

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Surah Al-Hijr

The Rocky Tract · Makki · 99 ayat — reflections on
surah 15 of the Qur'an

QURAN

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Surah Al-Hijr

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الحجر — Al-Hijr, “The Rocky Tract”. Surah 15 of 114, revealed in Makkah, 99 ayat. The full text and a recitation are on the web edition at deen2u.com/quran/15/.

ONE

The surah in brief

Assurance that Allah Himself guards His revelation and will requite the mockers, drawing on the fate of past peoples and the story of Iblis's refusal to warn against arrogance.

Al-Hijr is a Makki surah of consolation to the Prophet amid Meccan mockery, reassuring him that the same denial met earlier peoples and the same divine order will prevail. It contains the ringing guarantee that Allah Himself has sent down the Reminder and will preserve it. It revisits the honoring of Adam and the arrogant refusal and reprieve of Iblis, then the guests who brought Ibrahim glad tidings and warned Lut, and the ruin of the deniers of al-Hijr (Thamud). Balancing awe and hope, it announces that Allah is both the Forgiving and the source of a painful punishment, and it steadies the Prophet: lower your wing to the believers, glorify your Lord, and worship Him until certainty comes.

TWO

Its themes

- Preservation of the Qur'an
- Consolation amid rejection
- Iblis's arrogance
- Mercy paired with warning
- Worship until death
- Lessons of past peoples

THREE

Key verses

We have, without doubt, sent down the Message; and We will assuredly guard it (from corruption).

Qur'an 15:9

'Indeed, We sent down the Reminder, and indeed We will guard it' — the Qur'an's preservation is Allah's own undertaking, not a human achievement. Reflect that the book you recite is the same one revealed, kept intact by divine promise.

And serve thy Lord until there come unto thee the Hour that is Certain.

Qur'an 15:99

'And worship your Lord until the certainty (death) comes to you' — devotion has no retirement; it continues to the last breath. Reflect that no station of piety exempts you from ongoing worship.

Strain not thine eyes. (Wistfully) at what We have bestowed on certain classes of them, nor grieve over them: but lower thy wing (in gentleness) to the believers.

Qur'an 15:88

'Do not strain your eyes toward what We have given some to enjoy, and lower your wing to the believers' — turn from envy of the comfortable toward gentleness with the faithful. Reflect on where your longing gaze is fixed, and redirect it.

Tell My servants that I am indeed the Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful;

Qur'an 15:49

'Inform My servants that I am the Forgiving, the Merciful — and that My punishment is the painful punishment' — the two named together to keep hope and fear in balance. Hold both truths so mercy never becomes presumption nor fear becomes despair.

FOUR

Reading it closely

Context and character

Al-Hijr is a Makkan surah, the last of the Alif-Lam-Ra sequence, revealed in a period when the Prophet ﷺ was weighed down by the mockery and rejection of his people. Much of its purpose is consolation — to steady the Messenger and, through him, the believers — and it does this by combining stern warnings to the deniers with vivid reassurance that Allah is in full command of the message and its outcome.

It takes its name from al-Hijr, the rocky region in northern Arabia that was home to the people of Thamud, whose ruined dwellings the Arabs knew well and whose story the surah recalls (15:80–84). The chapter's mood swings between grandeur and intimacy: it speaks of the mighty gates of heaven, the guarded stars, the creation of Adam and the fall of Iblis, the doomed towns — and then turns to lay a gentle hand on the Prophet's grieving chest.

Among its most celebrated features is its opening pledge concerning the Qur'an itself, and its closing counsel of worship and patience. The commentators read al-Hijr as a surah built to fortify: it shows the deniers that they follow a long line of the destroyed, and it shows the believer that the One who guards the Reminder also guards those who carry it.

How the surah unfolds

It opens by imagining the deniers' future regret — a day when those who disbelieved will wish they had been Muslims (15:2) — and tells the Prophet to leave them to their eating and hoping and heedlessness, for they will come to know (15:3). Then comes the surah's landmark declaration: 'Indeed, it is We who sent down the Reminder, and indeed, We will be its guardian' (15:9), a direct answer to their sneer that the man they call possessed should bring them angels if he is truthful (15:6–8).

The surah then lifts the gaze to the heavens: Allah has set constellations in the sky and made them beautiful, and guarded them from every outcast devil who tries to eavesdrop, chased by a piercing flame (15:16–18). It descends to the earth spread out, its firm mountains, its balanced growth, and the provision granted to all creatures, with the reminder that the treasures of everything are with Allah, sent down only in known measure (15:19–21). Life and death, the first people and the last, are all gathered in His knowledge (15:23–25).

The chapter's long central narrative is the creation of Adam from dried clay and the refusal of Iblis to prostrate — his arrogance, his expulsion, his request for respite, and his vow to mislead the children of Adam, answered by Allah's assurance that over His sincere servants Iblis will have no power (15:26–44). Paradise is described for the God-fearing, brothers on couches with all rancour removed from their breasts, and Allah tells the Prophet to inform His servants that He is the Forgiving, the Merciful, and that His punishment is the painful one — mercy and warning held in one breath (15:45–50).

Then two linked stories: the honoured guests of Ibrahim who bring news of a learned son and of their mission to Lut's people, and the destruction of those people at dawn while Lut and his family are saved but for his wife (15:51-77). The people of the Wood and the people of al-Hijr follow, the latter, Thamud, carved secure homes into the mountains and were seized by the blast one morning, their labour of no avail (15:78-84). The surah ends by turning fully to the Prophet: he has been given 'the seven oft-repeated and the great Qur'an' (15:87), so he should not stretch his eyes toward the fleeting comforts of the deniers, lower his wing to the believers, and proclaim the truth openly (15:87-94). Allah promises to suffice him against the mockers (15:95), and closes with the surah's tender prescription: when your chest is straitened by what they say, glorify and praise your Lord, be among those who prostrate, and worship your Lord until the certainty — death — comes to you (15:97-99).

The major themes, in depth

The divine guarantee of the Qur'an. The pledge of 15:9 — that Allah Himself sent down the Reminder and will guard it — is the surah's most far-reaching claim and its deepest consolation. The commentators read it as a promise that this revelation will be protected from loss, corruption, and distortion until the end of time, a protection history has borne out in the Qur'an's uninterrupted preservation. For a Prophet surrounded by those who wished to silence him, and for every later believer, it means the message is not left to the mercy of its enemies; its Author is its guardian.

The arrogance of Iblis and the safety of the sincere. The Adam-and-Iblis account (15:26-44) diagnoses the root of evil as arrogance — Iblis judged his fiery origin superior to Adam's clay and refused the command. His declared strategy is to make wrongdoing seem beautiful and so lead people astray, yet Allah draws a bright line: 'over My servants you have no authority, except those who follow you' (15:42). The surah teaches that Satan's power is persuasion, not compulsion, and that sincere devotion is the shelter he cannot breach.

Mercy and warning as inseparable partners. Al-Hijr deliberately keeps hope and fear in balance. Allah tells the Prophet to announce that He is the Oft-Forgiving, the Merciful — and in the same breath that His punishment is the most painful (15:49-50). The gardens with every grudge removed from the believers' hearts (15:47) sit beside the dawn-blast that levelled the people of al-Hijr (15:83). The surah refuses both despair and false security, holding the servant between the two so that he neither presumes nor gives up.

The gift that outweighs the world. Near its close the surah reminds the Prophet that he has been given 'the seven oft-repeated and the great Qur'an' (15:87) — understood by many commentators, on the strength of a hadith, as Surat al-Fatiha, and by others as the seven long surahs. This gift is set against the passing luxuries Allah lets the deniers enjoy, and the Prophet is told not to strain his eyes toward those comforts (15:88). The lesson is one of true wealth: to possess the revelation and nearness to Allah is to possess what makes worldly glitter irrelevant.

Points of reflection

Al-Hijr offers a settled confidence to anyone who fears for the truth in a hostile age. The One who revealed the Reminder has taken its guardianship upon Himself (15:9); the believer's task is to hold to it and convey it, not to carry the impossible weight of its survival. That promise turns anxiety into trust.

It also exposes the mechanics of temptation. Iblis works by making sin attractive, but he cannot force a single soul (15:42); the guarded ones are those made sincere. The reflective reader learns to see the beautifying of wrong for what it is, and to seek the sincerity that is Satan's undoing — while remembering that arrogance, the sin that felled Iblis, is the beginning of every fall.

Most movingly, the surah gives a remedy for a heart heavy with the world's cruelty. When the chest tightens under what people say, the answer is not despair but worship: glorify your Lord, join those who prostrate, and keep worshipping until certainty comes (15:97-99). To live by al-Hijr is to meet grief with prostration, to prize the Qur'an above every passing comfort, and to steady oneself in the sure protection of Allah.

FIVE

Carrying it

1. Trust the Qur'an's integrity — its preservation is Allah's own promise.
2. Keep worshipping to the end; there is no graduation from servitude.
3. Stop measuring yourself against others' worldly comforts; be tender with the believers.
4. Hold Allah's forgiveness and His justice together, letting neither collapse.

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/.