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Surah Al-Fath

The Victory · Madani · 29 ayat — reflections on surah
48 of the Qur'an

QURAN

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الفتح — Al-Fath, “The Victory”. Surah 48 of 114, revealed in Madinah, 29 ayat. The full text and a recitation are on the web edition at deen2u.com/quran/48/.

ONE

The surah in brief

The treaty of Hdaybiyyah is declared a 'clear victory' and Allah's favor upon the Prophet and believers. The surah praises those who gave the pledge under the tree, foretells conquests and reward, and describes the Muslims as firm against deniers yet merciful among themselves.

Al-Fath was revealed over the Treaty of Hdaybiyyah, calling what seemed a setback 'a clear victory' (48:1) — and history bore it out as the opening that led to Mecca. It speaks of Allah sending tranquility (sakinah) into believers' hearts so their faith deepened (48:4), and of the Pledge of Ridwan under the tree, where the hand of Allah was said to be above their hands (48:10, 18). It confirms the Prophet's true dream of entering the Sacred Mosque in safety (48:27) and closes with the luminous portrait of Muhammad and his companions foretold in the Torah and Gospel (48:29).

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 48:1

At al-Hudaybiya, 'Umar objected to the peace terms and questioned the Prophet and then Abu Bakr. Surat al-Fath was then revealed; the Prophet recited it to 'Umar, who asked whether the treaty was a victory, and the Prophet said yes.

"Then Surat-al-Fath (i.e. Victory) was revealed and Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) recited it to the end in front of 'Umar."

Sahl ibn Hunayf · Sahih al-Bukhari 3182

Qur'an 48:5

When 48:1 was revealed about al-Hudaybiya, the companions congratulated the Prophet and asked what reward they would receive. Allah revealed that He would admit the believing men and women to gardens beneath which rivers flow.

"Congratulations and happiness for you; but what reward shall we get?" So Allah revealed"

Anas ibn Malik · Sahih al-Bukhari 4172

Qur'an 48:24

After the Hudaibiya truce, Abu Basir and other Makkan converts who were barred from Madinah harried Quraysh's caravans. Quraysh begged the Prophet to take them in, and Allah revealed 48:24-26.

"So the Prophet (ﷺ) sent for them (i.e. Abu Basir's companions) and Allah revealed the following Divine Verses"

Al-Miswar ibn Makhrama and Marwan · Sahih al-Bukhari 2731

TWO

Its themes

- Victory through apparent setback
- Tranquility (sakinah)
- The Pledge of Ridwan
- Forgiveness for the Prophet
- The true vision fulfilled
- The companions' description

THREE

Key verses

Verily We have granted thee a manifest Victory:

Qur'an 48:1

Calling the truce a 'clear victory' reframed the companions' disappointment; Ibn Kathir records that the peace opened hearts and roads so that more entered Islam in its two years than in all the time before.

It is He Who sent down tranquillity into the hearts of the Believers, that they may add faith to their faith;- for to Allah belong the Forces of the heavens and the earth; and Allah is Full of Knowledge and Wisdom;-

Qur'an 48:4

Allah 'sent down tranquility into the hearts of the believers to increase them in faith' — al-Sa'di notes that sakinah is a gift that steadies the soul precisely when circumstances shake it.

Verily those who plight their fealty to thee do no less than plight their fealty to Allah: the Hand of Allah is over their hands: then any one who violates his oath, does so to the harm of his own soul, and any one who fulfils what he has covenanted with Allah,- Allah will soon grant him a great Reward.

Qur'an 48:10

'The hand of Allah is over their hands' at the pledge affirms that a covenant with the Messenger is a covenant with Allah; al-Tabari reads the honor and the accountability together.

Muhammad is the messenger of Allah; and those who are with him are strong against Unbelievers, (but) compassionate amongst each other. Thou wilt see them bow and prostrate themselves (in prayer), seeking Grace from Allah and (His) Good Pleasure. On their faces are their marks, (being) the traces of their prostration. This is their similitude in the Taurat; and their similitude in the Gospel is: like a seed which sends forth its blade, then makes it strong; it then becomes thick, and it stands on its own stem, (filling) the sowers with wonder and delight. As a result, it fills the Unbelievers with rage at them. Allah has promised those among them who believe and do righteous deeds forgiveness, and a great Reward.

Qur'an 48:29

The believers 'merciful among themselves, severe against deniers,' bowing and prostrating, are described as a seed that grows strong and impresses the sower — al-Qurtubi sees in it both their present bond and their promised increase.

FOUR

Reading it closely

Context & character

Al-Fath — “The Victory” — is a Madinan surah revealed in the sixth year after the Hijra, on the return from Hdaybiyyah. The Prophet ﷺ had set out with his Companions to perform ‘umrah, only to be barred from Makka and drawn into a treaty whose terms seemed, on the surface, to favor Quraysh — even requiring the believers to turn back that year unfulfilled. Many Companions were dismayed. Then this surah descended, opening with the astonishing words that God had granted His Messenger a “clear victory” (48:1). The Prophet ﷺ said a surah had been revealed dearer to him than all that the sun rises upon (recorded in al-Bukhari).

Its character is one of reassurance and reframing. It teaches the community to read events by God’s scale rather than appearances: what looked like a humiliating setback was in truth the opening — fath — through which Islam would spread, culminating within two years in the peaceful conquest of Makka. The surah is suffused with the word *sakinah*, the divine tranquility God sends down into believing hearts at moments of tension, and it honors the pledge the Companions gave under a tree, the Bay’at ar-Ridwan, with God’s explicit pleasure.

The surah moves between three groups: the loyal believers whom God rewards, the Bedouins who stayed behind and made excuses, and the pagans whose zealotry God restrained — and

it ends with a luminous portrait of the Prophet ﷺ and his Companions that is itself a kind of victory foretold.

How the surah unfolds

It opens by naming the treaty a clear victory, and by unfolding what God grants through it: forgiveness of the Prophet's past and future faults, the completion of His favor upon him, guidance on a straight path, and mighty help (48:1-3). Then the key gift to the community — He sent down sakinah, tranquility, into the hearts of the believers so that their faith would grow alongside the faith they already had, for to God belong the armies of the heavens and the earth (48:4). This will bring the believers into gardens, while it exposes and punishes the hypocrites and pagans who thought evil of God, harboring the “assumption of ignorance” that He would abandon His Messenger (48:5-6).

The Prophet ﷺ is described as a witness, a bearer of glad tidings, and a warner (48:8), and the pledge of allegiance is honored: those who pledge to you pledge in truth to God; God's hand is above their hands, and whoever fulfills his covenant with God will be given a great reward (48:10). The surah then turns to the Bedouins who stayed behind from the journey, offering their property and families as excuse, and it names their real reason — they had thought the believers would never return alive (48:11-12). They will beg to share in the coming spoils of Khaybar, but are told they may not, and are instead summoned to a future call against a people of great might, where obedience will redeem them (48:15-16).

At the surah's heart stands the Pledge of Good Pleasure (48:18–19): God was well pleased with the believers when they pledged themselves to the Prophet ﷺ beneath the tree; He knew what was in their hearts, sent down tranquility upon them, and rewarded them with a near victory and much spoils to follow. God reminds them He restrained the hands of their enemies from them, and theirs from the enemy, within the valley of Makka after giving them the upper hand (48:24) — the peace itself was His doing. And He reveals a hidden mercy in the treaty: there were believing men and women in Makka, unknown to the army, whom the believers might have trampled unwittingly had fighting broken out (48:25).

The surah then contrasts two hearts under pressure. When the disbelievers filled their breasts with the fierce pride of ignorance (hamiyyat al-jahiliyyah) at Hdaybiyyah, God sent down His tranquility upon His Messenger and the believers and bound them to the word of God-consciousness, of which they were most worthy (48:26). It confirms the true vision the Prophet ﷺ had seen — that they would enter the Sacred Mosque in security — and declares the deeper purpose: God sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth to make it prevail over all religion (48:27–28).

It closes with the celebrated portrait (48:29): Muhammad is the Messenger of God, and those with him are firm against the disbelievers yet merciful among themselves; you see them bowing and prostrating, seeking God's bounty and pleasure, their mark upon their faces from the traces of prostration. Such is their likeness in the Torah, and in the Gospel they are like a seed that puts forth its shoot, then strengthens it, so it grows

thick and stands firm upon its stalk, delighting the sowers — that through them He may enrage the disbelievers. God has promised those of them who believe and do good forgiveness and a great reward.

The major themes, in depth

The central theme is victory redefined. The surah takes an event the Companions experienced as a defeat and renames it the clearest of openings. Ibn Kathir gathers the reports showing how Hudaybiyyah proved to be exactly that: the truce created a space in which people met the Muslims, heard the message, and entered Islam in numbers greater than in all the years before, so that the peaceful conquest of Makka followed within two years. The surah thus teaches a way of reading history — that God's definition of success may run opposite to appearances, and that patience with a bitter outcome can be the seed of the greatest good. This is perhaps the surah's most enduring gift: trust in God's judgment when our own recoils.

A second theme is *sakinah* — the tranquility God sends down. Three times the surah returns to it (48:4, 48:18, 48:26), each time at a moment of maximum strain: when faith needed to grow, when the pledge was given, and when the enemy's pride might have provoked a ruinous clash. Al-Sa'di describes *sakinah* as a stillness and firmness God places in the heart so that fear and agitation give way to steadiness. The surah presents it as the inner counterpart of the outer victory — indeed as the greater gift, since God's help begins by settling the hearts of His servants before it settles their affairs.

A third theme is the pledge and God's good pleasure (48:10, 48:18). In the Bay'at ar-Ridwan, the Companions pledged not to flee under a tree at Hudaybiyyah, and the surah records that God was pleased with them and knew the sincerity in their hearts. That God's hand is described as "above their hands" (48:10) elevates a human oath into a covenant with God Himself. This passage became a lasting honor for those Companions in Sunni tradition, and a model of loyalty: a commitment made to God's Messenger is a commitment made to God, carrying both the weight and the reward of a divine covenant.

A fourth theme is the portrait of the ideal community (48:29). The closing verse paints the Companions in a single, balanced image — severe toward hostility yet tender among themselves, absorbed in worship until prostration leaves its mark, likened in the Gospel to a crop that begins as a slender shoot and grows into a strong, thick-standing field that gladdens the one who planted it and galls those who wished it would fail. The image is both descriptive and prophetic: a small, embattled band would grow, by God's nurture, into a mighty community. It also sets the standard by which every later generation may measure itself — firmness and mercy held together, and lives visibly shaped by worship.

Points of reflection

The surah teaches us to trust God's reading of events over our own. What the Companions met with dismay, God called a clear victory — and history proved Him right. When our plans are

thwarted and the outcome tastes like loss, al-Fath invites us to withhold judgment, for the opening God intends may lie hidden inside the very setback we resent.

Its repeated gift of sakinah reorders where we look for help. Before He changes our circumstances, God can steady our hearts — and that inner calm is itself His aid. The surah encourages us to seek, in seasons of fear and pressure, the tranquility that He alone sends down, and to recognize it as a sign of His nearness rather than to demand that the pressure first disappear.

And its closing portrait sets a template for the community and the self: to be firm where the truth must be defended and gentle within the household of faith, and to let a life of worship leave its mark on us. The image of the growing crop is an encouragement to every small beginning made for God's sake — nurtured by Him, it can grow strong beyond all expectation.

FIVE

Carrying it

1. What looks like a loss may be the door to a greater opening — trust the plan.
2. Seek and recognize sakinah: God-given calm that grows faith under pressure.
3. A pledge to uphold the truth is weightier than it feels; keep it.
4. Strive to embody the described community — merciful within, firm in principle.

Where this reading draws from. Ibn Kathir, al-Tabari, al-Sa'di, al-Qurtubi. 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/.