

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Surah Hud

Hud · Makki · 123 ayat — reflections on surah 11 of the Qur'an

QURAN

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Surah Hud

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هود — Hud, "Hud". Surah 11 of 114, revealed in Makkah, 123 ayat.
The full text and a recitation are on the web edition at deen2u.com/quran/11/.

ONE

The surah in brief

The stories of Nuh, Hud, Salih, Lut, Shu'ayb, and Musa, showing that Allah destroys the arrogant and saves the faithful, with a call to steadfastness and uprightness as commanded.

Hud is Yunus's companion surah, retelling many of the same prophets but with the accent on steadfastness under prolonged rejection. It recounts Nuh, Hud, Salih, Lut, and Shu'ayb at length, each standing alone against a hostile people and each vindicated only after long patience, so that the Prophet and believers see their own trial mirrored. It insists the earth's every creature is provided for by Allah and warns against leaning toward wrongdoers. Its most weighted command — 'stand firm as you are commanded' — is the verse the Prophet said had turned his hair grey, and it closes urging prayer, patience, and the assurance that good deeds erase bad ones.

OCCASIONS OF REVELATION

Why it was revealed

These are the occasions (asbāb al-nuzūl) that the authentic collections narrate for verses of this surah. An occasion explains a verse; it does not limit its meaning.

Qur'an 11:5

Some people were shy of being exposed to the sky when relieving themselves or with their wives in the open, so they hid themselves. The verse "No doubt! They fold up their breasts" was sent down about them.

"so the above revelation was sent down regarding them"

Ibn 'Abbas (via Muhammad bin 'Abbas bin Ja'far, as spelled in the row) · Sahih al-Bukhari 4681

Qur'an 11:114

A man kissed a woman and then came and told the Prophet. The verse about establishing prayer at the two ends of the day was revealed, saying good deeds remove evil deeds. The man asked if it was for him alone, and the Prophet said it was for all his followers.

"A man kissed a woman and then came to Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) and told him of that, so this Divine Inspiration was revealed"

'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud · Sahih al-Bukhari 4687

TWO

Its themes

- Steadfastness under rejection
- The prophets' patience
- Reliance and provision
- Good deeds effacing evil
- Warning and reckoning
- Uprightness (istiqamah)

THREE

Key verses

Therefore stand firm (in the straight Path) as thou art commanded, - thou and those who with thee turn (unto Allah); and transgress not (from the Path): for He seeth well all that ye do.

Qur'an 11:112

'So stand firm as you are commanded' — the Prophet said this surah and its like had aged him, so heavy is the charge of unwavering uprightness without excess or slackness. Reflect that istiqamah is a daily recommitment, not a one-time station.

And establish regular prayers at the two ends of the day and at the approaches of the night: For those things, that are good remove those that are evil: Be that the word of remembrance to those who remember (their Lord):

Qur'an 11:114

Establish prayer at the two ends of the day and in the night, for good deeds drive away bad ones — revealed to console a man distressed by a sin. When you slip, do not spiral; answer the fall with a good deed and a prayer.

He said: "O my people! see ye whether I have a Clear (Sign) from my Lord, and He hath given me sustenance (pure and) good as from Himself? I wish not, in opposition to you, to do that which I forbid you to do. I only desire (your) betterment to the best of my power; and my success (in my task) can only come from Allah. In Him I trust, and unto Him I look.

Qur'an 11:88

Shu'ayb says, 'My success is only through Allah; upon Him I rely and to Him I turn' — the creed of every reformer who knows results are not his to manufacture. Adopt it whenever you strive to better yourself or your community.

There is no moving creature on earth but its sustenance dependeth on Allah: He knoweth the time and place of its definite abode and its temporary deposit: All is in a clear Record.

Qur'an 11:6

There is no creature on earth but that its provision rests upon Allah, who knows its dwelling and its resting place. Let this dissolve the fear of scarcity that tempts people to compromise their principles.

"I put my trust in Allah, My Lord and your Lord! There is not a moving creature, but He hath grasp of its fore-lock. Verily, it is my Lord that is on a straight Path.

Qur'an 11:56

Hud declares his reliance on Allah, 'my Lord and your Lord — there is no creature He does not hold by its forelock.'
Reflect that nothing moves except within His grip, so nothing you fear is truly beyond His command.

FOUR

Reading it closely

Context and character

Hud is a Makkan surah, close in time and temperament to Yunus, and it is famous for the weight it laid on the Prophet ﷺ himself. In a report preserved by al-Tirmidhi, he said, 'Hud and its sisters have turned my hair grey.' When pressed, some narrations point to its command 'So remain steadfast as you have been commanded' (11:112) — a charge so demanding that it aged the one who bore it. That single detail sets the surah's tone: this is a chapter about istiqama, standing firm on the straight path in the face of relentless rejection.

The book is introduced as one whose verses were 'perfected and then set out in detail from One All-Wise, All-Aware' (11:1) — a claim of both flawless design and clear exposition. What follows is a long procession of the messengers, each sent to a people, each meeting the same denial, and each episode closing with the same verdict: the believers are delivered and the deniers are swept away. The mood is grave and steady, meant to console a Prophet under siege by showing him that his experience is the pattern of prophethood itself.

Named after the Prophet Hud, sent to the people of 'Ad, the surah gathers the histories of Nuh, Hud, Salih, Ibrahim and Lut, Shu'ayb, and Musa into one sustained meditation on divine justice. Ibn 'Ashur observes that Hud develops in depth what

Yunus stated in principle: where Yunus argued that the messengers' warning is true, Hud walks through case after case to prove it.

How the surah unfolds

It opens with the call at the root of every prophet's mission — worship none but Allah, seek His forgiveness and turn to Him — and promises a fair provision in this life to those who do (11:1–3). It answers the deniers' scorn at resurrection and their attempt to hide from God, insisting that He knows even what the breast conceals and that not a creature moves on earth but its sustenance is upon Him (11:5–7). Then it exposes the fickle human heart: despairing and ungrateful in loss, boastful and forgetful in ease, except those who are patient and do good (11:9–11).

The heart of the surah is the parade of prophetic stories, and it is the fullest telling in the Qur'an of several of them. Nuh's long, patient call, the mockery he endured, the ark, the flood, and the searing scene of his drowning son who thought a mountain would save him — with the lesson that lineage is no shelter when a soul chooses disbelief (11:25–49). Then Hud among 'Ad, Salih and the she-camel among Thamud, Ibrahim's guests bearing news of a son and of Lut's doomed people, Lut himself, and Shu'ayb calling Midian to honesty in weight and measure (11:50–95). Each account follows the same arc — warning, arrogance, a fixed appointment, deliverance of the few, destruction of the many.

After the stories comes the surah's summation. These are 'tidings of the towns We relate to you' — some still standing, some cut down like a harvested field — and Allah did not wrong them; they wronged themselves (11:100–102). His seizing of a wrongdoing town is painful and severe (11:102). The Day is described in two groups, the wretched and the happy, one in the Fire and one in the Garden, each 'abiding as long as the heavens and earth endure' except as your Lord wills (11:105–108).

The closing movement turns from history to the listener. Do not lean toward the wrongdoers lest the Fire touch you (11:113); establish prayer at the ends of the day, for good deeds erase evil ones (11:114); and above all, 'remain steadfast as you are commanded' (11:112). It ends by noting that had your Lord willed He would have made mankind one nation, but they will keep differing — except those He has graced — and that the stories of the messengers are told precisely to make the believer's heart firm (11:118–120).

The major themes, in depth

The unchanging law of the messengers. More than any other surah, Hud presents prophethood as a single recurring drama with a fixed moral physics. A messenger arises from among the people, calls to the worship of Allah alone, is met with arrogance and the excuse that he is only a man like them, is told to bring on the punishment he threatens — and then the punishment arrives, on a day appointed, sparing the believers and levelling the rest. By repeating this seven times the surah makes denial look not clever but foolish, a wager repeatedly lost across

history. Islahi reads the accumulation as an argument by induction: the Quraysh are watching their own fate rehearsed before them.

Steadfastness on the straight path. The command 'fastaqim' (11:112) is the surah's summit and, by the hadith, its heaviest word. Istiqama is not a single act but a sustained orientation — to keep to the truth without excess or slackening, without drifting toward the wrongdoers even a little (11:113). The surah pairs this with the tenderness of 11:114: prayer at the day's edges, because 'good deeds drive away evil deeds.' Steadfastness is demanded, but the means of repair are kept always at hand.

Tawhid joined to istighfar. From its opening the surah couples the worship of Allah with seeking His forgiveness and turning back to Him (11:3, 11:52, 11:90). Hud tells 'Ad that if they seek forgiveness, the sky will pour rain upon them and add strength to their strength; Shu'ayb calls Midian to repent to a Lord who is Merciful and Loving, wadud (11:90). The surah's God is exacting in justice yet reachable in mercy, and the door of return is pressed on every people.

Justice that no one escapes and that wrongs no one. When the towns fall, the surah is emphatic: 'We did not wrong them, but they wronged themselves' (11:101). The two-group scene of the Last Day (11:106–108) makes the final sorting explicit and personal. Yet even here the surah guards the reader from despair — the happy are in the Garden as an uninterrupted gift, and difference among people is folded back into Allah's wider will and mercy (11:118–119).

Points of reflection

Hud asks us to read history morally rather than idly. The ruins of past nations are not curiosities; they are letters addressed to us, and the surah names them so that the believing heart may be made firm (11:120). To reflect on Hud is to see one's own choices inside the long pattern of accepting or refusing the truth.

Its central summons is to steadfastness that does not tilt. The world constantly invites small compromises with wrongdoing, and the surah warns that even a lean toward the unjust exposes us to the Fire (11:113). Yet it refuses to leave us anxious: prayer and good deeds are the daily washing away of failure (11:114), so that firmness and hope are held together.

Above all, Hud presses the union of worshipping Allah with constantly returning to Him. Nuh's ungrateful son and drowned neighbours, and Midian's cheaters at the scale, fell not because return was impossible but because they scorned it. The reader is left with the surah's steadying message: keep to the path as you were commanded, ask forgiveness often, and trust that the God who is severe in reckoning is also al-Wadud, the Loving.

FIVE

Carrying it

1. Renew your istiqamah daily — steadiness is the hardest and most beloved worship.
2. Answer every fall with prayer and a good deed rather than despair.
3. Root your reform of self and others in 'my success is only through Allah.'
4. Let certainty in Allah's provision free you from fear-driven compromise.

Where this reading draws from. Ibn Kathir, al-Sa'di, al-Qurtubi, al-Tabari. A summary is not a tafsir: for the verse-by-verse treatment go to the works themselves, or to the close studies at deen2u.com/tadabbur/.