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Surah Al-Qiyamah

The Resurrection · Makki · 40 ayat — reflections on
surah 75 of the Qur'an

QURAN

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September 2026 · v1.305.2

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القيامة — Al-Qiyamah, “The Resurrection”. Surah 75 of 114, revealed in Makkah, 40 ayat. The full text and a recitation are on the web edition at deen2u.com/quran/75/.

ONE

The surah in brief

Affirming the Resurrection that the deniers mock, the surah swears by the Day and the self-reproaching soul that God will reassemble even man's fingertips, portrays the dying moment and faces gazing at their Lord, and reminds that man was not created to be left aimless.

Al-Qiyamah opens with Allah swearing by the Day of Resurrection and by the self-reproaching soul, confronting the disbeliever who imagines his scattered bones can never be reassembled, with the reply that Allah is able even to restore the very tips of his fingers. It shows man as one who wishes to sin freely while asking, in mockery, when the Day of Resurrection will be, then paints that Day: sight dazzled, moon eclipsed, sun and moon joined, and nowhere to flee but to the Lord. A short aside instructs the Prophet not to rush his tongue to capture the revelation, for its gathering and recitation are Allah's charge. The surah ends at the deathbed, the soul reaching the throat while family look on helplessly, and asks whether man truly thought he would be left without purpose or reckoning.

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 75:16-19

The Prophet found revelation hard to bear and moved his lips quickly to memorise it as it came. Allah revealed "Move not your tongue concerning it to make haste therewith," promising to collect it in his heart; afterwards he listened to Gabriel and recited once Gabriel had left.

"So Allah revealed 'Move not your tongue concerning (the Qur'an) to make haste therewith.'"

Ibn 'Abbas (via Sa'id ibn Jubair) · Sahih al-Bukhari 5

TWO

Its themes

- Certainty of resurrection
- The self-reproaching soul
- Man's love of postponement
- Faces radiant or gloomy
- The moment of death
- Life is not purposeless

THREE

Key verses

And I do call to witness the self-reproaching spirit: (Eschew Evil).

Qur'an 75:2

And I swear by the self-reproaching soul (al-nafs al-lawwama). Al-Qurtubi describes this as the conscience that blames itself for wrongs and shortcomings, a sign of a living faith.

Nay, We are able to put together in perfect order the very tips of his fingers.

Qur'an 75:4

Yes, We are able to restore even the tips of his fingers. Ibn Kathir marvels that Allah points to the fingerprints, the finest detail of a person, as proof of His power to recreate.

Move not thy tongue concerning the (Qur'an) to make haste therewith.

Qur'an 75:16

Do not move your tongue with it to hasten it; upon Us is its collection and recitation. The Prophet was eased of his anxiety to memorize revelation, assured Allah would preserve it for him.

Some faces, that Day, will beam (in brightness and beauty);-

Qur'an 75:22

Faces that Day will be radiant, looking toward their Lord. Ahl al-Sunna take this, as Ibn Kathir affirms, as the believers' vision of Allah in Paradise, the greatest of its delights.

Does man think that he will be left uncontrolled, (without purpose)?

Qur'an 75:36

Does man think he will be left neglected, without purpose or command? The rhetorical question, al-Sa'di notes, overturns the illusion that life carries no accountability.

FOUR

Reading it closely

Context & character

Al-Qiyamah ("The Resurrection") is a Makkan surah given wholly to establishing the bodily raising of the dead — the very doctrine the Makkans found most absurd. It opens with two oaths, one of them by "the self-reproaching soul" (al-nafs al-lawwamah, 75:2), and takes as its target the sceptic who scoffs, "Does man think We will never reassemble his bones?" (75:3).

Its character is argumentative and vivid by turns. It reasons from creation to re-creation, paints the terror of the Day and the collapse of every excuse, pauses for a famous aside on how revelation itself is received, and closes with an unforgettable deathbed scene followed by a rhetorical question that lays the whole denial bare. Short verses drive a relentless, quickening rhythm, especially toward the end.

How the surah unfolds

After the twin oaths, the surah answers the sceptic head-on (75:3–6): yes, God is able not only to gather his bones but to reshape even his fingertips — the intricate, individuated tips of his fingers. The real motive behind the denial is exposed: "man wishes to go on sinning in the time ahead of him" (75:5).

Disbelief in resurrection is less an intellectual conclusion than a licence to keep sinning; he asks "When is the Day of Resurrection?" not to learn but to deflect.

Then the Day arrives in flashes (75:7-15): when the sight is dazzled, the moon eclipsed, the sun and moon joined together — that Day man cries, "Where is the escape?" No — there is no refuge; to your Lord alone is the settling place that Day. Man will be told all he sent ahead and all he left behind. Indeed, man will be a clear witness against himself, however many excuses he flings out.

Here the surah inserts its famous parenthesis on receiving revelation (75:16-19): "Do not move your tongue with it to hasten it. Upon Us is its gathering and its recitation; so when We recite it, follow its recitation; then upon Us is its clarification." The Prophet ﷺ, anxious not to forget the words as Gabriel delivered them, is reassured that God Himself guarantees the Qur'an's collection, recitation, and meaning — a striking promise of preservation set right inside a surah about the Reckoning.

The surah resumes its diagnosis (75:20-25): the trouble is that "you love the fleeting world and neglect the Hereafter." Then the two faces: some faces that Day are radiant, gazing upon their Lord — the verse (nazirah, 75:23) that the mainstream Sunni tradition reads as the beatific vision of God, the crowning bliss of Paradise — while other faces are scowling, sensing a back-breaking catastrophe about to fall.

The final movement is the deathbed itself (75:26-40), rendered in the present tense so the reader stands at the bedside. When the soul reaches the collarbones, and it is asked "Who can cure him?", and the dying one knows it is the parting, and shin is wound about shin — to your Lord that Day is the driving. For he neither believed nor prayed, but denied and turned away, and

went off to his people swaggering with pride. "Woe to you, then woe! Again, woe to you, then woe!" — a terrible refrain. The surah closes with the question that ties everything together: does man think he will be left purposeless? Was he not a mere drop of emitted fluid, then a clinging clot, which God created and proportioned, making from it the two sexes? "Is such a One not able to give life to the dead?" (75:40).

The major themes, in depth

The organising theme is the rational certainty of resurrection, argued from God's power over origins. The surah's whole logic is the argument from the first creation to the second: the One who fashioned a human being from a despised drop, who can reconstruct even the whorls of the fingertips, is plainly able to reassemble scattered bones (75:3–4, 37–40). It closes the case with a question rather than a statement — "Is He not able?" — because once the premise of the first creation is granted, denial of the second becomes self-evidently irrational. The surah also uncovers the psychology beneath the denial: "man wishes to keep sinning ahead of him" (75:5). The Reckoning is rejected not because it is unproven but because it is inconvenient.

A second theme is the soul as its own witness and judge. The two oaths at the opening — by the Resurrection and by the self-reproaching soul — link the outer Day to the inner conscience. "Rather, man is a clear witness against himself, even if he presents his excuses" (75:14–15). On that Day the person needs no external accuser; his own faculties and memory testify. This dignifies the human conscience (lawwamah, the soul that

blames itself for wrong) as a present foretaste of the final honesty, and warns that self-justifying excuses will collapse before self-knowledge.

A third theme, unique to this surah, is the guaranteed preservation of the Qur'an (75:16–19). Placed pointedly amid the terrors of Judgement, God takes personal charge of the revelation's gathering, recitation and explanation, calming the Prophet's fear of losing a single word. Classical scholars derive from this both an etiquette of receiving knowledge — listen fully before rushing to repeat — and a doctrinal assurance that the Book we hold is exactly what God undertook to keep. The contrast is deliberate: everything else will be shaken on that Day, but the word of God is secured by God.

Points of reflection

Al-Qiyamah asks the reader to examine the true root of their own heedlessness. It names it plainly: "you love the fleeting and neglect the Hereafter" (75:20–21). Much of what passes for doubt, the surah suggests, is really attachment — the wish to keep the near pleasure and postpone the distant account. Naming this honestly is the beginning of turning back.

Its deathbed scene is meant to be lived with, not merely read. Everyone will one day feel the soul rise to the collarbones and hear "who can cure him?" go unanswered. The surah lets us stand at that bed now, while there is still time to be among the radiant faces that gaze upon their Lord rather than the scowling ones bracing for the blow. And its final question — is the Maker of the drop not able to raise the dead? — is offered as a settled

comfort: the God who began us so intricately has not abandoned us to purposelessness, and will surely bring us home to account and to Himself.

FIVE

Carrying it

1. Nurture the inner voice that blames you toward repentance.
2. Trust Allah's power to raise you, down to your fingerprints.
3. Hold to the hope of gazing upon your Lord in the Hereafter.
4. Live as one created for a purpose and a reckoning, not aimlessly.

Where this reading draws from. Ibn Kathir, 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/.