

A GIFT FOR YOU · FROM DEEN2U.COM

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Surah Al-Fajr

The Dawn · Makki · 30 ayat — reflections on surah 89
of the Qur'an

QURAN

deen2u.com

One-stop center for Islamic resources · free to share
September 2026 · v1.304.1

CONTENTS

Surah Al-Fajr

- | | | |
|----------|---------------------------|--|
| 1 | The surah in brief | What it is, when it came, what it sets out to do |
| 2 | Its themes | 6 threads running through the surah |
| 3 | Key verses | 5 passages, with a reflection on each |
| 4 | Reading it closely | 4 sections |
| 5 | Carrying it | 3 things to take from it |
-

الفجر — Al-Fajr, “The Dawn”. Surah 89 of 114, revealed in Makkah, 30 ayat. The full text and a recitation are on the web edition at deen2u.com/quran/89/.

ONE

The surah in brief

Swearing by dawn and the sacred nights, the surah recalls how proud nations like 'Ad, Thamud, and Pharaoh were destroyed, rebukes the love of wealth and neglect of the orphan and poor, and calls the contented soul home to its Lord well-pleased.

Al-Fajr swears by the dawn, ten nights, the even and the odd, and the passing night, then recalls three proud powers, the towering 'Ad of Iram, the rock-carving Thamud, and Pharaoh of the stakes, all of whom filled the land with tyranny until their Lord poured a scourge upon them, for He is ever watchful. It then diagnoses the human heart: when tested with honor a man says his Lord ennobled him, and when tested with restriction he says his Lord humiliated him, misreading both. The real failure is not honoring the orphan, not feeding the poor, devouring inheritance, and loving wealth immoderately. It ends on one of the tenderest calls in the Qur'an, to the tranquil soul, invited home to its Lord well-pleased and pleasing.

TWO

Its themes

- Oaths by sacred times
- The fall of proud nations
- Allah ever-watchful
- Misreading trial and blessing
- Neglect of the orphan and poor
- The tranquil soul's return

THREE

Key verses

For thy Lord is (as a Guardian) on a watch-tower.

Qur'an 89:14

"Your Lord is ever in wait"; the tyrants who thought themselves beyond reach were being observed the whole time, as are we.

Now, as for man, when his Lord trieth him, giving him honour and gifts, then saith he, (puffed up), "My Lord hath honoured me."

Qur'an 89:15

Man reads honor as proof of God's love and hardship as proof of His scorn, when both are tests measuring how he responds.

Nay, nay! but ye honour not the orphans!

Qur'an 89:17

The turn from lofty oaths to the neglected orphan shows where real faith is weighed, in how we treat the weakest near us.

And ye love wealth with inordinate love!

Qur'an 89:20

"And you love wealth with immense love," the quiet root beneath the neglect of the orphan and the hoarding of what should be shared.

(To the righteous soul will be said:) "O (thou) soul, in (complete) rest and satisfaction!

Qur'an 89:27

The call to the tranquil soul, at peace with its Lord, is the destination of a whole life spent trusting rather than misreading His decree.

FOUR

Reading it closely

Context & character

Al-Fajr — “The Dawn” — is a Makkan surah of thirty verses, named for the oath that opens it, by the daybreak. It is a rich, wide-ranging surah that moves from cryptic oaths through the great destroyed civilisations of the past, into a sharp diagnosis of human nature and society, and finally to one of the most beautiful passages in the whole Qur'an — the invitation to the tranquil soul to return home to its Lord.

Its character is sweeping and rhythmic, almost cinematic. It gathers evidence from history, from human behaviour, and from the Day of Judgment, and binds it all with the refrain of a watchful Lord. The mood darkens through warnings of tyranny and greed and then breaks, at the very end, into serenity and welcome — one of the sharpest tonal shifts in the Book, engineered so that the reader who has been sobered by the whole surah lands on hope.

How the surah unfolds

The surah opens (89:1–5) with a cluster of evocative oaths — by the dawn, by ten nights, by the even and the odd, by the night as it departs — sealed with the question, “Is there not in that an oath for one possessed of understanding?” The commentators offer readings: the ten nights as the first ten of Dhūl-Hijjah, the odd and even as elements of prayer or creation. The precise

referents are debated, but the effect is clear: these are witnesses to God's ordering of time, sworn to prepare the listener for a serious message.

History follows (89:6–14). “Did you not see how your Lord dealt with ‘Ād — Iram of the pillars, the like of which was never built in the lands? And Thamūd, who carved the rocks in the valley? And Pharaoh, of the stakes?” These were the mightiest powers of their eras, transgressors who spread corruption, and “your Lord poured upon them a scourge of punishment — indeed your Lord is ever watchful (la-bil-mirṣād).” The lesson is that no strength, no monument, no empire exempts the arrogant from the ambush of divine justice.

The surah then turns to the human heart and its false reading of blessing and hardship (89:15–20): when God tests a man by honouring and provisioning him, he says “My Lord has honoured me,” and when He tests him by restricting his provision, he says “My Lord has humiliated me.” Both readings are wrong — wealth is not always honour, nor poverty always disgrace; both are trials. The proof of the false reading is in behaviour: “No! but you do not honour the orphan, and do not urge one another to feed the poor, and you devour inheritance greedily, and love wealth with intense love.” Finally (89:21–30) the Day arrives: the earth is ground to powder, the Lord comes with the angels rank on rank, Hell is brought near, and man remembers — but too late — wishing he had sent ahead good for his life. On that Day none punishes as He punishes and none binds as He binds. Then the tone transforms: “O tranquil soul! Return to your Lord, well-pleased and pleasing to Him. Enter among My servants, and enter My Paradise.”

The major themes, in depth

The first theme is that God is ever in ambush over the tyrant. The trio of ‘Ād, Thamūd, and Pharaoh are chosen as the peaks of human power — architectural (Iram's pillars), engineering (Thamūd's carved rock cities), and imperial (Pharaoh's stakes and dominion). Each thought itself untouchable; each was overtaken. The refrain “your Lord is ever watchful” (89:14) reframes history: the rise of oppressors is not evidence of divine absence but of a patience that ends. For the persecuted Makkan Muslims, and for every generation crushed under arrogance, this is a promise that the powerful are being watched from a vantage they cannot see, and the account will be settled.

The second theme is the misreading of wealth and poverty. The surah exposes a deep human error: we treat prosperity as a sign of God's approval and hardship as His rejection. Both are wrong, because both are tests (ibtilā’). The dangerous consequence of this error is social: the man who believes his wealth is his deserved honour becomes hard — he does not honour the orphan, does not encourage feeding the poor, seizes inheritance greedily, and loves wealth “with intense love” (jamman). The surah thus ties a theological mistake directly to injustice. Greed is not merely a personal vice here; it grows from a false theology of blessing. Al-Sa‘dī notes that the surah moves from what the tongue says (“my Lord honoured me”) to what the hands do (devouring, hoarding), showing that a corrupt idea always ripens into a corrupt deed.

The third theme is the return of the tranquil soul — al-naḥs al-muṭmaʾinnah. After all the imagery of ruin, the surah's final four verses are pure homecoming. The soul that found its rest and certainty in God is called back to Him “well-pleased and pleasing” — a mutual contentment, the servant satisfied with his Lord and the Lord satisfied with His servant. It is then folded into a community (“enter among My servants”) and a place (“enter My Paradise”). The contrast with the man of 89:15–20, whose soul was never at peace because it read every circumstance as either flattery or insult, is total. The tranquil soul is the one that stopped judging God by its own comfort and simply trusted Him — and that trust is what is welcomed home.

Points of reflection

The surah quietly asks how we read our own lives. When things go well, do we treat it as a verdict of our worth? When things go hard, do we conclude God has turned against us? The surah dismantles both reflexes. Ease and hardship are both examinations, and the mature believer learns to say, in either state, that this is a test I must pass, rather than a grade I have received.

It also draws a straight line from the heart to the orphan's plate. If the surah is right that greed springs from a false sense of entitlement to blessing, then generosity is more than kindness — it is the correction of a theology. Honouring the orphan and feeding the poor become the outward proof that a person has understood who really owns the wealth in his hands.

And the ending gives every believer something to aspire to become: a tranquil soul. The whole spiritual life can be read as the project of moving from the restless self of verse 15 — forever wounded or flattered by circumstance — to the settled self of verse 27, at peace because it has anchored in God. To hear “Return to your Lord” at the end of one's life as an invitation and not a sentence is the hope this surah holds out, and the reason it is so often recited at funerals.

FIVE

Carrying it

1. Read both ease and hardship as tests, not verdicts; neither wealth nor loss measures your standing with your Lord.
2. Measure your faith by your treatment of orphans and the poor and your grip on wealth, the surah's own scale.
3. Aim to die with a tranquil soul, content with Allah's decree, for that is the soul welcomed home.

Where this reading draws from. Ibn Kathir, Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim, al-Sa'di, Taysir al-Karim al-Rahman, al-Tabari, Jami' al-Bayan. 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/.