

Sura 32: Al-Sajda (The Prostration)

In the name of God, the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy

Verses 1 to 30:

1. *Alif. Lam. Mim.*
2. *The revelation of the Book, there is no doubt in it, is from the Lord of the worlds.*
3. *Or do they say, "He has fabricated it"? It is the truth from your Lord that you may warn a people to whom no warner has come before you, in order that they may be guided.*
4. *It is God who created the heavens and the earth, and whatever is between them, in six days. Then He established Himself on the Throne. You do not have, besides Him, any protecting guardian or anyone to intercede on your behalf. Will you not then be mindful?*
5. *He manages (all) affairs from the heavens to the earth. Then it ascends to Him on a Day, the length of which is a thousand years of your reckoning.*
6. *Such is He, the Knower of all things, unseen and seen, the Eminent, the Giver of Mercy.*
7. *He who perfected everything He created. And He began the creation of humankind from clay.*
8. *Then He made his progeny from an extract of insignificant fluid.*
9. *Then He fashioned him in due proportion and breathed into him of His spirit. And He gave you (the faculties of) hearing and sight and minds, little thanks you give.*
10. *And they say, "When we are lost in the earth, shall we then be re-created?" In fact, they deny the meeting with their Lord.*
11. *Say, "The angel of death, put in charge of you, will take your souls. Then you shall be brought back to your Lord."*
12. *If only you could see when the guilty ones, bowing their heads before their Lord, (saying) "Our Lord, we have seen and we have heard, so send us back; we will do good deeds; for indeed we are now certain."*
13. *If We had so willed, We could have certainly given every soul its guidance, but the word from Me has come true, "I will fill Hell with jinn and people all together."*
14. *So, taste (the evil of your deeds). Forasmuch as you forgot the meeting of this day of yours, We forget you. Taste the eternal torment for what you used to do.*
15. *Only those believe in Our revelations who, when they are reminded of them, fall down in prostration and celebrate the praise of their Lord, and they are not arrogant.*
16. *They forsake their beds to call upon their Lord in fear and hope, and they spend of that We have bestowed on them.*
17. *No soul knows what is kept hidden for them of joy, as a reward for what they used to do.*
18. *Is he who is a believer like him who is a transgressor? They are not equal.*
19. *For those who believe and do good deeds are Gardens of Refuge as hospitable homes, for what they used to do.*
20. *And as for those who transgressed, their refuge is the fire; whenever they desire to go forth from it they shall be brought back into it, and it will be said to them, "Taste the torment of the fire which you used to deny."*
21. *And indeed, We will make them taste of the torment of this (life) prior to the supreme torment, that haply they may return.*

22. *And who does greater wrong than he who is reminded of the revelations of his Lord, then turns away from them. We shall exact revenge on the guilty.*
23. *We did indeed give Moses the Scripture. So do not be in doubt regarding his encounter. And We made it guidance to the Children of Israel.*
24. *And We appointed, from among them, leaders, giving guidance under Our command, so long as they persevered and continued to have certitude in Our revelations.*
25. *Verily, your Lord will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection concerning that wherein they used to differ.*
26. *Is it not a lesson for them (to observe) how many generations We destroyed before them, amid whose dwelling places they do walk? Therein verily are signs. Will they not then hear?*
27. *And do they not see that We do drive rain to barren land, and produce therewith crops, providing food for their cattle and themselves? Will they not then, see?*
28. *They say, "When will this victory be, if you are telling the truth?"*
29. *Say, "On the day of the victory, the faith of those who disbelieve (and who then will believe) will not avail them, neither will they be reprieved."*
30. *So, turn away from them, and wait; they too are waiting. (32: 1 – 30)*

"Alif. Lam. Mim." These letters of the Alphabet were known to the Arabs, and they excelled in using them to compose prose and poetry. However, they realized the vast difference between what they were able to compose and this Quran. There is no doubt that this Quran has been revealed by God, *"The revelation of the Book, there is no doubt in it, is from the Lord of the worlds."* The statement of certainty was inserted in the middle of the sentence, between the noun and the predicate, because this is the main theme of the Sura. The idolaters of Mecca claimed that Muhammad (PBUH) was the one who composed the Quran. The Quran emphasizes that this claim is not true, *"Or do they say, 'He has fabricated it'? It is the truth from your Lord that you may warn a people to whom no warner has come before you, in order that they may be guided."* It is the truth from your Lord. It is the truth because it confirms the truth implanted in the initial natural disposition of humankind, it enunciates the truth about the universe and its laws, it provides the believers with the means to live in harmony with the rest of the universe, and it is the truth that establishes justice and removes any form of injustice. It is the truth from your Lord not from you, Muhammad. You were given this truth to warn the Arabs whose generations after Prophet Ishmael (PBUH) did not receive any warning before you were sent to them, perhaps they may heed this warning.

The Arabs used to associate partners with God. This verse establishes the right of God to be worshipped alone, *"It is God who created the heavens and the earth, and whatever is between them, in six days. Then He established Himself on the Throne. You do not have, besides Him, any protecting guardian or anyone to intercede on your behalf. Will you not then be mindful?"* God created this vast universe in six time periods. Only God knows how long these periods were. They may have been six phases or six stages of development, but they are certainly not six days like our days. Then He established Himself on the Throne. This is a symbolic way to express God's exaltation above His creation. We have no idea about the nature of the Throne. This is a matter that only God knows. No one can protect us nor intercede on our behalf besides

Him. This is a fact that people need to remember and heed.

God is the Most High and He also manages all the affairs, and He will settle all the affairs on the Day of the Resurrection, *“He manages (all) affairs from the heavens to the earth. Then it ascends to Him on a Day, the length of which is a thousand years of your reckoning.”* He is, *“the Knower of all things, unseen and seen, the Eminent, the Giver of Mercy.”* And He, *“who perfected everything He created.”* God has perfected everything He created. Every creature was made to perform a specific function from the single cell to the human being to the planets floating in the sky. The universe was made in harmony. Creation was made functional and beautiful. Beauty in creation was deliberate because perfection yields beauty.

A sign of His perfection is the creation of the human being, *“And He began the creation of humankind from clay.”* It may be understood from the Arabic text that the human being was created in stages. However, there is no information about the number or the extent of the stages of development. This is still the secret of life which no one has been able to discover. The development of creation which is referred to here is different from the development stipulated by Darwin’s theory.

“Then He made his progeny from an extract of insignificant fluid.” The fertilized egg is the first stage of development of the embryo. The process of the development of the embryo is summarized, *“Then He fashioned him in due proportion, and breathed into him of His spirit. And He gave you (the faculties of) hearing and sight and minds, little thanks you give.”* It is a tremendous process of development that only God is capable of completing. But not many people appreciate it. They even dispute the idea of resurrection, *“And they say, ‘When we are lost in the earth, shall we then be re-created?’ In fact, they deny the meeting with their Lord.”* They dismissed the fact that God who created them is able to resurrect them again. But did they not begin initially from clay? What would prevent God from resurrecting them from clay a second time? Their true refusal is the idea of meeting God. Yet they will die and they will be resurrected, and they will be brought to God once more, *“Say, ‘The angel of death, put in charge of you, will take your souls. Then you shall be brought back to your Lord.’”*

Having mentioned the Day of Resurrection, the following verse describes one of the scenes of that Day, *“If only you could see when the guilty ones, bowing their heads before their Lord, (saying) ‘Our Lord, we have seen and we have heard, so send us back; we will do good deeds; for indeed we are now certain.’”* The verse describes the disbelievers bowing their heads in humiliation in front of God. They will admit their sin, regret their rejection of the truth, confess their certitude of the truth, and ask for another chance. Before stating their fate, God will declare the truth which controls the situation and decides the fate of people, *“If We had so willed, We could have certainly given every soul its guidance, but the word from Me has come true, ‘I will fill Hell with jinn and people all together.’”* Had God willed He would have made one choice available to humankind: to follow the way of guidance similar to the angels. But God willed that humankind would be given the ability to choose between two roads: the road of guidance and the road of misguidance. God has decreed that He will fill the Hellfire of those who chose the road of misguidance. They have forgotten God and, on that Day God, will forget them. They will be punished according to their deeds, *“So taste (the evil of your deeds). Forasmuch as you forgot the meeting of this day of yours, We forget you. Taste the eternal torment for what you used to do.”*

Another scene is depicted, the scene of the believers. It is the scene of those who worship God in humility and devotion, they call upon their Lord with trembling hearts hoping in His mercy and fearing His punishment, *“Only those believe in Our revelations who, when they are reminded of them, fall down in prostration and celebrate the praise of their Lord, and they are not arrogant.”* It is a bright picture of guided souls. Those who, when reminded of their Lord, fall prostrate. They spend the night praying; they perform the night prayer and the Dawn prayer and extra voluntary prayers in between. They prefer their Lord’s company over the night rest that their beds are offering, *“They forsake their beds to call upon their Lord in fear and hope, and they spend of that We have bestowed on them.”* They also give for the sake of God from what He has bestowed on them. Only God knows the reward that is hidden for them, *“No soul knows what is kept hidden for them of joy, as a reward for what they used to do.”*

The principle of justice is stated, *“Is he who is a believer like him who is a transgressor? They are not equal.”* Believers and disbelievers are not equal in many respects. Their nature, their emotions, and their behavior are different. Consequently, their reward will be different. People will be rewarded according to their deeds with absolute justice. Those who believe and do good deeds will be awarded, *“Gardens of Refuge as hospitable homes, for what they used to do.”* But the transgressor will end up in Hellfire, *“And as for those who transgressed, their refuge is the fire; whenever they desire to go forth from it they shall be brought back into it, and it will be said to them, ‘Taste the torment of the fire which you used to deny.’”* They will be tormented in this life as well as in the Hereafter, *“And indeed We will make them taste of the torment of this (life) prior to the supreme torment.”* It is a sign of God’s mercy that He provides opportunities for people to learn and repent, *“that haply they may return.”* This is a chance for people to return to the straight path. If they do, then they will be forgiven and will be spared the torment promised for the transgressors. However, if they persist on their ways of falsehood, then there is a dire warning for them, *“And who does greater wrong than he who is reminded of the revelations of his Lord, then turns away from them. We shall exact revenge on the guilty.”* This is a horrifying threat.

“We did indeed give Moses the Scripture. So do not be in doubt regarding his encounter. And We made it guidance to the Children of Israel. And We appointed, from among them, leaders, giving guidance under Our command, so long as they persevered and continued to have certitude in Our revelations. Verily, your Lord will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection concerning that wherein they used to differ.” The verse refers briefly to Prophet Moses (PBUH). The phrase, *“So do not be in doubt regarding his encounter,”* refers to the oneness of the message that both Moses (PBUH) and Muhammad (PBUH) brought to people. This message is the truth. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is being assured that the message that he was sent with is the truth from God. It coincides with the message that Moses (PBUH) brought from God. This is the encounter between Moses (PBUH) and Muhammad (PBUH). The verse exhorts the Muslims to persevere in their struggle against falsehood as did the chosen people from the Children of Israel before. The verse hints to the reward that awaits them if they do persevere. God promised to appoint those who persevere as leaders to guide humanity to the straight path. God will settle the dispute between those who differed among them on the Day of Judgment.

The ruins of previous nations, who were destroyed and perished before, were still there to be seen by the Arabs so they may learn a lesson from it, *“Is it not a lesson for them (to observe)*

how many generations We destroyed before them, amid whose dwelling places they do walk? Therein verily are signs.” These were the ruins of the tribes of ‘Ad and Thamud which the Arabs used to see when they travel on their caravans. The scenes of these ruins should have made them reflect on their destiny and should have reminded them to mend their ways and turn to God. They used to listen to the stories of these tribes being told, “*Will they not then hear?*” Will they not hear the warning?

From the story of death, ruins, and destruction to the story of life, and growth, “*And do they not see that We do drive rain to barren land, and produce therewith crops, providing food for their cattle and themselves? Will they not then, see?*” God sends water on the barren land, and it becomes green full of plants. This is a scene which opens the hearts to feel the mercy of God, to fill these hearts with hope, and to make them enjoy the beauty of the creation of God.

The conclusion of the Sura deals with the challenge that the disbelievers used to pose to the Prophet (PBUH) daring him to hasten the torment that he promised, “*They say, ‘When will this victory be, if you are telling the truth?’*” The Prophet (PBUH) was assured of God’s victory and was commanded to ignore them, “*Say, ‘On the day of the victory, the faith of those who disbelieve (and who then will believe) will not avail them, neither will they be reprieved.’ So, turn away from them, and wait; they too are waiting.*”