

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Surah As-Sajdah

The Prostration · Makki · 30 ayat — reflections on
surah 32 of the Qur'an

QURAN

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Surah As-Sajdah

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السجدة — As-Sajdah, "The Prostration". Surah 32 of 114, revealed in Makkah, 30 ayat. The full text and a recitation are on the web edition at deen2u.com/quran/32/.

ONE

The surah in brief

A concise Makkan surah affirming that the Qur'an is truth from the Lord of the worlds, contrasting the believers who fall in prostration and rise for night prayer with the heedless, and confirming creation, Resurrection, and reward.

As-Sajdah affirms the truth of the revelation and the Creator who fashioned the human being, breathing into him of His spirit and granting hearing, sight, and hearts (32:9). It answers those who deny resurrection — who ask how they can be remade once lost in the earth — by pointing to the God who manages all affairs from heaven to earth. The surah then draws a sharp contrast: the deniers who prefer the near punishment are set against believers whose sides forsake their beds to call upon their Lord in hope and fear, spending from what He gave (32:15–16), for whom is a reward no soul has ever conceived (32:17). Al-Sa'di reads the surah as moving from the proofs of God's creating and reviving to the night-worship that marks those who truly believe them.

TWO

Its themes

- Truth of the revelation
- Creation and the human spirit
- Denial and affirmation of resurrection
- Night worship of the believers
- A hidden, unimaginable reward

THREE

Key verses

But He fashioned him in due proportion, and breathed into him something of His spirit. And He gave you (the faculties of) hearing and sight and feeling (and understanding): little thanks do ye give!

Qur'an 32:9

God 'fashioned him and breathed into him of His spirit, and gave you hearing, sight, and hearts' — Ibn Kathir notes the faculties are named precisely because so few use them in gratitude.

Their limbs do forsake their beds of sleep, the while they call on their Lord, in Fear and Hope: and they spend (in charity) out of the sustenance which We have bestowed on them.

Qur'an 32:16

'Their sides part from their beds, calling their Lord in fear and hope' — al-Qurtubi reads this as the portrait of those who trade the ease of sleep for nearness to God at night.

Now no person knows what delights of the eye are kept hidden (in reserve) for them – as a reward for their (good) deeds.

Qur'an 32:17

'No soul knows what comfort is hidden for them' — the mufasssirun cite the hadith qudsi of what 'no eye has seen,' making the reward beyond all imagining.

Is then the man who believes no better than the man who is rebellious and wicked? Not equal are they.

Qur'an 32:18

'Is one who is a believer like one who is defiantly disobedient? They are not equal' — al-Sa'di stresses the two are separated forever by their response to the same signs.

FOUR

Reading it closely

Context & character

As-Sajdah, 'The Prostration,' is a Makkan surah of thirty verses, compact and thematically tight. Its three great subjects are the ones the Makkan Qur'an returns to again and again: the truth of the revelation, the oneness and creative power of God, and the certainty of resurrection. It takes its name from verse 15, at which the reader is recommended to make a prostration of recitation — a fitting name, since the surah's emotional centre is the image of true believers falling down in worship before their Lord.

There is an authentic report, in the collections of al-Bukhari and Muslim, that the Prophet ﷺ used to recite Surah as-Sajdah together with Surah al-Insan in the Fajr prayer of Friday. The scholars explain that this was not accidental: both surahs speak of creation, resurrection, and the accounting to come, so the community would begin its weekly gathering by recalling where it came from and where it is going. The surah's mood is grave and searching, yet it holds out warmth for the worshippers who rise in the night, whom it describes with unmistakable affection.

How the surah unfolds

It opens by settling the question of the Book's source: this is the revelation, in which there is no doubt, from the Lord of all the worlds (32:1–2). Do they say Muhammad invented it? No — it is the truth from your Lord, sent so you may warn a people to whom no warner had come, that they might be guided (32:3).

The surah then grounds this in God's lordship over creation: He created the heavens and earth and all between in six days, then rose over the Throne (istawa 'ala al-'arsh), and beside Him there is no protector or intercessor (32:4). His command descends and ascends through the cosmos on a scale of time that dwarfs human reckoning (32:5). He is the Knower of the unseen and the seen, the Mighty, the Merciful.

From the vastness of the heavens the surah zooms in to the making of a single human being (32:7–9), and this is one of its most beautiful passages. He who made everything well began the creation of man from clay; then made his descendants from an extract of despised fluid; then proportioned him and breathed into him of His spirit; and gave you hearing, sight, and hearts — yet little do you give thanks. The trajectory from lowly clay and a drop of fluid to a being endowed with the divine spirit and the faculties of perception is meant to overwhelm any doubt about resurrection.

That doubt is voiced next: they say, when we are lost in the earth, shall we really be created anew? (32:10). The surah answers not with argument alone but with the angel of death, who will take each soul in full, and with a scene from the Day itself: the criminals hanging their heads before their Lord, pleading 'Now we see and hear, so send us back that we may do good — we are now certain' (32:12). But the time for return is past.

The surah's moral heart follows in the contrast between the disobedient and the devout. The one who was a believer is not equal to the one who was a defiant sinner (32:18). And then the

celebrated portrait of the night worshippers: their sides forsake their beds, calling on their Lord in fear and hope, and spending from what He gave them; no soul knows what comfort is kept hidden for them as a reward for what they used to do (32:16–17). This is the verse the surah is, in spirit, built around.

Toward the end it draws on history and nature for confirmation. It recalls that God gave Musa the Book — so the Prophet should not be in doubt about receiving revelation, for this is God's consistent way (32:23–25). It asks whether the destruction of past generations, whose ruins the deniers walk among, teaches them nothing (32:26). And it offers a sign they see with their own eyes: God drives water to barren land and brings forth crops from which they and their cattle eat — the very picture of the dead earth revived, and so of the resurrection (32:27). Finally the deniers taunt, 'When is this victory, if you are truthful?' and the surah answers that on the Day of victory their faith will not help them; so turn away and wait — they too are waiting (32:28–30).

The major themes, in depth

From clay to the breathed spirit: the argument for resurrection. The surah's strategy against the deniers of the Hereafter is to make them look honestly at their own origin. A human being is assembled in stages from the humblest materials — clay, then a despised drop — and yet becomes a creature of intellect, sight, hearing, and a soul touched by God's own spirit. If God can do this the first time from almost nothing, the claim that He cannot reassemble scattered dust is exposed as absurd. Ibn Kathir and al-Sādi both stress that the surah pairs this with the sign of the

reviving rain (32:27): the God who greens a dead valley every spring is telling you plainly what He will do with the dead. The resurrection is not a strange new act but the completion of a pattern already before your eyes.

The two kinds of people, and the worship of the night. The surah is built on a sharp moral asymmetry: the believer and the fasiq are simply not equal, in this life or the next. It then shows us what the believer actually looks like, and remarkably it does not choose the battlefield or the marketplace but the bedroom in the dark — the moment when a person pulls away from the warmth of sleep to stand before God in fear and hope. This is faith at its most private and least performative, and it is precisely here that the surah locates the highest reward, a joy so great that 'no soul knows' what is hidden for them. The lesson is that the measure of a heart is what it does when no one is watching.

Revelation as God's settled way. Against the accusation that the Qur'an is Muhammad's invention, the surah repeatedly points to precedent: God sent the Book to Musa before; He raised leaders from among the Children of Israel who guided by His command when they were patient and certain (32:24).

Prophethood and scripture are nothing new or suspicious; they are how God has always dealt with humanity. The Prophet ﷺ is therefore told to have no doubt about the meeting with his Lord and no doubt about what he has received — he stands in a long, unbroken line.

Points of reflection

As-Sajdah invites us to answer its central question in the only time we can — now, in this life — rather than in the moment described in verse 12, when the deniers finally see and hear and beg to be sent back, only to be told it is too late. The whole surah is a plea to gain certainty before certainty is forced upon us.

Its portrait of the night worshippers is a quiet summons. The surah does not ask for the impossible; it praises those who leave their beds to whisper to their Lord 'in fear and hope' and who give from what they have. It holds out a reward beyond imagining for a deed most people could begin tonight. To be among 'those whose sides forsake their beds' is offered as one of the surest signs of living faith.

And the surah teaches us to read the world as a book of signs. The green shoot rising from dead soil, the child assembled from a drop, the ruins of vanished nations — each is a sermon on the God who creates, revives, and calls to account. The one who learns to see creation this way lives in a world thick with meaning and moves, as the surah's name urges, naturally toward prostration.

FIVE

Carrying it

1. The senses and heart are gifts meant to be turned toward gratitude and faith.
2. A mark of living faith is leaving the warmth of the bed to call upon God.
3. The best of the reward is hidden precisely because no mind could picture it.
4. Belief and defiant rejection are never equal, however alike people look.

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/.