

from the
QUR'AN
about A.D. 650

According to Muslim belief, in about A.D. 610, Muhammad had a vision of an angel, a messenger from Allah (the Arabic word for God). The voice proclaimed that Muhammad was to be the last prophet on earth. Over the years Muhammad received more revelations from Allah, gathered a great following, and established a new religion, Islam. After Muhammad's death the revelations were collected in the Qur'an. In the following excerpts from the Qur'an, with the exception of the beginning prayer, the speaker is Allah. The Day of Judgment is described, as well as Allah's victory over the unfaithful.

THINK THROUGH HISTORY: Clarifying

In this passage from the Qur'an, what does Allah have to say about the prophet Muhammad?

The Exordium

In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.
Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Creation,
The Compassionate, the Merciful,
King of Judgement-day!
You alone we worship, and to You alone we pray for help.
Guide us to the straight path.
The path of those whom You have favoured,
Not of those who have incurred Your wrath.
Nor of those who have gone astray.

The Tidings

In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.
About what are they asking?
About the fateful tidings—the theme of their disputes.
But they shall know the truth; before long they shall know it.
Did We¹ not spread the earth like a bed and raise the mountains like pillars?
We created you in pairs and gave you rest in sleep. We made the night a mantle,
and ordained the day for work. We built above you seven mighty heavens and
placed in them a shining lamp. We sent down abundant water from the clouds,
bringing forth grain and varied plants, and gardens thick with foliage.

1. We: the plural form "We" is often used in the Qur'an to indicate Allah's speech.

Fixed is the Day of Judgement. On that day the Trumpet shall be sounded and you shall come in multitudes. The gates of heaven shall swing open and the mountains shall pass away and become like vapour.

Hell will lie in ambush, a home for the transgressors. There they shall abide long ages; there they shall taste neither refreshment nor any drink, save boiling water and decaying filth: a fitting recompense.

They disbelieved in Our reckoning and roundly denied Our revelations. But We counted all their doings and wrote them down. We shall say: ‘Taste this: you shall have nothing but mounting torment!’ . . .

There they shall hear no idle talk nor any falsehood. Such is the recompense of your Lord—a gift that will suffice them: the Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that lies between them; the Merciful, with whom no one can speak.

On the day when the Spirit and the angels stand up in their ranks, they shall not speak; except him who shall receive the sanction of the Merciful and declare what is right.

That day is sure to come. Let him who will, seek a way back to his Lord. We have forewarned you of an imminent scourge: the day when man will look upon his works and the unbeliever cry: ‘Would that I were dust!’

Victory

In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

We have given you a glorious victory, so that Allah may forgive your past and future sins, and perfect His goodness to you; that He may guide you to the right path and bestow on you His mighty help.

It was He who sent down tranquillity into the hearts of the faithful so that their faith might grow stronger. His are the legions of the heavens and the earth. Allah is wise and all-knowing. . . .

We have sent you² forth as a witness and as a bearer of news and warnings, so that you³ may have faith in Allah and His apostle and that you may assist him, honour him, and praise Him morning and evening.

Those that swear fealty to you swear fealty to Allah Himself. The Hand of Allah is above their hands. He that breaks his oath breaks it at his own peril, but he that keeps his pledge to Allah shall be richly rewarded.

The desert Arabs who stayed behind⁴ will say to you: ‘We were occupied with our goods and families. Implore Allah to pardon us.’ They will say with their tongues what they do not mean in their hearts.

Say: ‘Who can prevent Allah from punishing you or being gracious to you, if He is pleased to do either? Allah is cognizant of all your actions.’ . . .

The Table

In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

Believers, be true to your obligations. It is lawful for you to eat the flesh of all beasts other than that which is hereby announced to you. Game is forbidden while you are on pilgrimage. Allah decrees what He will.

2. you: Muhammad

3. you: the people of Mecca

4. Arabs who stayed behind: those Arabs who did not fight with Muhammad for the cause of Islam

Believers, do not violate the rites of Allah, or the sacred month, or the offerings or their ornaments, or those that repair to the Sacred House seeking Allah's grace and pleasure. Once your pilgrimage is ended, you shall be free to go hunting.

Do not allow your hatred for those who would debar you from the Holy Mosque to lead you into sin. Help one another in what is good and pious, not in what is wicked and sinful. Have fear of Allah, for He is stern in retribution.

You are forbidden the flesh of animals that die a natural death, blood, and pig's meat; also any flesh dedicated to any other than Allah. You are forbidden the flesh of strangled animals and of those beaten or gored to death; of those killed by a fall or mangled by beasts of prey (unless you make it clean by giving the death-stroke yourselves); also of animals sacrificed to idols.

Source: Excerpt from *The Koran*, translated by N. J. Dawood (London: Penguin, 1968). Used with the permission of Penguin UK.