, like John in v. 14, is characterized by filial piety, regarding the importance of filial piety, see 2:85; 4:36; 6:151; 17:23; 29:85; 30:14; 46:15. Like John, he is also not domineering, that is, neither arrogant nor disobedient to God's commands (T) nor violent in anger (Q). Jesus is reported to have lived humbly: he ate mostly plant foods, wore a coarse hair shirt, sat on the ground, and was itinerant, without a fixed residence (Q). Despite his filial piety, Jesus is said to have treasured those who followed the truth of his message above all. According to one report, when a woman saw Jesus raising the dead and healing the sick, she said to him, "Happy is the womb that bore thee and the breasts that nursed thee!" He replied, "Happy are those who recite the Book of God and follow what is in it" (T, Th). A similar sentiment is conveyed in Mark 3:31–35; Matthew 12:46–50; and Luke 8:21–22, where Jesus identifies his true family not as his biological mother and relatives, but as those who "hear the word of God and do it."

33. Jesus' statement in this verse is identical to that regarding John in v. 15, although here the triple invocation of peace is uttered in the first person by Jesus himself. The invocation is understood to mean that Jesus enjoys protection from God against Satan; he was spared Satan's touch on the day he was born (T), and he will be free from fear on the day he dies (after his return to
day I die, and the day I am raised alive." They are statements of the truth, which they doubt. It is not for God to take a child. Glory be to Him! When He decrees a thing, He only says to it, "Be!" and it is. Truly God is my Lord and your Lord; so worship Him. This is a straight path." Yet the parties differed among themselves, and woe unto those who disbelieve for the witnessing of a tremendous day! How well they will hear and how well they will see.

As translated, this verse is read as a continuation of the words that Jesus speaks in vv. 30–33 (T, Ts), and the first sentence is nearly identical to Jesus' words in 5:117. Read in this way, the statement reiterates the idea that Jesus is a servant in relation to God, Whom he describes as my Lord and your Lord. The command so worship Him indicates that those who would worship Jesus should worship God instead, who is Jesus' Lord as well as their own. However, the verse may also be read as a continuation from v. 34, so that it could be rendered: "That is Jesus son of Mary and that is God, my Lord and your Lord" (T, Ts). Regarding the straight path, understood to be the path of true religion that leads to salvation, see 1:66.

The parties who differed among themselves are said by some to be the Jews and the Christians, who differ with each other over the status of Jesus (Q, Z). Others suggest that the parties refers to different Christian sects, for example, the Jacobites and Nestorians (Q, T, Ts, Z), which were based in the Near East. The witnessing of a tremendous day refers to the witnessing or experiencing of great fear in the face of the reckoning and punishment meted out on the Day of Resurrection (T, Z). The witnessing may also be a reference to the testimony of others against the disbelievers on that Day, including the testimony of the angels, the prophets, and leaders of their respective religious communities as well as the testimony of even their own skin and limbs against themselves (see 2:4; 2:4; 36:65; 41:20; Z). Witnessing translates mashhad, which most literally denotes the time and place of the reckoning and judgment (Z). The verse may thus allude to the great fear that this scene or setting will induce.

On the Day of Resurrection and Judgment, the disbelievers will hear and see keenly, in contrast to their spiritual "blindness" and "deafness"
they will see on the Day they come unto Us. But the wrongdoers, today, are in manifest error. 39 And warn them of the Day of Regret, when the matter will have been decreed, while they are in a state of heedlessness and believe not. 40 Surely We shall inherit the earth and whatsoever is upon it, and unto Us shall they be returned. 41 And remember Abraham in the Book—verily he himself in the form of a ram and “slaughter” it before the inhabitants of both the Garden and the Fire to indicate that death can no longer change or bring an end to their respective fates (Q. T).

40 One of the Quranic Names of God is the Inheritor (al-Wārith); see 15:23; 28:58; and also 21:89, where He is described as the best of inheritors. God is the Inheritor insofar as all things belong to Him and thus return unto Him in the end; see 57:55: Unto Him belongs sovereignty over the heavens and the earth, and unto God are all matters returned; and 55:26–27: All upon it (the earth) passes away. And there remains the Face of thy Lord, Possessed of Majesty and Bounty.

41 Truthful translates siddiq, a word that also means “sincere” or “loyal.” The Quran also uses this term to describe Joseph (12:46), Idris (v. 56) and Mary (5:75). The plural, siddiqūn/īn, is used for those who believe earnestly in God and the prophets (57:19), and the siddiqūn are counted together with the prophets, the witnesses (or martyrs), and the righteous as those whom God blesses (4:69). According to al-Rāzī, the term refers to those who are honest by nature and habit, but may also refer to those who are constantly confirming the truth (regarding this term, see also 4:69–70c). Abraham is said to have been truthful in his speech, his promises, and his deeds (T).

Islamic tradition makes a distinction between the title prophet (nabd), which pertains to all those given a message from God—of either glad tidings or warning, or both—to deliver to their people, and “messenger” (rasul), which refers to those prophets who have brought a new revelation or religious law for their people. All messengers are prophets, but not all prophets are messengers. The two terms are more distinct in meaning in Islamic tradition than they are in the Quran, however, where certain prophets, such as Hūd and other Arabian non-Biblical prophets, who were given only a message of warning and not a new religion
Maryam

19:45

was truthful, a prophet— when he said unto his father, “O my father! Why do you worship that which neither hears nor sees, nor can avail you in any way? O my father! Verily knowledge has come unto me that has not come unto you. So follow me, and I shall guide you upon a sound path. O my father! Worship not Satan; surely Satan is disobedient toward the Compassionate

or scripture, are referred to as “messenger” (rasūl) rather than “prophet” (nabī; see 7:67; 26:112, 143). Abraham is considered both a messenger and a prophet in Islamic tradition, but only the title “prophet” is used explicitly for Abraham in the Qurān itself. That Abraham is also a messenger (rasūl) according to the traditional definition may be implicit in 41:63–65 and in his having been given scriptures in 53:36–37 and 87:19.

42 This verse begins one of several Qurānic accounts of Abraham’s confrontation with his father, Azār (6:74), and his people regarding their idolatry; see also 6:76–83; 21:51–67; 26:69–87; 37:84–96; 43:26–28. In this verse, Abraham presents an argument against idolatry that is repeated in various ways throughout the Qurān, namely, that it is illogical to worship something that can neither hear nor see (see 7:194–96c). Al-Rāzī elaborates further on this argument regarding the futility of worshipping idols or false deities, noting that if the idols cannot see or hear, they can neither distinguish those who worship them from those who do not nor hear the supplications of their devotees; moreover, to worship such as these is to worship something that is less capable than oneself (R). Some commentators indicate that the false objects of worship for Abraham’s people were simple idols (Q, Th). Al-Rāzī suggests, however, that Abraham’s people likely did not consider these idols to be powerful in themselves; rather, they may have worshipped them as representatives of the stars, which they considered to possess Divine Power, or they worshipped them as representatives of great people who they thought could act as intercessors with God on their behalf (R). The idols also cannot avail . . . in any way; that is, they cannot prevent or aver harm or bring benefit (T); cf. 21:65; 26:73.

43 The knowledge that Abraham claims to possess uniquely is the spiritual knowledge that has come to him as a prophet and by which his father and his people might be guided—specifically, knowledge of the Reality of God and the Hereafter (Q). That Abraham’s father is asked here to accept spiritual guidance from his son is a clear inversion of the tribal norm and is thus one of the ways in which the Qurān makes the point that spiritual authority, unlike tribal authority, is not determined by age or lineage. This point serves as an implicit response to those who would claim that their rejection of prophetic messages was done on the basis of deference to their “fathers” or to their fathers’ traditions (see, e.g., 2:170; 5:104). This is also one of several places in this surah where human age is shown to be irrelevant to the manifestation of God’s Will, as when the aged Zachariah and his barren wife become capable of bearing a child (vv. 4–9) and when the infant Jesus is endowed with the power to speak (vv. 30–33). The sound path is understood to mean the path of correct religion by which salvation may be attained (Q).

44 Worship not Satan is understood to mean that one should not obey Satan’s promptings toward sin and evil (Q, R, Th), since Abraham’s people did not “worship” Satan directly. The commentators point out, however, that obeying another being through an act of disobedience to God is tantamount to “worshipping” that being (Q, Th), a point also discussed in 9:31c.

45 Friend here translates wali, which can also mean “protector” (as it is often rendered elsewhere in this translation of the Qurān) and which designates a close bond of allegiance, support, or even love. The state of being a friend (wali) of Satan may be contrasted with that of being a friend of God (wali Allāh; see 10:61–64c), a term used in the Islamic and especially the Sufi tradition to designate the sanctity or sainthood of those whose devotion to God has led them to
will befall you, such that you will become a friend of Satan.” (46) He said, “Do you reject my gods, O Abraham? If you cease not, I shall surely stone you. Take leave of me for a long while!” (47) He said, “Peace be upon you! I shall seek forgiveness for you from my Lord. Verily He has been gracious unto me. (48) And I withdraw myself from you and that which you call upon apart from God. And I call upon my Lord; it may be that in calling upon my Lord, I will not be

attain a state of nearness to Him, even in this life, and who therefore may serve as channels of His Grace and Favor in this world, although not in the same way or to the same degree as those who are prophets. Analogously, those who are friends of Satan can thus be considered channels of Satan’s influence and temptation in this world. When one becomes a friend or associate of Satan, one is dissociated from or repudiated by God (R, T), and this is the fate that Abraham fears, or according to some commentators “knows” (Q, T, Th) will befall his father if he persists in his worship of idols. Abraham’s fear that his father will become Satan’s friend may also mean that he fears that his father will end up as a companion or cohabitant with Satan in Hellfire (Q, R). It does not mean that Satan will be his friend in the literal sense, since Satan is repeatedly described as the enemy of human beings (see, e.g., 2:168; 6:142; 7:22) and in the Hereafter Satan will abandon his followers (1:22). Al-Rāzī notes that each argument in vv. 42–45 is preceded by the vocative O my father, indicating that the words he speaks are spoken out of love and earnest filial concern for the spiritual well-being of his father (R), not out of disrespect.

(46) I shall surely stone you is understood by most to mean that Abraham’s father was threatening to curse him or to “stone him with words” (Q, T, Th) rather than to stone him physically, although some mention this possibility (Q), also discussed in 2:61:16c. His warning, Take leave of me for a long while, likely means, “Take leave of me so that you will be safe from my punishment!” (Q, T, Th).

(47) Abraham’s response, contrasting sharply with his father’s threat, is Peace be upon you, which the Quran identifies as the greeting of the believers, both in this world and in Paradise; see 6:54c; 7:46–47c. It is also the response the Quran enjoins toward the ignorant and those who engage in idle talk, as in 25:65: The servants of the Compassionate are those who walk humbly upon the earth, and when the ignorant address them, say, “Peace”; and 28:55: And when they hear idle talk, they turn away therefrom and say, “Unto us our deeds, and unto you your deeds. Peace be upon you! We do not seek out the ignorant.” Abraham’s response is not meant as a greeting, however, but rather as an indication that he will discontinue his confrontation with his father, as he does not intend to fight him, and that his father has nothing to fear from him (Q, T). Abraham seeks forgiveness for his father here, but when it became clear to him that his father was an enemy of God, he repudiated him (9:114).

(48) Abraham promises here that he will heed his father’s request and take leave of him: he also removes himself from all association with the idols and false deities that Abraham’s father and people call upon apart from God. This is understood as his taking leave of his family to migrate to the Holy Land (Th). Wretched translates shaqiyyan, which can describe one who suffers perdition in the Hereafter. But here, as with Zachariah’s similar declaration in v. 4, that Abraham will not be wretched in his calling upon God more likely means that God will answer his prayers and supplications (T). In the context of this verse, Abraham is said to have called upon his Lord to grant him family and children who would strengthen him, now that he was alone and separated from his father and his people (Q). The answer to Abraham’s prayer is then recounted in the next verse, where he is given Isaac and Jacob. If this is indeed the content of Abraham’s supplication, then it would be consistent with a larger theme of this surah, namely, God’s Compassion in bestowing blessed children upon prophets and other holy persons like Zachariah and Mary. Alternately, some suggest that Abraham’s prayer was
wretched." So when he had withdrawn from them and that which they called upon apart from God, We bestowed upon him Isaac and Jacob, and each We made a prophet. And We bestowed upon them something of Our Mercy, and ordained for them a sublime, faithful renown. And remember Moses in the Book. Verily he was devoted, and he was a messenger, a prophet. We called out to him from the right side of the Mount, and drew him nigh in that his father would be guided (Q), although this seems less likely, since according to the Quran this guidance does not come to pass.

49-50. Isaac and Jacob are also described as gifts bestowed upon Abraham by God in 6:84; 15:13-14; 17:21-23; see also 14:39, where it is Isaac and Ishmael who are bestowed upon Abraham, and 11:41, where Abraham's wife is given glad tidings of Isaac, and after Isaac, of Jacob (cf. 37:101). The statement each We made a prophet is meant to include Abraham as well as Isaac and Jacob (T); Isaac and Jacob are also identified as prophets elsewhere, see 6:84-89; 6:84c. Here, Isaac and Jacob are gifts bestowed upon him to compensate Abraham for the loss of his father and his people (T), and al-Tabari notes that the gift of these two prophets was far better than what he had lost.

The Mercy that is bestowed upon them by God is said by some to refer to bounty and provision in this world, such as wealth and children (T, Th), while others say that it also refers to the gifts of prophethood and revelation (Th); see 29:27c. Sublime, faithful renown is an idiomatic translation of lisāna sidqin, which literally means "a sublime tongue of truthfulness." However, commentators all indicate that the phrase refers to the high reputation and sincere praise that Abraham and his family enjoyed and still enjoy among people of many creeds (Q, T, Th, Ts), including not only Jews, Christians, and Muslims, but also the pre-Islamic pagan Arabs, who recognized Abraham as their venerable forerather. This is an answer to Abraham's supplication in 2:684: And make for me faithful renown (lisān sidq) among later generations.

The Sufi commentator Ibn 'Ajibah interprets this verse to mean that all those who remove themselves from worldly and created things and withdraw to the "realm of Truth" in order to worship the Truth will be rewarded with spiritual knowledge and "holy gifts." He asserts that withdrawing from creatures is a necessary condition at the beginning of the path for Sufi disciples, but when they reach a certain level, it becomes incumbent upon them to mingle with people and be in the world, for at that point their encounters with other people will increase their knowledge and understanding (Aj). He further states that Shaykh Abu'l-Hasan al-Shadhili (d. 656/1258) cited this verse when commenting that the practice of solitude leads to "the lifting of veils, the descent of Mercy, the realization of love, and a truthful tongue in speech." The reference to "truthful tongue," although used in al-Shadhili's statement to mean honesty and veracity, appears to be an allusion to lisānā sidqin (lit. "tongue of truthfulness"), which in the present verse is used idiomatically to mean great renown.

51. For other major accounts of Moses, see 1:49-74; 5:20-26; 7:103-105; 10:75-93; 18:60-82; 20:9-97; 26:10-67; 27:7-14; 28:3-46; 43:46-56; 79:15-26. Moses was devoted (mukhlis) to the One God, worshipping Him alone (IK, Q, T, Ts, Z), without hypocrisy (Q, Z). True devotion or sincerity, especially for Sufis, means to worship God only for the sake of God, not for the sake of the blessings of this world or the next that one might attain through such worship (Aj); regarding devotion, see 7:29c; 31:32c; 98:56. Mukhlis can also be read as mukbalis, meaning "specially chosen" (IK, Q, T, Ts, Z); both can be considered correct according to al-Tabari. Moses is a messenger, since he brings his people a new scripture (the Torah) and through it a new Divine Law; he is a prophet to both the Israelites and Pharaoh's people in that he brings messages of warning to both.

52. The Mount here, as elsewhere, refers to Mt. Sinai (al-Tur al-Sinīn); see 2:63-64c. From the right side of the Mount refers to the side of the mountain that was on the right as Moses approached it from Midian and saw the burning...
intimate discourse. And We bestowed upon him, from Our Mercy, his brother, Aaron, a prophet. And remember Ishmael in the Book. Verily he was true to the promise, and he was a messenger, a prophet. He used to bid his people to give the two of them the Book that makes clear. God’s sending Aaron as a helper for Moses is said to come in response to Moses’ supplication in 20:29–30. And appoint for me a helper from among my family, Aaron, my brother (Q, T, S), and in 28:34. And my brother, Aaron, is more eloquent than me in speech. So send him with me as a helper (IK). In certain Sufi commentaries, Aaron is said to represent the esoteric dimension of the revelation given to Moses (RB), and his position is compared to that of ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib vis-a-vis the Prophet, for example, in the famous hadith in which the Prophet says to ‘Ali, “Your position in relation to me is as the position of Aaron in relation to Moses, except that there shall be no prophet after me.”

54–55 Ishmael, the son of Abraham, is identified as both a messenger and a prophet, presumably since he was responsible for bringing Abrahamic monotheism to the people of Arabia, and especially to the tribe of Jurhum (T, S), among whom he and his mother are said to have settled in Makkah. That he was true to the promise reportedly refers to his reputation for keeping his word (T, T, S). Many relate an account in which someone had asked Ishmael to wait for him in a specified location, and then forgot about him. Ishmael is said to have waited either several days or an entire year without moving from the spot (IK, Q, T, Z). A similar account is told about the Prophet before his prophetic mission (IK, Q). For those who consider Ishmael rather than Isaac to be the son nearly sacrificed by Abraham in 37:102, the description of Ishmael as true to the promise may also allude to his remaining steadfast during this ordeal (Q); see 37:102c.

He was pleasing (mardīyyan) unto his Lord as a result of his obedience, righteousness, purity (T, T, S), and avoidance of all ugliness in his conduct (T, S). These qualities recall Zachariah’s prayer for a son who would be pleasing (radīyyan, from the same Arabic root) to God (v. 6) as well as the description of John in vv. 13–14. According to the Quran, the religious duties of prayer and almsgiving are commanded by God for all Muslims
prayer and almsgiving, and he was pleasing unto his Lord. (56) And remember Idris in the Book. Verily he was truthful, a prophet. (57) And We raised him to a sublime station. (58) They are those whom God has blessed among the prophets of the progeny of Adam, and of those whom We carried with Noah, and of the progeny of Abraham and Israel, and of those whom We guided and chose. When the signs of the Compassionate were recited unto them, they would fall

(e.g., 2:110, 177; 4:77) as well as for the People of the Book more generally (cf. 2:43, 83; 5:12; 19:31). Some say Ishmael used to command his people to perform prayer at night and give charity during the day (Ts); the Prophet is also told to bid his family to pray in 20:132.

56–57. Idris is identified as truthful (siddiq) and a prophet, as is Abraham in v. 41. Idris is also mentioned along with Ishmael and Dhu’l-Kifl in 18:53 as among the patient. Some say that his name is derived from the root d-r-s, meaning "to study," because of his love of studying (Q, Th, Ts), but others, such as al-Zamakhshari, cast doubt on this interpretation. Idris is most commonly considered the great-grandfather of Noah, whose Biblical name is Enoch (Q, Ts, Th), but Idris is also sometimes identified with the Quranic Elias (Ilyās), sec 6:96; 37:135. Given his antediluvian dates, Idris is said to have been the first to have written with a pen, to have had knowledge of astronomy and mathematics, and to have made sewn clothing (from animal skins: Q, Ts, Z); he is often referred to by the epithet Abu’l-Hukamāʾ ("father of the philosophers [or sages]") in Islamic philosophical and metaphysical works. Some say that he was the first prophet among the children of Adam (Q) and that he was given thirty scrolls (Q, Z). That God raised him to a sublime station is reported to mean that God raised him either bodily or in spirit to the fourth or sixth heaven (Q, T, Ts, Z); in a hadith, the Prophet reports having encountered Idris in the fourth heaven during his miraculous Ascension (mi’raj) through the seven heavens (Q). According to others, Idris has not yet died, having been raised alive, or taken directly, by God (T), much like Jesus in 4:158. His sublime station may also refer simply to his being a prophet (Z).

58. They refers to all of the prophets and sacred figures mentioned to this point in the surah (T, Z). Progeny of Adam may refer to all of these figures or specifically to Idris (T, Z), who otherwise would not fall into any of the other groups mentioned, since he predates Noah and Abraham.

Those whom We carried with Noah refers to Abraham and his progeny, Isaac, Ishmael, and Jacob, while the progeny of ... Israel (i.e., Jacob) refers to those sacred figures among Jacob’s descendants who are mentioned in this surah: Moses, Aaron, Zachariah, John, Mary, and Jesus (T, Z). When the signs—that is, the indications and proofs of God—were recited to them from the revealed Books (T), they would fall down, prostrate and weeping in submission and humility (R). Weeping is indicated in several abadith as the appropriate response to hearing the Quran; according to one hadith, the Prophet enjoins, “Recite the Quran and weep. And if you do not weep, then make yourself weep” (Z).

With its reference to prostrating, this verse is one of fifteen verses known as sajdah (prostration) verses; upon hearing these verses recited, Muslims are enjoined to prostrate physically. (The others are 7:206; 13:15; 28:49–59; 17:107–9; 22:28; 22:77; 25:60; 27:26; 32:15; 38:24; 4:48; 5:38; 53:62; 84:21; 96:19, though there is some disagreement as to whether the prostration after 41:37–38 and 53:62 is obligatory or supererogatory, and most consider the prostration after 53:8 to be one of thanks rather than obligation.) Prostrating and weeping in response to the recitation of the Quran can be indicative of the spiritual quality of “tenderness of heart” (riqqat al-qalb), which, according to al-Qushayri, was shared by all the prophets.

The bodily prostration of the prophets to the recitation of the signs of God is a reflection of the prostration of their inner selves before the spiritual truths they have realized (Qu). Ibn ‘Ajabah says that such a response to the recitation of the Quran is characteristic of the first stage of the love of God (mahabbah), which is later replaced by joy.
Then they were succeeded by a generation who neglected prayer and followed base desires. So they shall meet [the reward of] error, save for those who repent and believe and work righteousness. It is they who shall enter the Garden, and they shall not be wronged in the least: Gardens of Eden, those which the Compassionate promised His servants in the Unseen. Verily His Promise shall come to pass. They shall hear no idle talk therein, but only “Peace!” And therein they shall have their provision, morning and evening. This is the Garden We shall bequeath unto those among Our servants who were reverent.

“We descend not, save by the door of repentance remains open until death (see 4:17–19).” “Believing” and “working righteousness” are repeatedly paired in the Quran as the twin bases for attaining to the Garden in the Hereafter, for both Muslims and followers of other faiths (see 2:62; 5:60), indicating the interconnectedness and indispensability of both faith and good works (see, e.g., 2:251; 3:57; 4:57; 7:42). For other verses asserting that God does not wrong people, see 2:72; 6:81; 16:161; 41:40; 77:12; 6:160; 8:60; 17:71; 23:61; 39:69.

Gardens of Eden refers to the paradisal gardens of the Hereafter; see also 9:72; 13:23; 16:31; 18:33; 20:76; 35:33; 38:50; 40:8; 98:8. They are in the Unseen because they remain hidden to human beings while they are in this world (T); see 32:17: No soul knows what comfort is kept hidden for it as a recompense for that which they used to do. In the present verse, His Promise refers to the promise that God’s servants and “friends” (awliyā’) will enter the Garden (T). That His Promise shall come to pass is similar to repeated assertions that God’s Promise is true (see, e.g., 4:112; 10:4; 18:21).

The notion of the paradisal Garden as a place in which there is no idle talk is mentioned in several verses (52:25; 56:25; 78:35; 88:10–11), as is the idea that the salutation with which the people of Paradise will be greeted, and with which they greet one another, is “Peace” (salām) (7:46; 10:10; 13:24; 14:23; 16:32; 33:44; 36:58; 39:73; 56:26). There they shall have their provision of food and drink and all that they desire (T), morning and evening. According to some, there is no night or midday in the Garden, as there is no darkness; “night” and “day” are thus measured in terms of the lowering and lifting of veils and the closing and opening of gates (T).

This verse was reportedly revealed when there had been an unusually long period—reportedly twelve, fifteen, or forty nights (T, Z)—during which no revelation had come to the Prophet through the Archangel Gabriel (T); see also the introduction to Sūrah 93 about 93:1–5, in which the Quran responds to the Prophet’s concern over an earlier hiatus in the revelation. At the time of the revelation of the present verse, the Prophet was being questioned by those around him about the inhabitants of the cave and Dhuill-Qarnayn (the Quranic accounts of these figures are found in Sūrah 18) as well as about the Spirit.
Command of thy Lord. Unto Him belongs that which is before us and that which is behind us, and whatsoever lies between that, and thy Lord is not forgetful—(6) the Lord of the heavens and the earth and whatsoever is between them. So worship Him and be steadfast in His worship. Dost thou know any who can be named alongside Him? (6) Man says, "When I am dead, shall I be brought forth alive?" (6) Does man not remember that We created him before, when he was naught? (6) And by thy Lord, We shall surely gather them and the

The Prophet did not know the answers to these questions and was hoping for some revelation to guide him; the fact that for a while no revelation came concerned him and caused the idolaters to suggest that God had abandoned him (Z). When the archangel returned, the Prophet reportedly asked, "What prevents you from visiting us more than you do?" (T, Ts). The present verse is understood to represent Gabriel’s direct response to the Prophet’s question; the We in the opening line refers to the archangel (Z). Gabriel indicates that he comes to the Prophet only upon the Command of thy Lord; cf. 17:85, where the Spirit, sometimes identified with Gabriel, is said to be from the Command of God; and 97:4, where it is said that the angels and the Spirit descend by the leave of their Lord. A minority interpretation understands this verse to convey the words of the people of the Garden, since they do not settle in the Garden save by God’s Command (Ts).

Various interpretations are given for that which is before us and that which is behind (or beyond) us. Some indicate that this pair of phrases refers to the temporal distinction between the affairs of this world and the Hereafter, to the time before the creation of human beings and the time after their annihilation, or simply to the past and the future, where the future includes what remains of this life as well as the Hereafter (T, Ts). Others suggest that this phrase refers to the spatial distinction between earth and Heaven (Ts). Whatever lies between may refer to the period between the "two blowings" of the trumpet (Ts)—the first of which will bring the world to an end and the second will wake the dead (see 39:68c)—or to the period of our earthly lives (Ts). God’s possession of these three temporal or spatial dimensions indicates His encompassing all time and space. Thy Lord is not forgetful is meant to assure the Prophet that God has not "forgotten" Him (cf. 9:63, where it is said that the Prophet has not been forsaken); rather, any interval between the revelations is providential and for his ultimate benefit (Z).

65. Lord of the heavens and the earth is a title for God found also in 13:16; 17:102; 18:14; 21:56; 26:243; 37:55; 38:66; 43:82; 44:47; 45:36; 78:37. Dost thou know any who can be named alongside Him? means: "Is there any who is His equal or His like in generosity and bounty?" (T) or "Is there any partner or associate who can be named alongside Him?" (T). The question is purely rhetorical, indicating that no one should be called "God" except Him, and thus it is not right that idols or false deities should be referred to as "gods" (Z). Some commentators suggest that this verse is meant to establish that no one other than God should be called al-Rahmān (R, Z), a Divine Name that, as already mentioned, is used repeatedly for God throughout this surah.

66-67. In several other verses, similar rhetorical questions are posed by the idolaters in order to dismiss the idea of resurrection after death, followed by similar responses indicating that God’s ability to create human beings the first time should be sufficient proof that He can do it again:

68 The Quran mentions the disbelievers as allies or associates of satans in several verses (2:14; 61:12; 7:30), for God has made the satans the friends of those who believe not (7:27). These satans can also be either human beings or jinn (see, e.g., 6:112). That the disbelievers and the satans who inspire them shall be brought to Hell together is consistent with other verses indicating that God will fill Hell with Satan and those who follow him all together (see, e.g., 7:18c; 38:85). They are brought around Hell on their knees, a posture reflecting their state of fear, lowliness, and powerlessness in the face of
Then We shall surely bring them around Hell on their knees. 69 Then indeed We shall pluck out from every group whosoever among them was most insolent toward the Compassionate. 70 Then We shall surely know those who most deserve to burn therein. 71 And there is not one of you, but that he will approach it. It is, with thy Lord, a decree determined. 72 Then We shall save those who are reverent and leave the wrongdoers therein, on their knees. 73 And when Our signs are recited unto them as clear proofs, those who disbelieve say unto those who believe, “Which of the two groups is better in station or fairer in company?” 74 How many a generation We destroyed before them who were impeding judgment and punishment (R, Z); see also v. 72, where God leaves the wrongdoers in the Fire on their knees, and 45:28, where on the Last Day thou wilt see every community upon its knees. 69-70 From every group means from every religious community or nation (ummah; T). Here and in 6:159, the reference is to communities or groups who have fallen into error or schism. Those who are most insolent and thus who most deserve to burn are said by many to be the leaders of those communities in error, who are not only astray themselves, but who lead their communities astray as well, and so are deserving of greater punishment (R, Ts, Z); see 11:19-20; 11:20-22c. Others suggest that the most insolent refers to those who are most stubborn in their rejection of God and in disobedience to Him (R, T) or to those guilty of the worst offenses, such as idolatry (shirk) or disbelief (kufr); these people will enter the Fire first (T). 71-72 Vv. 69-70 describe the disbelievers, specifically, as huddled on their knees in the Fire, but vv. 71-72 suggest that all people, both the pious and the iniquitous, will approach it, that is, the Fire of Hell (T). Several commentators state that when the righteous “pass through” Hell, its flames will subside or become cool for them, so that they will not even be aware of having passed through them (Bd, T, Z); or that they will enter the fire, but they will then emerge from it because of their good deeds (T). Others assert that the Fire will not touch the righteous at all as they pass through Hell (Mw), or that only the disbelievers are being addressed in this verse (T). According to some, the righteous approaching the Fire refers to their suffering fevers and illnesses in this world (T, Z). Still others suggest that the righteous believers are made to pass through the Fire, so that they may know the extent of God’s Bounty and Favor toward them and can thus enjoy greater happiness in the Garden (Ts). In a hadith, the Prophet declares that none of those present with the Muslims at the Battle of Badr (6/624) and Hudaybiyah (6/628) will enter the Fire. The Prophet’s wife Hafṣah then asked him about v. 71, indicating all would approach the Fire, and he responded by continuing to recite v. 72, which states that God shall save those who are reverent (T). 73 In the Makkan context in which this sūrah was revealed, those who disbelieve are the idolatrous Quraysh, while those who believe are the Companions of the Prophet (T). The Makkan idolaters boast of their being better in station, that is, having better residences and living conditions (T, Ts), and fairer in company, meaning that they have wealthier or more socially prominent friends and associates. The Makkan idolaters assume that what they have enjoyed in this regard on earth they will also enjoy in the Hereafter (Ts); see 19:77-78c. 74 The exclamation How many a generation We destroyed before them is repeated in identical or similar form in several verses throughout the Quran as a warning, usually directed toward the Makkan Quraysh, that their earthly wealth and status will not keep them safe from God’s Punishment. Previous generations or “towns” were destroyed for their wrongdoing, despite having a better earthly provision and material situation than the Makkans; see 6:6; 7:4; 17:17; 19:98; 21:111.
facer in [their] furnishings and in outward appearance. 75 Say, “Whosoever is in error, the Compassionate will extend his term till, when they see that which they have been promised, be it the punishment or the Hour, they will know whose position is worse, and whose host is weaker.” 76 God increases in guidance those who are rightly guided. And that which endures—righteous deeds—are better in reward with thy Lord, and better in return. 77 Hast thou not considered the one who disbelieves in Our signs, and says, “I shall be given wealth and children.” 78 Has he penetrated the Unseen, or made a pact with astray who have already chosen the paths of disbelief or iniquity (see 2:26; 6:123; 40:34, 74), most explicitly by His abandoning them to their own misguidance (Z).

God may increase people in guidance by helping them in acts of obedience and granting them success in their attempts to please Him through righteous deeds (Ts, Z) as well as by bestowing various (spiritual or material) favors that will guide them toward virtue and virtuous deeds (Ts). It may also mean that God gives them greater certainty and resolve regarding the guidance that they have already been given and that He continues to increase them in guidance and certitude by revealing new signs or verses (Q). Related to this theme, some commentators interpret this verse historically, suggesting that it refers to God’s guiding the believers during the lifetime of the Prophet in new ways through successive revelations, which sometimes entailed the abrogation of earlier Quranic rulings by later ones, offering new guidance on particular matters in order to meet the changing needs of the nascent Islamic community (T, Ts); on the question of the abrogation of certain Quranic rulings, see 2:106c.

Regarding the enduring reward and benefit of righteous deeds in comparison to the material goods of this world, see also 18:46; 28:60; 42:36. In the context of this verse, righteous deeds is sometimes glossed as a reference to obligatory prayer or to other, supererogatory prayers and forms of praising God (Z). Such deeds are better in return than the station and company of the idolaters mentioned in v. 73, since good deeds lead to reward in both this world and the next (Ts).

77-78 Wealth and children are mentioned repeatedly in the Quran as emblematic of the good
the Compassionate? Nay, but We shall record that which he says, and We shall prolong for him the punishment. And We shall inherit from him that which he claims, and he will come unto Us alone. And they have taken gods apart from God, that they might be a strength for them. Nay, but they will disavow their worship, and they will become an opponent unto them. Hast thou not considered how We unleash the satans on the disbelievers, to incite things of this world (see, e.g., 9:69; 17:6; 18:46), but also as one of its challenges (see 64:14). This verse was reportedly revealed in response to a Makkah leader and idolater, al-`Abbas bin Wa'il (father of `Amr ibn al-`Abbas), who owed money to one of the Companions of the Prophet. When resurrection was mentioned to him in conjunction with a request that he repay his debt to the Companion, al-`Abbas mockingly replied that if he were indeed to be resurrected, he would be resurrected possessing wealth and children and so would be able to repay his debt then (T, Ts, W). Some say that the disbeliever who spoke these words was al-Walid ibn al-Mughira (Ts), although this statement might also be intended to convey an attitude common among other disbelievers and thus to apply generally.

The Unseen refers to all that is beyond ordinary and external human means of knowing or understanding (see 6:59c), that is, beyond the external senses and the conjunctures based upon them. In this context, it refers specifically to the realities of the next world. Although God may reveal something of the Unseen to prophets or others, God alone possesses the keys of the Unseen, none know them but He (6:59), and None in the heavens or on the earth know the Unseen, save God (27:65). The question about whether the disbeliever has made a pact with the Compassionate means, according to some, "Has he believed in God and acted upon His Commands and avoided what He has prohibited?" (T), such that he might merit such reward in the Hereafter; or "Has he made a pact that he would enter the Garden?" (Ts). Similar rhetorical questions about possessing knowledge of the Unseen, or having a special pact or covenant with God are found in 2:80 and 53:35, as a challenge to those who glibly assert that they expect to find bliss or escape punishment in the Hereafter.

79–80 Nay is the response to the rhetorical question in v. 78 and is meant to indicate that the disbeliever in that verse does not have knowledge of the Unseen or a pact with God (T). God will prolong . . . the punishment of the disbeliever, because he has compounded his disbelief with lies and vain claims (T). God shall inherit from him that which he claims; that is, God will "inherit" his wealth and his children (T, Ts), since God is the Inheritor (see v. 40; 15:23; 21:89; 28:58) and all things return to Him. In the Hereafter, the disbeliever will come unto God alone, that is, devoid of the wealth and children that were a source of honor and security for him in this world (T, Ts).

Regarding human beings returning to God alone, see v. 95:6:94c. 81–82 The disbelievers hope that the gods apart from God that they worship will be a strength for them, that is, that they will defend them against or deliver them from God's Punishment or any harm or evil that God might bring upon them (T), or that they might be their intercessors with God (Ts). According to the Quran, this is a vain hope, however, for in 39:38 the Prophet is told: Say, "Then have you considered those upon whom you call, apart from God? If God desires some harm for me, could they remove His Harm, or if He desires some mercy, could they withhold His Mercy?" Say, "God suffices me; in Him trust those who trust"; and 10:107 states: And if God should touch thee with affliction, none can remove it save He.

Rather than being a strength for the idolaters, the gods they have taken apart from God will disavow those who worshipped them and indeed become an opponent to their former worshippers (T, Ts); see 2:166–67; 6:94; 7:37; 28:63–64; 40:74–84. Alternately, the verse may be read to mean that the idolaters will disavow and oppose their idols and false deities on the Day of Judgment in an attempt to avoid punishment (Ts). 83–84 That God will unleash the satans may mean simply that God does not hold them back.
So hasten not against them; verily We are counting for them a number. On the Day We shall gather the reverent to the Compassionate as an honored delegation, and We shall drive the guilty into Hell as a thirsty herd. They have no power of intercession, save the one who has made a pact with the Compassionate. And they say, “The Compassionate has taken a child.” You have indeed asserted a terrible thing. The heavens are well-nigh rent thereby, and the earth split asunder, and the mountains made to fall down in ruins, that they should claim for the Compassionate a child. It is not fitting for the Compassionate to take a

from the disbelievers (Z) as a punishment for their disbelief. Others assert that the verse refers to God’s giving the satans authority over the disbelievers (R). To incite them cunningly means to mislead, tempt, or seduce them into disobeying God (R, T, Z); this is similar to 17:64, where God tells Iblis, Incite whomsoever thou canst among them with thy voice (Q, R; see commentary on this verse). The Prophet and the believers should not hasten . . . against the disbelievers, meaning that they should not attempt to hurry their demise by seeking their punishment or destruction, for God may be postponing their destruction in order to give them the opportunity to manifest their ultimate inner character and destiny (see 19:75c). That God is counting for them a number means that He is taking full account of all of their deeds, so that He may recompense them accordingly (R, T, Z), or that their breaths, years, and terms are numbered (R, T, Z), that is, finite and ever nearing their end.

On the Day—that is, the Last Day—the reverent shall come to God as an honored delegation. Some describe the reverent arriving as if riding on splendid camels rather than walking on foot (IK, R, T, Z), while the guilty shall be like beasts of burden themselves, “herded” into Hell, thirsty (JJ), and in search of water (Bd) they will never find.

The Quran limits the possibilities of intercession in the Hereafter in various ways. Here intercessors are those who have made a pact with the Compassionate—that is, those who believe in the One God and His Messenger and follow His commands (R, T, Z). Elsewhere, it is said that none may intercede except those who have received God’s permission (2:255; 20:109) or with whose word He is content (20:109) or who have borne witness to the truth knowingly (43:86); regarding intercession, see 2:48c; 2:255c. Despite the limitations on who may intercede, the present verse also affirms that even those who are guilty of major sins may benefit from the intercession of those who have made a pact with the Compassionate (R).

Throughout the Quran, various claims by different religious communities that God has a child are rejected; see 6:101–2c. That the heavens and the earth are well-nigh rent by such claims is meant to indicate that all creatures, except certain human beings and jinn, are rooted in the awareness of God’s Oneness and are terrified of shirk, or the associating of partners with God (IK, T). In the face of such claims that God has a child, the mountains nearly fall down in ruins in anger for God’s sake (T). The Quran indicates that all creatures have an existential awareness of God and a relationship with Him, even seemingly inanimate natural phenomena; see, for example, 2:74, where stones crash down for the fear of God; and 17:4: The seven heavens, and the earth, and whosoever is in them glorify Him. And there is no thing, save that it hymns His praise, though you do not understand their praise. The heavens and earth are also described as split or rent asunder on the Last Day; see 50:44; 73:18; 82:1.

Cf. 21:26. See 6:101–c as well as 11:3, which says of God, He begets not, nor was He begotten. That it is not fitting for the Compassionate to take a child is said by some to mean that such a thing is impossible and inconceivable (R).
There is none in the heavens and on the earth, but that it comes unto the Compassionate as a servant. He has taken account of them, and numbered them exactly. And each of them shall come unto Him on the Day of Resurrection, alone. Surely those who believe and perform righteous deeds, for them shall the Compassionate ordain love. We have only made this easy upon thy tongue that thou mayest give glad tidings unto the reverent thereby, and that thereby thou mayest warn a contentious people. How many a generation before them have We destroyed? Dost thou perceive even one of them, or hear from them a murmur?

93–95 That every created reality comes unto the Compassionate as a servant is another way of saying that God is the Lord (Rabb) of all things, which are therefore servants in relation to Him. That all who are in the heavens (the angels) and on the earth (human beings and jinn) are His servants is to say that they all, ultimately, worship Him; cf. 5:56: I did not create jinn and mankind, save to worship Me.

That God has taken account of and numbered His creatures means that He knows the number of all His creatures (T) and, by implication, also their nature, their destiny, and their essence. It may also refer to His Knowledge of the finite terms of their existence, for everything with Him is according to a measure (13:8; see also 42:27). Some Islamic philosophers, such as Ibn Sinā, argued that God's Knowledge of things, while all-encompassing, was nonetheless a general knowledge and thus God knew the "particulars" of things only in a universal way. This view was rejected by the theologians (mutakallimūn), who claimed that God has knowledge of all particulars as particulars. That God "takes account of" and "numbers" all that is in the heavens and on the earth is one of several Qur'anic statements that speaks directly to God's Knowledge of particulars (R); see also 6:59: He knows what is on land and sea; no leaf falls but that He knows it, nor any seed in the dark recesses of the earth, nor anything moist or dry, but that it is inscribed in a clear Book. In v. 95, each of them—that is, each being in the heavens and on the earth (v. 93)—will come unto God alone, in the sense that all will be resurrected without anyone to aid or defend them before God, Who will judge and do as He wills on that Day (T).

96 Love here translates ṭawwud, rather than ṭawba, the word usually used elsewhere for "love" in the Quran (see 2:165c; 3:54c), but commentators generally understand these two words as synonymous (T). That God shall ordain love for those who believe and perform righteous deeds is understood to mean that God grants that such people will be loved in the world, particularly by God's other believing servants (T). Al-Sulaimi states that such people are beloved by their fellow Muslims, which is none other than a manifestation of God's Love for them. Al-Razi favors this interpretation, but also notes that some interpret the verse to mean that God will grant righteous believers what they love, rather than the state of being loved by others, for it is well known that the believers are often despised rather than loved by the disbelievers, and that some disbelievers are much beloved among people in this world (R). Yet he favors the first interpretation, since it is supported by a hadith that says that when God loves a servant, He calls out to the Archangel Gabriel, "Verily I love so-and-so, so love him!" Gabriel then calls upon all those in Heaven to love this person, and the inclination to love this person is then made to descend upon those on earth (see also IK, Q). Some report that this verse was revealed as a consolation to 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn 'Awf, who was concerned about leaving his companions in Makkah (T).

For Shiite commentators, the love that God ordains for the righteous believers is the love of
and spiritual attachment (walılıya) to ʿAli ibn Abi Talib (Qm, Tb, Ts), for according to Shiites there are no true Muslim believers save those in whose hearts is the love of ʿAli (Ts). According to a Shiite report, the Prophet said to ʿAli, “Say, ‘O God, ordain for me a pact with Thee, and ordain for me love in the hearts of the believers.’” This verse was then revealed (Ts). For some Sufis, the love that God ordains here is none other than the unveiling of Divine secrets. In this vein, a well-known hadith qudsi says, in part, “Verily My servant does not cease to draw nigh unto Me through supererogatory acts until I love him, and when I love him, I am the hearing with which he hears, the seeing with which he sees, the hand with which he grasps, and the foot with which he walks.” Al-Qushayrī cites a similar hadith: “My servant does not cease to draw nigh unto Me until he loves Me and I love Him” (Qu).

97 God made the Qurān easy upon thy tongue (cf. 44:38)—that is, on the tongue of the Prophet—by revealing it in Arabic (IK, R, Z), the native language of the Prophet and his Companions. This verse may also be read, “We made this easy in thy tongue [i.e., in the Prophet’s language],” referring to the revelation of the Qurān in Arabic (Z). See also 54:17, 22, 32, and 40, where the Qurān is said to have been made easy to remember. Contentious translates luddan, which denotes those who are intensely but vainly argumentative and who argue on the basis of falsehood (T). The term also connotes an attitude of insolence and a certain “deafness” to hearing the truth (T).

98 The rhetorical question, How many a generation before them—that is, before the Quraysh—have We destroyed also appears in v. 74 and in several other Qurānic verses; see 19:74c. The verse and the surāb conclude by evoking powerfully the absence and silence of these destroyed peoples and is similar in tone and affect to verses that bid the Arabs (in particular) to observe the ruins of earlier peoples, whose empty dwellings were well known to them, because of their travels through the desert; cf. 3:137; 6:11; 12:109; and 27:51–52. See also 6:11c. One no longer hears from such people even a murmur (rikz), that is, not even the slightest sound (R, T).
All commentators agree that al-Rüm was revealed during the Makkah period, although some maintain that v. 17 is from the Madinan period (Aj, Âl) and others maintain that vv. 27–28 are from the Madinan period (IJ). The sūrah takes its name from the mention of the defeat of the Byzantines, or Romans, al-Rüm, in v. 2. According to some commentators, God’s promise that the Byzantines would prevail after having been defeated (v. 3) follows upon the last verse of the previous sūrah, which promises that God will guide those who strive for His sake (Âl, Sy). Others maintain that the two sūrah’s are linked by the promise that truly God is with the virtuous, which ends Sūrah 29, and the promise in vv. 4–5 that on that day the believers shall rejoice in God’s Help (Aj).

From the mention of the battle between the Sassanids and the Byzantines and the prediction of the eventual victory of the Byzantines (vv. 2–6) followed by a criticism of the disbelievers for failing to reflect upon the signs of God (vv. 7–9), the sūrah proceeds to a discussion of the disparate ends of believers and disbelievers (vv. 10–16). This leads into the sūrah’s central theme, the abundance of signs of God in the created order and the inability of many human beings to understand them, because they follow caprice rather than knowledge (vv. 17–29). Beginning with a reference to the original or primordial nature of human beings, the fitrāb, in one of the Qur’an’s more famous verses (v. 30), vv. 30–34 contrast those who follow the upright religion with those who divide religion into factions (v. 32). Challenging the disbelievers to bring something to substantiate their claims (v. 35), the sūrah then touches upon several broader Quranic themes, such as virtue toward relatives and employing one’s wealth in a just manner (vv. 38–39), the phases of human existence (v. 40), and the extent of human corruption (v. 41).

After calling again to the upright religion (vv. 43), al-Rüm returns to the contrast between the believers and disbelievers (vv. 44–45), which leads into another extended passage on its central theme, the importance of reflecting upon God’s signs (vv. 46–51). A reminder of the Prophet’s inability to guide those
whom God has not guided (vv. 52–54) is then followed by a discussion of the difficulties that will confront the guilty upon the Hour of Judgment (vv. 55–57). The surah concludes with a reminder that their hearts are sealed (v. 59) and that one must thus remain steadfast when confronted by them (v. 60).

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

1 Alif. Lām. Mīm. 2 The Byzantines have been defeated 3 in a land nearby. Yet after being defeated they will prevail 4 within a few years—unto God belongs the affair, before and after, and on that day the believers shall rejoice 5 in God's Help. He helps whomsoever He will, and He is the Mighty, the Merciful.

1 The Arabic letters alif, lām, and mīm, which also appear in 2:1; 9:1; 29:1; 31:1; and 32:1, are among the separated letters (al-muqatta‘āt) that are found at the beginning of twenty-nine sūrahs and whose meaning is considered by most commentators to be known ultimately only to God; see 2:1.

2–5 These verses provide the only reference in the Quran to political events contemporary to Muhammad and his followers beyond the Arabian Peninsula. According to the majority of commentators, these verses were revealed in response to the disbelievers heckling the Muslims after the Persian Empire had defeated the Byzantine Empire in Syria. In the first part of the seventh century, the Persian ruler Khusraw Parwiz (r. 590–628) sent an army under the command of General Shahrbaraz (d. 630) to Byzantium. These forces conquered parts of Syria, taking Damascus in 613 and Jerusalem in 614, during which time another Sassanid army under General Shahin had conquered Egypt and laid siege to Constantinople. For many people the complete defeat of the Byzantine Empire seemed imminent. The Byzantine ruler had entrusted the command of his army to a man called Juhannas. In a land nearby most likely refers to the battles that he lost to Shahrbaraz at Adhrī‘at and Busrah, which are the closest parts of Syria to the land of the Arabs. The Prophet and his Companions heard of this defeat while in Makkah and were saddened. The Prophet disliked the fact that the Sassanids had the upper hand over the Byzantines, as the former were Magians and the latter were followers of an Abrahamic religion. The disbelievers of Makkah, however, were said to have been exultant and gloating. When they met the Prophet’s Companions, they said to them, “You are People of the Book, and the Christians are People of the Book. We are without a revealed scripture, and our brothers the Persians have defeated your brothers the Byzantines. If you ever fight us, we will defeat you too” (T, W).

Despite the defeats they had suffered, the Quran predicted that the Byzantines would prevail within a few years. In this context, a few translates bid‘, which indicates a period between three and nine years (Sh, T, Z). In 622 the tide began to turn when the Byzantine emperor Heraclius defeated the Persians at Issus, south of the Taurus Mountains. This was the first in a series of victories that culminated in the Battle of Nineveh in 627, after which the Persian Empire weakened considerably, having fallen from the apparent greatness it had reached at the time these verses are said to have been revealed. In the context of the geopolitical events to which these verses refer, unto God belongs the affair, before and after refers to God’s ability to make one army victorious over another. Metaphysically, it can also be understood to mean before everything existed and after everything ceases to exist, since God is the Originator.
6 [This is] God’s Promise—God fails not His Promise, but most of mankind know not. 7 They know some outward aspect of the life of this world, but of the Hereafter they are heedless. 8 Do they not reflect upon their souls? God did not create the heavens and the earth and whatsoever is between them, save in truth and for a term appointed. Yet truly many among mankind believe not in the meeting with their Lord. 9 Have they not journeyed upon the earth and observed how those before them fared in the end? They were greater than them in strength. They tilled the earth and built upon it more than have they, and their messengers brought them clear proofs. For God would never wrong them, that were human beings to reflect, they would see that God did not create the heavens and the earth and whatsoever is between them, save in truth (cf. 15:85; 46:33; see also 10:5; 14:19; 16:3; 39:53; 45:32; 6:43; 6:73c; 29:44c; 44:38–39c). That all things are created for a term appointed (cf. 31:29; 35:13; 39:53; 46:3), which is understood as a reference to the Day of Resurrection (Sh), points to the finitude of all that exists and to their being created with a final end in mind (R). That they disbelieve in or deny the meeting with their Lord (cf. 6:31; 32:10) would thus mean both that they deny the Resurrection and that they do not understand that everything in the created order will eventually come to an end, since all things perish, save His Face (28:88).

8 Do they not reflect upon their souls? represents one of the Quran’s many invitations to reflect upon the nature of God’s creation in order to facilitate spiritual understanding; see also 11:2, 4, 30; 13:3; 16:17; 37:155; 56:62; see commentary on 3:191: 45:3–6, 23. Many understand this verse to mean that were the disbelievers to reflect upon themselves and how they were created, they would find evidence of both the Oneness of God and God’s Ability to resurrect them (Bd, IK, R, Sh, T). In this sense, it is similar to the question posed to the disbelievers in 23:115: Did you suppose, then, that We created you frivolously, and that you would not be returned unto Us? (R). To reflect upon their souls could also be understood to mean to reflect “within themselves” and upon themselves (Aj, Q, Sh). Here, as in many verses, the Quran maintains of all things and the One to Whom all things return (ST).

6 The first phrase of this verse can also be read as an abbreviated structure substituting for a verbal construction meaning, “God has promised them [victory].” In both readings, it refers to God’s Promise that the Byzantines would defeat the Sassanids (IK, Sh). That God fails not His Promise (cf. 22:47; 39:20) is a general statement confirming the repeated Quranic assertion that God’s Promise is true (see 30:60c).

7 This verse refers to those who know how to prosper in this world, but who are ignorant of religious and spiritual matters (IK, T). They know the outward vanities of this world, but are ignorant of the inner realities and final ends of all things (R, Z).

8 Do they not reflect upon their souls? represents one of the Quran’s many invitations to reflect upon the nature of God’s creation in order to facilitate spiritual understanding; see also 11:2, 4, 30; 13:3; 16:17; 37:155; 56:62; see commentary on 3:191: 45:3–6, 23. Many understand this verse to mean that were the disbelievers to reflect upon themselves and how they were created, they would find evidence of both the Oneness of God and God’s Ability to resurrect them (Bd, IK, R, Sh, T). In this sense, it is similar to the question posed to the disbelievers in 23:115: Did you suppose, then, that We created you frivolously, and that you would not be returned unto Us? (R). To reflect upon their souls could also be understood to mean to reflect “within themselves” and upon themselves (Aj, Q, Sh). Here, as in many verses, the Quran maintains that were human beings to reflect, they would see that God did not create the heavens and the earth and whatsoever is between them, save in truth (cf. 15:85; 46:33; see also 10:5; 14:19; 16:3; 39:53; 45:32; 6:43; 6:73c; 29:44c; 44:38–39c). That all things are created for a term appointed (cf. 31:29; 35:13; 39:53; 46:3), which is understood as a reference to the Day of Resurrection (Sh), points to the finitude of all that exists and to their being created with a final end in mind (R). That they disbelieve in or deny the meeting with their Lord (cf. 6:31; 32:10) would thus mean both that they deny the Resurrection and that they do not understand that everything in the created order will eventually come to an end, since all things perish, save His Face (28:88).
but themselves did they wrong. 10) Then the end of those who committed evil deeds was most evil, for they denied God’s signs and mocked them. 11) God originates creation, then brings it back; then unto Him shall you be returned. 12) And on the Day when the Hour is come, the guilty shall despair. 13) They have no intercessors from among those they ascribed as partners, and they will then disbelieve in those they ascribed as partners. 14) And on the Day when the Hour is come, that Day they will be separated. 15) As for those who believe and perform righteous deeds, they will be made joyous in a Garden. 16) But as for those who disbelieved and denied Our signs and the meeting of the Hereafter,
they will be arraigned unto the punishment. (17) So glory be to God when you enter upon the eve and when you rise at morn; (18) His is the praise in the heavens and on the earth—when the sun declines and when you reach noon-tide. (19) He brings forth the living from the dead, and brings forth the dead from the living, and He revives the earth after its death. Even so shall you be brought forth. (20) Among His signs is that He created you from dust. Then, behold, you are human beings ranging far and wide. (21) And among His signs is that He created mates for you from among yourselves, that you might find rest in them, and He established affection and mercy between you. Truly in

Quran as being among God's signs; see commentary on 2:106; 10:10, 22; 45:3–6. All people shall be arraigned before God (see 36:32, 53), but only the disbelievers will be arraigned unto the punishment (cf. 34:38). In this context, glory be to God is understood as an injunction to glorify or praise God, either generally or specifically within the five daily prayers, in which one recites "Glory be to God, the Magnificent" when bowing and "Glory be to God, the Most Exalted" when prostrating (Q). Together, these two verses are interpreted as a reference to the five daily prayers: the eve refers to the sunset prayer (maghrîb) and the night prayer (îshâ); at morn, to the morning prayer (fajr); when the sun declines, to the late afternoon prayer (fâjd); and noon-tide, to the early afternoon prayer (zuhr; Q). 19 This verse answers the rhetorical question posed in 10:31: And who brings forth the living from the dead, and brings forth the dead from the living? God brings forth the living from the dead when creating human beings the first time and when resurrecting them after death. God brings forth the dead from the living when causing them to die. These functions are related to the Two Divine Names Muhîyî ("Giver of Life"); 30:50, 41:39 and Mutârî ("Bringer of Death"); see also 3:270; 6:955; 10:31c. This is one of many verses where the manner in which God revives the dead earth is employed as a metaphor for resurrection; see also 7:57; 16:165; 22:51; 25:48–49; 29:63, 30:12, 40:10, 35:9; 36:33; 41:31, 39; 43:112, 45:55; 50:9–11, 30:20. Among His signs, which begins vv. 20–25 and v. 46 as well as 41:37; 39 and 42:29, 32, can be understood to mean that these signs are indications of God's complete Power and Lordship over all things (Aj). On one level, God's having created human beings from dust is a reminder of their humble origins and of God's Ability to resurrect them from dust, just as He brought them forth from clay, as in 36:79: He will revive them. Who brought them forth the first time. It can also be understood as a reminder that human beings are of two natures, one spiritual and one physical, and that the physical nature, made of clay and dust, must not be allowed to dominate over the luminous spiritual nature (Aj). Behold translates the particle idhâ, which in this context indicates immediacy, thus conveying the manner in which God is believed to bring forth creation suddenly through the command "Be!" (R; see 2:175; 34:7; 6:73; 16:40; 19:35; 36:82c; 40:68). That human beings range far and wide alludes to all races being of one origin, as in the hadith: "God created Adam from a handful of [dust] taken from throughout the earth. Hence the sons of Adam vary as the earth varies; so they are white, red, black, and [colors] in between." (IK).

21 That God made for human beings mates from among yourselves (or, "from your souls"); cf. 16:72; 13:11; 44:11; 78:8) is also understood to mean "from yourselves" when seen as an allusion to the creation of Eve from Adam's rib (IK). T), though some commentators are skeptical of this association, feeling it relies too heavily on the Biblical tradition (see Genesis 2:14–25). A direct account of Eve's creation is not found in the Quran, only in the Hadith literature; see 4:10. Although many understand the present verse as an address
that are signs for a people who reflect. And among His signs are the creation of the heavens and the earth and the variation in your tongues and colors. Truly in that are signs for those who know. And among His signs is your sleep by night and day and your seeking His Bounty. Truly in that are signs for a people who hear. And among His signs is that He shows you lightning, arousing fear and hope, and that He sends down water from the sky, then revives thereby the earth after its death. Truly in that are signs for a people who understand.

22. That the created order serves as a sign of God's Omnipotence and Oneness is a theme found throughout the Quran, though it is stated more explicitly in this pericope (vv. 20-25) than in most others. The variation in the tongues and colors indicates the differences between languages and races. The difference in tongues can also be understood as a reference to different types of speech, as individuals reveal something of their true nature by the content of their speech. Colors can, moreover, be understood as a reference to different states or conditions of human beings. Variation can also be seen as a reference to the different means by which people see and understand God's signs. As Ibn 'Arabi writes, "The Divine signs that have come in the Wise Reminder [i.e., the Quran] have come in great variation. Because of their variation, those addressed by them have a variety of descriptions. Among them are signs for a people who reflect (3:33; 30:22; 39:42; 45:13; cf. 10:24); signs for a people who understand (2:165; 13:5; 16:12; 30:24); signs for a people who hear (10:67; 16:65; 30:22); signs for those who believe (45:3; cf. 6:99; 15:77; 17:87; 27:86; 42:24; 30:37; 39:8); signs for those who know (30:22); signs for a people who are reverent (106); signs for those possessed of intelligence (20:54, 128); signs for the possessors of intellect (3:190); and signs for those who possess insight (3:31)." Ibn 'Arabi then enjoins, "So differentiate as He has differentiated and do not step beyond to what has not been mentioned [in the Quran]. On the contrary, put every sign and everything else in its place" (Futūhāt, IV 105, 30-33). In this sense, those who discern signs (15:75) are those who know which signs speak to which human types and to which faculties and are able to differentiate between them accordingly.

23. This verse could be understood to mean "your sleep by night and your seeking His Bounty by day" (Aj, Q), in which case sleep by night refers to death and day and your seeking His Bounty refers to Resurrection (Q). It could also be understood to mean your sleep during both night and day and your seeking His Bounty during both (Aj). A people who hear, or "listen," is understood to mean those who reflect upon and understand what they hear (Aj, IK, Q). What is heard could be the Quran, the truth, God's exhortation (Q), or all three.

24. Lightning arouses fear of the destructive forces it may herald, yet hope for the rain it may bring; see 13:15-16. This is one of several verses to invoke God's ability to revive the earth after its death as an argument for His ability to resurrect human beings (cf. 7:57; 16:65; 22:5; 39:63; 50:19, 50; 31:9; 41:39; 43:11; 44:5; 50:9-11; 57:17).

25. That all things stand by His Command indicates that nothing would exist, were it not for
among His signs is that the sky and the earth stand fast by His Command. Then, when He calls you forth from the earth with a single call, behold, you will come forth. Unto Him belongs whosoever is in the heavens and on the earth; all are devoutly obedient unto Him. He it is Who originates creation, then brings it back, and that is most easy for Him. Unto Him belongs the loftiest description in the heavens and on the earth, and He is the Mighty, the Wise. He sets forth for you a parable from yourselves: have you, among those whom your right hands possess, partners in what We have provided for you, such that you are equal with respect to it, with you fearing them as you fear each other? Thus do We expound the signs for a people who understand. Nay, God’s Direction and Wisdom, or His Permission (Q); see also 22:65; 35:41. Then when God calls human beings to the Resurrection (Aj, IK, Q), they rise again, by His Command; see also 17:52; 36:33; 79:15–14. As in v. 20, behold renders the particle idhā, indicating a sudden event. Just as God is said to create human beings out of nothing in an instant through His Word and Command, so too will He resurrect them suddenly, and they will have as much choice in the matter as they did when they were brought forth the first time.

26 That all of creation is devoutly obedient (gānit) indicates an existential and spiritual obedience that carries with it a sense of constancy and in the human order also serenity (cf. 2:116, 238; 3:17, 43; 4:34; 16:120; 3:31, 35; 39:19, 66:12). In this sense, everything is also said to prostrate unto God, as in 16:49: And unto God prostrates whatever crawling creatures or angels are in the heavens or on the earth, and they do not wax arrogant (cf. 13:15; 22:18; 55:6), and in the repeated assertion that whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is on the earth glorify God (59:1; 61:1; 62:1; 64:1; also see 17:44; 2:44; 57:1; 59:24). To 2:30, 31:28, 34:12, 15:12, 20:12, 70:26, 2:4, 29, 34:12, 15:12, 20:12, 70:26, 20:4, 34:12, 15:12, 20:12, 70:26.

27 Regarding the assertion that it is God Who originates creation, then brings it back (cf. 10:4, 34:27:64), see v. 11; 10:4c. That is most easy for Him is understood to mean that the process of creation and resurrection is easy for God (T), or resurrecting human beings could be even easier for God than creating them the first time (IK, Q, R, T). Unto Him belongs the loftiest description (cf. 16:60) is understood to mean the most exalted description, which cannot be attributed to anything else (Aj). Thus some link it to the phrase Naught is like unto Him (42:11; Aj, IK, T) to the Muslim testimony of Divine Unity, “There is no god, but God” (Aj, IK, R, T); see 16:60c. The parable established here compares the relationship between God and those whom the idolaters ascribe to partners to God to the relationship between human beings and their own slaves or servants. The rhetorical questions indicate that no one would envision a slave or servant having an equal share in the master’s wealth or fear that the slave would have an equal right to it, just as God, the Absolute Sovereign, would not fear anything else sharing in His Power. The argument is that if one cannot envision this state of affairs for one’s own limited sphere of sovereignty, how can one attribute it to the universal sovereignty of God (IK, Q, T)? Also see commentary on 16:71, 75–76. This verse is understood by some as a response to the devotional chant that the idolaters are reported to have sung when circumambulating the Ka‘bah, “At Thy service, Thou hast no partner, save the partner that Thou hast. Thou dost possess him and whatsoever he doth possess” (IK, Q). Regarding the manner in which God is said to expound the signs; see 6:97–98, 126; 7:31, 174; 9:11; 10:5, 24; 13:2; 41:44; 61:46c; 65:5c; 41:45c. 11:29 From a Quranic perspective, to follow one’s own caprices and desires is the opposite of following God and God’s messengers; see commentary on 2:120; 45:18, 23. Those who follow caprice have thus taken a course directly opposite
those who do wrong follow their caprices without knowledge. So who will guide those whom God has led astray? And they shall have no helpers. 30 Set thy face to religion as a hanif, in the primordial nature from God upon which He originated mankind—there is no altering the creation of God; that is the upright religion, but most of mankind know not—31 turning unto Him. And reverence Him and perform the prayer; and be not among the idolaters, 32 among to that of guidance, as in 47:14: Is one who stands upon a clear proof from his Lord like one whose evil deeds are made to seem fair unto him, and like those who follow their caprices? The answer to the rhetorical question So who will guide those whom God has led astray? is found in 4:88: Whomsoever God leads astray, thou wilt not find a way for him. There could therefore be no helpers among human beings, jinn, or angels who would help the disbelievers (see also 3:22, 56, 91:16; 3:28; 4:82), as none can thwart God. 30 To set, "turn," or "submit" one's face to or toward religion (see 6:79; 10:105) means to orient one's whole being toward worship and obedience to God (see also 2:112; 32:10; 7:29; 30:43; 31:2). The present verse is thus taken by most commentators to be a command to follow the religion for which God created human beings. It is addressed directly to the Prophet or to all who hear the message (Aj). Some commentators take the first phrase to mean, "Follow the religion as a hanif and follow the primordial nature in which God created you" (Q, T). In another interpretation, primordial nature (fitrah) modifies religion, which is referred to as "primordial" because human beings were originally created for religion, as in 3:56: I did not create jinn and mankind, save to worship Me (Q). As a hanif is understood by most to mean in a straight and upstanding manner, neither inclining nor adhering to past religions that have been altered or abrogated (Q). For hanif (pl. buna'a), which derives from the verb banaf, meaning "to incline," see 2:135. Hanif is usually employed in the Quran with reference to Abraham (2:135; 3:67, 95; 4:125; 6:79; 16:112, 13), but in general it indicates one who inclines away from misguidance and toward belief in the Oneness of God (tawhid; l). Thus in 10:105, the Prophet is enjoined, Set thy face toward the religion as a hanif, and be thou not among the idolaters (see also 2:31; 98:5). The basic understanding of hanif may best be illustrated by a famous hadith qudsi: "God says, 'Verily I created My servants as buna'a'. Then the satans came to them and distracted them from their religion" (IK). Seen in this light, to be truly devout (hanif) and incline toward the worship of God and away from idolatry is to live according to one's primordial nature (fitrah), in which all human beings have been created. One cannot change this underlying nature as a servant or worshipper of God, because there is no altering the creation of God (Q, R). This phrase is also understood to mean that there is no change in God's religion (IK, Q); that is, there is no change in the substance or universal truths of religion, only in the forms in which these truths are revealed in different religions.

The reference to the fitrah is read by some to mean that human beings are born for Islam, so that anyone who follows any other religion is "astray" or "misguided" (IK). But al-Qurabi maintains that it is impossible for the fitrah mentioned here to be Islam in its particular sense, because "Islam (submission) and iman (faith) are declaring with the tongue, embracing with the heart, and performing with the limbs," implying that if fitrah pertains to the original human nature, which is related to the spirit, it cannot pertain to the specific practices of a particular religious tradition because these can only be performed while a spirit resides in a body in this world. From this perspective, the upright religion (cf. 6:161; 9:36; 12:40; 30:43; 98:5) could refer to religion as such and thus to any religious practice that accords with the fitrah. Nonetheless, most interpret upright religion as a reference to Islam in particular (IK, Q). Regarding the upright religion, see 6:161c.

31–32 Turning unto Him translates munabiha ‘alayhi, which can mean turning unto God in repentance or returning to God (Q). In this
those who have divided their religion and become factions, each party rejoicing in that which it has. And when harm befalls the people, they call upon their Lord, turning to Him in repentance. Then, when He lets them taste of His Mercy, behold, a group among them ascribe partners unto their Lord. Let them be ungrateful for that which We have given them: “So enjoy yourselves! For soon you will know.” Or have We sent down upon them any authority that speaks of that which they ascribe as partners unto Him? And when We

context, perform the prayer can be seen as a general injunction to follow all of the practices of religion (Tü), as these are the means by which one acts in accord with the fitrah while in this world. Although the injunction to be not among the idolaters or polytheists is clearly a call to monotheism, in this context it is also seen as a call to avoid hidden polytheism, meaning that one should seek only to please God in one’s worship (R). To do otherwise constitutes a hidden polytheism on account of which human beings have divided their religion and become factions (R). Being divided into factions is understood by many as a reference to being divided into various sects or even making false religions out of true religion (Tu), but it can also be seen as a reference to those who worship God with the goal of seeking something of this world, or even those who do so seeking Paradise, rather than those who do so with a sincere heart, seeking only God (R).

In other passages, dividing religion into factions is an error attributed to previous religious communities, one that Muslims are enjoined to avoid (see: 31:103-5; 6:65; 42:13-14; 98:4; 61:59c). When understood as a reference to religious sects, each party rejoicing in that which it has can be understood as a reference to competing creeds and tenets (Ts, Tü). But when understood as a reference to different modes of worship, it can be seen as a reference to the different aspects of God’s Bounty and Mercy in which different types of worshippers rejoice (R) and the injunctions that God has promulgated for each religious community.

33 This is one of several verses to mention human beings’ tendency to call upon their Lord in times of peril or adversity (cf., e.g., 10:121; 17:67; 39:8; T), such as illness and poverty (J); see 6:40-41c. Then, when He lets them taste of His Mercy by relieving them of such afflictions, they revert to heedlessness and to pursuing their caprices (Ts, Tb); see also 7:189-90c; 10:126c.

34 Cf. 16:55; 29:66c. So enjoy yourselves is an ironic injunction indicating that people will continue to follow their caprices (v. 29) and rejoice in the tenets of their ways (v. 34), but that these are merely the ephemeral delights of this world, which stand in stark contrast to the rewards of the next life (see 3:184; 4:77; 9:58; 13:26; 101:31; 28:60; 40:39; 42:36; 43:35), since the world itself is naught but the enjoyment of delusion (3:185; 57:10). In this regard, the Prophet is instructed to say to disbelievers, Enjoy your disbelief a little; truly you shall be among the inhabitants of the Fire (98:3). In this sense, those who disbelieve enjoy themselves and eat as cattle eat (47:12) and give no thought to anything beyond their immediate interests and desires.

35 Here authority can be understood to mean a revealed book (Q, T), as in passages that speak of God having sent Moses with a manifest authority (4:153; 11:96; 23:45; 40:23; 44:19; 57:38). It can also be understood to mean any proof that would attest to the truth of the idolaters’ position (K, Q, Z). In this vein, 37:156-57 asks the disbelievers: Or have you a manifest authority? Bring your Book, then, if you are truthful. Elsewhere the Quran asks rhetorically, Did We give them a book, such that they stand upon a clear proof from it? (35:40; see also 6:148; 34:4:4; 43:21; 53:28; 68:37-38, 47).

36 Cf. 42:48. People rejoice in their blessings, which they attribute to their own merits and which they believe are a testament to their own superiority, as in 39:49: And when harm befalls man, he calls upon Us. Then, when We confer upon him a blessing from Us, he says, “I was only given it because of knowledge.” The judgment wrongdoers
cause the people to taste some mercy, they rejoice in it. But should an evil befall them because of that which their hands have sent forth, behold, they despair.

Have they not considered that God outspreads and straitens provision for whomsoever He will? Truly in that are signs for a people who believe. (9) So give unto the kinsman his right, and unto the indigent and the traveler. That is better for those who desire the Face of God. It is they who shall prosper. (39) That which you give in usury that it might increase through other people's wealth does not increase with God. But that which you give in alms, desiring the Face of God—it is they who receive a manifold increase. (40) God it is Who created

receive in the next life is the result of the acts of disobedience that their hands have sent forth (Q: 1:95; 3:130; 4:62; 28:47; 42:48; 62:77; see also 5:80; 18:57; 36:12; 78:40), reinforcing the idea that human beings are responsible for their fate in the Hereafter. But there is also the suggestion that the misfortunes generated by their wrongdoing might be visited upon them in this life. From one perspective, their actions are sent forth to be confronted again at a later point in time or on the Day of Judgment, though from another perspective, actions are "brought forth" by their hands, thus making manifest what is in their hearts (TS). Those who do not succumb to the tendency to turn away from God when evil befalls them are the patient who, when affliction befalls them, say, "Truly we are God's, and unto Him we return" (2:216).


38 According to Shiite commentaries, the first phrase of this verse is a specific injunction for the Prophet to give his family members their due (TS, Tû). In accordance with this injunction, the Prophet is reported to have given his daughter Fāṭimah a garden. But due to different understandings of what the Prophet had intended, this garden was viewed by the first Caliph, Abû Bakr, as property that belonged to the Muslim pie and not to Fāṭimah (Qm, TS, Tû). In contrast, most Sunni commentators see this as one of several injunctions to observe the rights of kin found throughout the Quran. The right, or due, that one is to give can be seen specifically as charity or generally as virtuous conduct toward relatives (see 2:88). It is even said that giving charity to others while one's relatives are in need will not be accepted by God as a good deed (Q). For a broader discussion of the categories of people among whom one's wealth should be distributed, see 2:177c. That giving others their right, or due, is better means that it is better than keeping wealth just for oneself (Q). To give charity because one desires the Face of God indicates that one does not do it to obtain favors from others or for some other form of worldly gain (see 2:64c).

39 This is the earliest mention of usury (riba) in the chronological order of the Quran. The last verses in the chronology of revelation (2:273-81) also deal with the concept of ribā, but are ambiguous enough to have led to centuries of debate over how one defines "usury"; see 2:275-81c; 3:110; 4:161c. In the context of this verse, ribā is understood as a reference to either usury, which is forbidden (see 2:275-81) or the seeking of increase, which is permissible (TS). It is permissible to present a gift to another in the hopes of receiving something greater than it from that person, although it does not bring increase with God, because it is thought that actions are rewarded in accord with the intentions behind them (Q). That one receives a manifold increase from paying alms (zakāh) is meant as a contrast to the practice of ribā in pre-Islamic Arabia, where loans could compound exponentially, to the point of leaving the borrower in complete ruin (see 2:275-81c).

40 This is one of many verses that refer to all the stages of existence and God's function as the
you, then nourished you; then He causes you to die; then He gives you life. Is there anyone among those you ascribe as partners who does aught of that? Glory be to Him and exalted is He above the partners they ascribe. Corruption has appeared upon land and sea because of that which men's hands have earned, that He may let them taste some of that which they have done, that haply they might return. Say, "Journey upon the earth and observe how those before fared in the end, most of whom were idolaters." And set thy face to the

creative agent for each. For then He causes you to die; then He gives you life (cf. 2:28; 22:66; 45:26). see 2:78c. Glory be to Him and exalted is He above the partners they ascribe (cf. 10:18; 16:1; 39:67) is an affirmation of God's utter transcendence.

41 Corruption (ifsād) implies all manner of decadence and injustice, in regard to both rebelling against God and oppressing others; thus failing to recognize the rights of all. It is often understood by commentators to mean open disobedience toward God. In both 2:27 and 13:25, corruption is presented as part and parcel of breaking the covenant: those who break God's pact after accepting His covenant, and sever what God has commanded be joined, and work corruption upon the earth; and in 5:33 working corruption is linked to rejecting God's messengers. In general, when human caprice is followed rather than Divine ordinances, corruption ensues, as in 23:71: Were the truth to follow their caprices, the heavens and the earth and those therein would have been corrupted. As such, corruption can be linked to all manner of iniquity, such as arrogance (see 7:74), oppression (2:6:183; 28:4), and failing to honor family relations (47:22). Though working corruption is an accusation made against several specific human collectivities, such as the Children of Is- rael (17:4) and the pre-Islamic Arabian tribes of Thamūd (2:6:152) and Midian (7:85; 29:36), it is recognized as a general human shortcoming. Thus the angels are reported to have said to God regarding the creation of the human being on the earth, Wilt Thou place therein one who will work corruption therein, and shed blood? (2:130). Working corruption implies a combination of spiritual and worldly corruption (e.g., 2:27; 7:74, 85-86, 103, 11:85; 13:23); and it is implicitly or explicitly connected to physical violence in several verses (e.g., 21:205; 5:64; 26:183; 27:48-49; 28:4). The opposite of working corruption (ifsād) is ʾislāh, "setting things aright" or "making amends," and elsewhere corruption is put in direct contrast to performing righteous deeds (ṣalīḥāt): Or shall We make those who believe and perform righteous deeds like those who work corruption upon the earth? Or shall We make the reve rent like the profigate? (38:28).

In the present verse corruption is said to appear because of that which men's hands have earned while elsewhere it is said that it is through the works of men that corruption is repelled: And were it not for God's repelling people, some by means of others, the earth would have been corrupted (2:253). The final ends of those who work corruption and those who oppose it are thus divergent. Heaven is ordained for the latter: That is the Abode of the Hereafter, which We ordain for those who desire neither dominion upon the earth, nor corruption (28:83); and punishment for the former: Those who disbelieve and who have turned from the way of God, for them We shall add punishment on top of punishment, for their having worked corruption (16:88).

That God will let them taste some of that which they have done means that God will allow them to experience some form of trial or punishment in this life in hopes that it may help them turn toward repentance and thus be forgiven and absolved of experiencing the full punishment in the Hereafter. That haply they might return thus implies that they might repent (T) and refrain from committing acts of disobedience in the future (IK, T3).


43 Set thy face to the upright religion is understood to mean not to turn away from it in the least, lest one be unable to return to it, as in 9:127.
upright religion before there comes a day from God that none can repel. That Day they will be spread asunder. 44 Whosoever disbelieves, his disbelief is to his own detriment. And whosoever works righteousness, they make provision for their souls. 45 that from His Bounty He may recompense those who believe and perform righteous deeds. Truly He loves not the disbelievers. 46 And among His signs is that He sends the winds as bearers of glad tidings to let you taste of His Mercy, that the ships may sail by His Command, and that you may seek of His Bounty, and that haply you may give thanks. 47 We have indeed sent messengers unto their people before thee, and they brought them clear proofs. Then We took vengeance upon those who were guilty; and it is incumbent
upon Us to help the believers. 

God is He Who sends the winds, then they cause clouds to rise, and He spreads them in the sky as He will and makes them into fragments, whereupon you see the rain emerging from their midst. Then when He bestows it upon whomsoever He will among His servants, behold, they rejoice, though previously, before it was sent down upon them, they had been in despair. So observe the vestiges of God’s Mercy, how He revives the earth after its death. Truly that is the Reviver of the dead, and He is Powerful over all things. And were We to send a wind and they were to see it turn their despair (IK). Or they may have been in despair when the winds first arose, thinking that a violent storm was coming, and then became relieved when it only brought rain.

The translation of the last phrase, and it is incumbent upon Us to help the believers, is based upon reading upon Us to help the believers as modifying incumbent, which here renders haqqan. But haqqan can also be read as the end of a sentence (Aj), in which case the phrase might best be rendered, “and it was due. Ours is to help the believers,” as it is often by means of other people that God repels the unjust (see 2:250–51; 22:140c). Both readings indicate that God took vengeance in order to aid the believers, but the second reading is somewhat more emphatic, indicating that God’s Vengeance was due and that it was just. The means by which God aids human beings can also be seen as a reference to His saving them in the Hereafter, as in a famous saying of the Prophet, “No Muslim defends the honor of his brother but that it is incumbent upon God to defend him from the Fire of Hell on the Day of Resurrection,” after which he recited and it is incumbent upon Us to help the believers (Bd, IK, Q, R, T). 48–49 Winds appears in the plural form ten times in the Quran, and each time it expresses God’s Mercy, as in 7:57: He it is Who sends forth the winds as glad tidings ahead of His Mercy (see also 25:48; 35:9). In contrast, when wind occurs in the singular, it is usually used to convey God’s Wrath and Punishment (see 3:117; 10:22; 17:69; 22:33; 30:51; 33:9; 41:16; 46:2:44; 51:4:41; 54:19; 69:6). This distinction is likely made because the winds of the south, east, and north are all said to bring mercy; only the west wind is said to bring punishment and destruction. Fragments renders kisaf, which could also mean "piled up" (IK). The people to whom the rain came may have been in despair because they were in need, and the rain relieved their despair (IK). Or they may have been in despair when the winds first arose, thinking that a violent storm was coming, and then became relieved when it only brought rain.

50. The vestiges of God’s Mercy refers to the rain and all of the things that are given life through it (Bd). Vestiges translates athar, which can also be read athar, meaning "the effect of God’s Mercy" (IJ, T). As with other passages that refer to the revival of dead earth (e.g., 7:57; 16:65; 22:15; 30:38, 24:35:19; 36:33; 41:31; 39:41:11; 45:1:509–99), this passage also uses such imagery to argue for God’s ability to resurrect decayed bones (Aj). That is the Reviver of the dead thus indicates that God and no other has the ability to revive the earth, since He is Powerful over all things, and that God has the ability to resurrect human beings. God’s reviving the earth by sending water is also understood as a symbol for spiritual revival. Thus al-Tuttari writes, “In its outer meaning it refers to the rain, and in its inner meaning it alludes to the life of hearts through remembrance” (ST). 51. In contrast to their positive reaction to the winds of mercy and blessings mentioned in vv. 46–50, when people are confronted with a wind that removes those blessings, they think poorly of God, fail to reflect upon the blessings that they have been given, fail to trust in God (Bd), and thus come to disbelieve. In this context, turn yellow refers to either plants turning yellow from lack of rain or clouds changing color (N). After that means either after they were made glad or after the plants or clouds turned yellow (N). Together, vv. 48–51 indicate the manner in which disbelievers vaclillate, first despairing of God’s Mercy and provision, then becoming glad.
yellow, after that they would surely disbelieve. 54) Surely thou dost not make the dead to hear; nor dost thou make the deaf to hear the call when they turn their backs; nor dost thou guide the blind from their straying. Thou maketh none to hear, save those who believe in Our signs and are submitters. 55) God is He Who created you from weakness, then ordained strength after weakness, then ordained weakness and old age after strength. He creates whatsoever He will, and He is the Knowing, the Powerful. 55) And on the Day when the Hour is come, the guilty will swear that they had tarried naught but an hour; thus were they perverted. 56) And those who have been given knowledge and belief will say, "Indeed, you tarried in God’s Book until the Day of Resurrection; and when they arrive, and then disbeliefing in God and God’s Mercy when some of the blessings are annulled (N).

52-53 Cf. 17:30-31. Just as the Prophet is unable to make the dead hear in their graves, so too is he unable to make those who turn away from the revelation hear, as this ability lies with God alone (IK, T). A similarparallel is drawn in 6:36: Only those who hear will respond. As for the dead, God will resurrect them, and unto Him they shall be returned. That the Prophets cannot cause the dead to hear can also be understood as an allusion to those whose hearts are dead or sealed (N), as in v. 59. Blind then refers to those whose hearts are blind (Aj), as in 22:46: Truly it is not the eyes that go blind, but it is hearts within breasts that go blind. From a Quranic perspective, the Prophets cannot cause their hearts to see or hear because his function is only to convey the revelation (see 3:124; 18:10), and whenever God leads astray, no guide has be (7:86; 13:33; 19:35; 36:40/31)); the Prophet should thus concern himself only with guiding those who do listen.

54 That human beings were created from weakness (cf. 4:138) refers either to their having been made from a base fluid (7:91:13; cf. 13:8; 86:5-7; Aj, Q, T), or to the weakness of a child at the beginning of life (Aj, Q, Z). Strength then refers to the period of youth and maturity, followed by the period of decline in old age. See also 22:15, where all of the stages of earthly life from conception to old age are cited as signs of God’s Power (see also 22:55) as well as 16:68, which speaks of those whom God causes to regress in creation, and 18:70, which speaks of those who are brought back to the weakest of ages, such that they know nothing after having had knowledge (cf. 51:17; 14:24: 44:49).

55 That the guilty seem to have tarried naught but an hour (cf. 101:42; 17:31; 20:80-81; 46:35; 79:46) refers either to their experience of the period in the grave before the Day of Resurrection or to their period of time on earth (Q), whose duration is as an hour or less in relation to the eternity of the Hereafter. Their claim may be made in ignorance or in order to argue that there is not enough proof against them (IK). Perverted translates ḫalūn, which literally means "turned away," but which always carries a negative connotation, meaning turning away from truth toward falsehood—turning from telling the truth to lying or from beautiful actions to ugly ones (11)—and thus becoming perverted or deluded (Taj al-‘Arus). In this latter sense, the last phrase can also mean "thus were they deluded" (Z) in their understanding of the relationship of this world to the Hereafter.

56 Here, those who have been given knowledge and belief is understood to mean those who are given knowledge of and belief in God’s Book (T), which some identify specifically as the angels or the believers (IJ) or more generally as the angels, the prophets, and the believers (Aj, Z). In God’s Book means in God’s Knowledge that is written on the Preserved Tablet (85:22), in God’s
this is the Day of Resurrection! But you knew not.” 27 On that Day the excuses of those who do wrong will benefit them not; nor can they make amends.

28 And indeed We have set forth for mankind in this Quran every kind of parable. And if thou bringest them a sign, those who disbelieve will surely say, “You make naught but false claims.” 29 Thus does God seal the hearts of those who know not.

30 So be patient. God’s Promise is indeed true. And let not those without certainty disquiet thee.

Judgment and Decree (Aj), in the Quran (Aj), or in the book of deeds that is with God (IK). Their saying This is the Day of Resurrection implies a rebuke, similar to the disbelievers being told, This is the Day of Division that you used to deny (37:12).

27 The wrongdoers’ excuses do not benefit them, because they have been provided ample warning through the messengers and ample opportunity to repent, as in 35:4: And there has been no community but that a Warner has passed among them (cf. 16:36). Thus they are commanded, O you who disbelieve! Make no excuses this day! You are only requited for that which you used to do (66:7); see also 16:84; 45:35.

28 That God has set forth... every kind of parable (cf. 39:27) and employed every kind of parable (17:89; 18:5:4) means that God has shown people the truth, so that they may understand and follow it (IK), thus indicating why it is that the disbelievers have no excuse. Here a sign can mean verses of the Quran (Aj) or prophetic miracles (Aj; IK), such as Moses’ staff turning into a snake and his hand turning white (II) or the Prophet Muhammad’s cleaving of the moon (IK; see 54:110). In this context, them in if thou bringest them a sign refers to the guilty (v. 55) as well as those whom the Prophet cannot make hear (v. 52) because God has “sealed their hearts” (v. 59); thus they will not believe, though every sign should come unto them,