

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Surah Ar-Ra'd

The Thunder · Madani · 43 ayat — reflections on surah
13 of the Qur'an

QURAN

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Surah Ar-Ra'd

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الرعد — Ar-Ra'd, "The Thunder". Surah 13 of 114, revealed in Madinah, 43 ayat. The full text and a recitation are on the web edition at deen2u.com/quran/13/.

ONE

The surah in brief

The signs of Allah in creation and revelation testify to His truth; hearts find rest in remembering Him, and the strong word of faith endures while falsehood withers away.

Ar-Ra'd — classed by most scholars as Makki, though some hold it Madani — argues for tawhid and the truth of revelation through the grandeur of the cosmos. Thunder itself glorifies Allah, mountains and rivers and the alternation of fruits testify to one ordering Lord, and He is presented as knowing what every womb carries and diminishes. It contrasts the firm truth with vanishing falsehood through the vivid image of floodwater carrying away froth while what benefits people remains in the earth. Its most cherished note is that hearts find their true rest only in the remembrance of Allah, and it honors those who keep His covenant and repel evil with good, whom the angels greet with 'peace' for their patience.

TWO

Its themes

- Signs in creation
- Truth versus falsehood
- Hearts at rest in remembrance
- Keeping the covenant
- Human responsibility and change
- Reward of the patient

THREE

Key verses

"Those who believe, and whose hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of Allah: for without doubt in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find satisfaction.

Qur'an 13:28

'Verily, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest' — the restlessness people chase away with everything else is only cured by dhikr. When anxiety rises, reflect that you are seeking peace in the wrong places until you turn to Him.

For each (such person) there are (angels) in succession, before and behind him: They guard him by command of Allah. Allah does not change a people's lot unless they change what is in their hearts. But when (once) Allah willeth a people's punishment, there can be no turning it back, nor will they find, besides Him, any to protect.

Qur'an 13:11

Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves — inner transformation precedes outer change. Reflect that reform begins with the state of your own heart and choices, not with waiting on circumstances.

He sends down water from the skies, and the channels flow, each according to its measure: But the torrent bears away to foam that mounts up to the surface. Even so, from that (ore) which they heat in the fire, to make ornaments or utensils therewith, there is a scum likewise. Thus doth Allah (by parables) show forth Truth and Vanity. For the scum disappears like forth cast out; while that which is for the good of mankind remains on the earth. Thus doth Allah set forth parables.

Qur'an 13:17

Truth and falsehood are likened to water and the froth it carries: the froth vanishes, but what benefits people stays in the earth. Reflect that falsehood can look impressive and dominant for a while, yet only the beneficial endures.

"Peace unto you for that ye persevered in patience! Now how excellent is the final home!"

Qur'an 13:24

The angels greet the patient in Paradise with 'Peace be upon you for what you endured' — the reward is framed as a direct fruit of steadfastness. Let a hard, patient day now be reframed as an investment in that greeting.

FOUR

Reading it closely

Context and character

Ar-Ra'd, 'The Thunder,' is a surah whose place of revelation the scholars dispute. Some early authorities counted it Madani and others Makkan; much of its content — the argument for revelation and resurrection against demanding deniers — reads as thoroughly Meccan in spirit, while a number of commentators, including several relied upon in the tradition, took it as Madani. This introduction notes the difference honestly. What is not in doubt is its subject: the truth of the Qur'an, the reality of the Last Day, and the signs of Allah written across the heavens and the earth.

It takes its name from a striking verse in which the thunder itself glorifies Allah with His praise, as do the angels out of awe (13:13). That image sets the surah's mood — the whole cosmos is a worshipping, testifying order, and only the human being, given the choice, hangs back in denial. The character of the chapter is contemplative and evidentiary, moving between the vast signs of nature and the inner state of the heart.

The commentators note that Ar-Ra'd answers a recurring Meccan demand: the disbelievers kept asking why no miraculous sign was sent to compel them. The surah's reply is that signs are everywhere for those willing to see, that compelled belief was never Allah's way, and that the Prophet's task is only to convey (13:7, 13:40).

How the surah unfolds

It opens by affirming that what is revealed is the truth, though most people will not believe, and then turns at once to the heavens raised without pillars you can see, the sun and moon in their courses, the earth spread out with its mountains and rivers, and the diversity of fruits and crops watered by one rain yet made to differ — all of it, it says, holds signs for people who reflect (13:2–4). Against this backdrop the deniers' mockery of resurrection looks small: the God who does all this can surely raise the dead (13:5).

The surah then describes Allah's total knowledge and oversight — He knows what every female carries and what the wombs gain or lose, He is equally near to the one who hides his speech and the one who proclaims it, and each person is attended by angels who guard him by Allah's command (13:8–11). Here comes the surah's most quoted principle: 'Allah does not change the state of a people until they change what is in themselves' (13:11). The thunder and lightning follow, glorifying their Maker while He sends the thunderbolts (13:12–13).

A powerful parable marks the surah's centre: truth and falsehood are like a flood that carries a swelling scum on its surface, or the froth that rises from smelted metal — the froth is thrown away as worthless while what benefits people remains in the earth (13:17). So it is with the deniers and the believers. The surah then draws the portrait of the people of understanding, *ulu al-albab*, who keep Allah's covenant, join what He commanded to be joined, fear their Lord, are patient seeking

His face, establish prayer, spend in secret and openly, and repel evil with good — for them is the good end, gardens they enter with the righteous of their kin, greeted by angels (13:19–24).

The closing movement returns to the deniers' demand for signs and their unrest. It answers that only in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest (13:28), that even a Qur'an that could move mountains would not compel those unwilling to believe (13:31), and that the Prophet is sent only to deliver the message while the reckoning is Allah's (13:40). It ends by contrasting the shrinking domain of falsehood with the sufficiency of Allah as witness between the Prophet and those who deny him (13:41–43).

The major themes, in depth

Creation as unanswerable evidence. The surah's reply to every demand for a miracle is to point at the standing miracle of the world — pillarless skies, ordered sun and moon, one water yielding many different fruits, day folded into night. Al-Sa'di notes that these signs are addressed to 'people who reflect,' 'people who reason,' 'people who know': the evidence is objective, but only the engaged mind draws the conclusion. Resurrection, the surah argues, is the easy sequel to a creation this vast.

The heart at rest in remembrance. Ar-Ra'd diagnoses the deep human restlessness that no argument alone can cure and names its only remedy: 'Verily, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest' (13:28). The commentators read this as the surah's spiritual heart — that the same God whose signs fill the

horizons is also the One in whose dhikr the anxious soul finally settles. Knowledge convinces the mind; remembrance steadies the heart.

Weighing the froth against what lasts. The parable of the flood-scum and the metal-froth (13:17) is the surah's method for teaching discernment. Falsehood can look large and loud, riding on the surface, while truth seems quiet and low; but the froth is discarded and what benefits people abides. The surah trains the reader not to be dazzled by the volume or prominence of what is false, and to measure things by what endures and helps.

Human responsibility for change. The principle that Allah does not change a people's condition until they change themselves (13:11) sits at the surah's core as a charter of moral agency. Read in context it cuts both ways — Allah withdraws favour from those who corrupt their inner state, and grants transformation to those who reform it. The commentators are careful that this does not deny Allah's decree; rather it makes the inner life of a community the arena in which Allah's decree of blessing or loss plays out.

Points of reflection

The surah invites us to walk through the world as through a gallery of signs — to let the rain, the mountains, the alternation of night and day, even the thunder overhead, speak of their Maker. Faith here is not asked to leap in the dark; it is asked to look honestly at what is already before it and follow the evidence to the One who deserves worship.

When the heart grows restless — and the surah assumes it will — Ar-Ra'd points to a single refuge. Not distraction, not the noise of the world, but the remembrance of Allah is what steadies the soul (13:28). The reflective reader learns to return there first, and to test the froth of the age against what actually lasts and benefits.

And it hands us responsibility for our own change (13:11). Rather than waiting for our circumstances to shift, we are told to work on what is within — the covenant kept, the tie maintained, the patience for Allah's sake, the evil repelled with good (13:20-22). Those are the marks of the *ulu al-albab*, and to them the angels say at every gate: peace be upon you for your patience; how excellent is the final home (13:24).

FIVE

Carrying it

1. When restless, return to remembrance — no other refuge steadies the heart.
2. Own your part in change: work on yourself before expecting your situation to shift.
3. Do not be dazzled by the froth; weigh things by what lasts and benefits.
4. Repel evil with good and hold to your covenant, trusting the angels' welcome of the patient.

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/.