

IN THE  
**Shade**  
OF THE  
**Qur'ān**

---

*The Martyr*  
(Inshā' Allāh)

**SAYYID QUṬḬB**

**Vol XI**

**Sūrahs 16-20**

# Contents

<b>Contents</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Transliteration Table</b> .....	<b>vi</b>
<b>Al-Naĥl</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<i>Prologue</i> .....	1
1 <i>God the Creator of All</i> .....	4
Overview.....	7
An Imminent Grave Event.....	7
Creation and Compassion.....	9
Blessings Galore.....	11
False Deities That Create Nothing.....	14
2 <i>Divergent Outlooks and Attitudes</i> .....	16
Overview.....	21
Unbelief Compounded by Arrogance.....	22
A Wicked Campaign.....	23
A Perfect Contrast.....	26
Two Ways for Mankind.....	27
The Truth of Resurrection.....	29
Universal Submission to God's Power.....	32
3 <i>The One and Only God</i> .....	34
Overview.....	39
All Grace Comes from God.....	40
Common Forms of Paganism.....	42
If God Were to Inflict Punishment Now.....	45
Clear Signs to Reflect Upon.....	47
The Bee and Its Honey.....	48
The Life Cycle.....	50
Incomparable Situations.....	52
4 <i>Denying the Undeniable</i> .....	54
Overview.....	56
In the Twinkling of an Eye.....	57
God's Hidden Secrets.....	58
A Witness against Every Community.....	61
5 <i>Absolute Justice</i> .....	63
Overview.....	67
An Order Combining All Goodness.....	68
Using Oaths for Deceit.....	70
Ideals Made Practical.....	72
Equal Reward for Equal Sexes.....	73
Attitude to Qur'ānic Recitation.....	74
The Nature of False Fabrication.....	75
Rejecting the Faith after Accepting it.....	78
6 <i>Advocacy by Example</i> .....	82
Overview.....	84
An Example to Avoid.....	85
The Lawful and the Forbidden.....	86
The Best Method of Advocacy.....	89

<b>Al-Isrā'</b> .....	<b>93</b>
<i>Prologue</i> .....	93
A Unique Experience .....	96
1 <i>God's Infinite Power</i> .....	99
A Unique Journey.....	102
The Promise to the Israelites .....	103
Same Action, Same Penalty.....	105
Guidance in All Fields.....	107
Man's Hasty Characteristic .....	109
Personal Responsibility .....	110
Affluence Leading to Destruction .....	111
Choices and Rewards .....	112
No Limits to God's Grace .....	113
2 <i>A Code Based on Justice</i> .....	115
Overview .....	117
Kindness to Parents .....	118
Kindness to All.....	121
Setting Values Right.....	122
Adultery Outlawed .....	123
A Peaceful Community .....	125
Perfect Honesty .....	127
Just Weight and Measure.....	128
Accountability for All Actions .....	129
3 <i>God: The One and Glorious</i> .....	132
Overview .....	135
All Glorify Him.....	136
Deaf Ears, Sealed Hearts .....	137
Bringing the Dead Back to Life.....	140
Man's Open Enemy.....	142
Competition to Be Closer to God .....	142
4 <i>Honour Granted to Mankind</i> .....	144
Overview .....	147
Clear Warnings, Increased Transgression .....	148
An Ever-Raging Battle .....	150
Aspects of God's Favours.....	152
A Special Honour for Man .....	154
5 <i>Why People Reject the Divine Message</i> .....	157
Overview .....	164
Vain Endeavours .....	166
The Truth Will Triumph.....	168
The Qur'ānic Cure.....	171
Man's Scanty Knowledge.....	172
Only a Man and a Messenger .....	174
Devoid of all faculties .....	176
A Threat to Exterminate the Believers .....	177
Method of Qur'ānic Revelations .....	179
To Believe or Not to Believe.....	180
<b>Al-Kahf</b> .....	<b>182</b>
<i>Prologue</i> .....	182
1 <i>A Distinctive System of Values</i> .....	187
A Stern Warning for Outright Liars.....	192
Young Men with Clear Insight .....	194

Spreading Grace .....	197
The Sleepers Awake .....	198
How Many Were in the Cave? .....	201
On God We Rely .....	201
Long Was Their Sleep .....	203
<b>2 Faith Based on Free Choice.....</b>	<b>204</b>
Overview .....	207
The Truth from Your Lord .....	208
No Rescue Available .....	210
A Gulf Too Wide .....	212
Transient Pleasures .....	214
<b>3 Heedless of Divine Warnings.....</b>	<b>216</b>
Overview .....	219
A Record to Include All Affairs .....	219
Much Too Argumentative .....	221
Why Reject God's Guidance? .....	222
<b>4 A Special Lesson for Moses .....</b>	<b>225</b>
Overview .....	228
Where the Two Seas Meet .....	229
First Jolting Shock .....	230
Patience Stretched to the Edge .....	232
All Made Clear and Simple .....	234
<b>5 Accurate Historical Accounts .....</b>	<b>236</b>
Overview .....	240
The Mysterious Traveller .....	240
A Policy of Justice for All .....	243
A Barrier against Evil Forces .....	246
The Truth about Gog and Magog .....	248
Deaf and Blind.....	249
Deceptive Thoughts of Bad Action .....	250
Preparing for a Meeting with the Lord .....	252
<b>Maryam.....</b>	<b>254</b>
Prologue .....	254
<b>1 God's Unbridled Will.....</b>	<b>257</b>
A Passionate Prayer Answered .....	262
A Child Is Born Against All Probability .....	264
John: A Prophet in His Own Right .....	265
Suspending the Law of Procreation .....	267
The Most Remarkable Birth in History .....	268
How Jesus Was Born .....	270
As Mary Confronts Her People .....	272
The Full Truth about Jesus .....	273
<b>2 A Long Line of Prophets.....</b>	<b>276</b>
A Son's Passionate Appeal .....	279
Insolent Answer to a Compassionate Appeal .....	281
More Prophets .....	284
God's Door Remains Open.....	286
God's Absolute Lordship.....	287
<b>3 Two Interlinked Lives.....</b>	<b>289</b>
Overview .....	292
The Reality of Resurrection.....	293
What Gives Better Returns .....	294

A Promise Coming True.....	296
Monstrous Claims by the Unbelievers.....	298
<b>Ṭā Hā.....</b>	<b>302</b>
<i>Prologue.....</i>	<i>302</i>
<i>1 The Purpose of Revelation.....</i>	<i>304</i>
Knowledge Going Deeper than Secrets.....	317
More Details about Moses.....	319
An Address from On High.....	321
Moses' Mission Defined.....	324
Requests Granted.....	326
Reminder of Past Favours.....	328
Moses' Mission Outlined.....	330
How to Confront a Tyrant.....	331
Calling on a Tyrant to Believe.....	333
An Argument Too Powerful.....	335
How to Avoid a Losing Argument.....	336
In Confrontation with the Sorcerers.....	338
A Tyrant's Threat.....	341
Hearts Touched by Faith.....	341
The Drowning of Pharaoh and His Army.....	343
When God Intervenes.....	344
The Price for God's Intervention.....	345
Promises Fulfilled or Broken.....	346
Justifying Deliberate Error.....	348
Temptation of the Golden Calf.....	350
<i>2 Man's Long Drawn Battle.....</i>	<i>353</i>
Overview.....	358
Reasons for Qur'ānic History.....	359
All Submit to God.....	360
Man's Lack of Purpose.....	361
Drawing the Lines of Battle.....	364
The Lessons of History.....	366
The Way to Contentment.....	367

## Transliteration Table

### Consonants. Arabic

Initial: unexpressed medial and final:

ء	'	د	d	ض	ḍ	ك	k
ب	b	ذ	dh	ط	ṭ	ل	l
ت	t	ر	r	ظ	ẓ	م	m
ث	th	ز	z	ع	ʿ	ن	n
ج	j	س	s	غ	gh	ه	h
ح	ḥ	ش	sh	ف	f	و	w
خ	kh	ص	ṣ	ق	q	ي	y

### Vowels, diphthongs, etc

Short:

ِ	i	َ	a	ُ	u
---	---	---	---	---	---

Long:

ِي	ī	َا	ā	ُو	ū
----	---	----	---	----	---

Diphthongs:

َي	ay	َو	aw
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# SŪRAH 16

## Al-Naĥl

(The Bees)

### Prologue

Although this *sūrah* enjoys a calm rhythm with a quiet, soft beat, it nonetheless tackles several main topics within its broad framework. It makes use of several sound effects and emphatic connotations to heighten its impact. Like all *sūrahs* revealed in Makkah, it discusses the main topics of faith, such as God's oneness, revelation and resurrection. But it also refers to a number of secondary topics, such as the essential unity between Abraham's faith and the faith preached by Muĥammad (peace be upon them both). It outlines the true nature of God's will, and mentions the human will with regard to accepting or denying the true faith, following divine guidance or going astray. It explains the mission of God's messengers and His law that applies to those who deny them and their messages. It discusses the question of who may forbid things or leave them lawful, and the false concepts of pagan ideologies in this regard. It speaks of leaving one's community to migrate for God's sake, the persecution Muslims may suffer at the hands of unbelievers, the rejection of faith after having accepted it and what punishment any of these situations may incur. It then adds some discussion on human dealings, such as maintaining justice, ensuring kindly treatment, giving money for good purposes and the fulfilment of promises and pledges, as well as other practices that observe the principles of faith. Thus we see how the *sūrah* weaves together its interrelated subject matter.

These topics are presented within an expansive framework in which all the events take place. It includes the heavens and the earth, with the rain pouring down, the trees springing up, the day and night, the sun, the moon and the stars, the seas, the

mountains and the rivers. It is indeed this whole world with all that takes place in it as well as the life to come with all its scenery and the fates of different categories of God's creatures. It also includes the realm that lies beyond the reach of our perception, and the feelings it inspires within us.

Against such a broad backdrop the *sūrah* sounds like a massive campaign aimed at profoundly influencing people's hearts and minds. It is a campaign that uses a moderate rhythm with several coherent sounds. It has nothing of the very strong beats we hear in *Sūrahs* 6 and 13, Cattle and Thunder respectively. Yet in its quiet rhythm it addresses every sense and feeling in the human soul, as well as both reason and conscience. It alerts our eyes to see, our ears to hear, our hands to touch and feel, our consciences to be alert and our minds to reflect. It portrays every aspect of the whole universe, looks at the present life and the life to come, as well as secrets of the universe and what is beyond the reach of our faculties of perception. All these are used to heighten the effect on our senses, hearts and minds. The result is a massive panorama which only a closed mind and a dead heart can ignore.

We are directed to look at the signs and messages that God has placed throughout the universe, and the great bounties and blessings He has given to mankind, and to reflect on the scenes of the Day of Judgement, the images of death, and the fate suffered by former communities. Coupled with this is a series of emotional touches that penetrate the depths of our hearts, and which refer to the different stages of human life from unborn embryos, to people in the full vigour of youth, in mid-life and in old age, as also in situations of strength and weakness, enjoying God's blessings or enduring hardship. It uses different styles and modes of expression, giving examples, drawing images, relating dialogue and presenting stories in order to make its message clear and enhance its effect.

The splendid colours that impart their shades to the whole atmosphere of the *sūrah* also highlight a number of great natural phenomena, reflecting the greatness of creation, God's bounty, His knowledge and elaborate planning. These are all intermingled. The great universe created by God is subject to God's perfect knowledge and His meticulous design and planning. Yet it is meant to be a blessing for mankind, meeting not only their needs but also their wishes and expectations. Thus all needs and necessities are satisfied; adornments provided; relaxation of body and soul ensured. It is then right that people should give thanks and express their gratitude to God.

Thus throughout the *sūrah* we see God's blessings and believers expressing gratitude. There are several directives on the need to show such gratitude, coupled with various comments. Parables are given, as well as examples. The most vivid of these is that of the Prophet Abraham who is described as showing "*his gratitude for the blessings bestowed by Him who had chosen him and guided him to a straight path.*"

(Verse 121)

All this is given in a perfect harmony of image, connotation, expression, rhythm, issue and subject matter. We now hope to outline some of these as we discuss the *sūrah* in detail.

# 1

## God the Creator of All

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*In the Name of God, the Lord of Grace, the Ever Merciful.*

*God's judgement is bound to come; so do not seek to hurry it on. Limitless is He in His glory and sublimely exalted above anything people may associate with Him. (1)*

*He sends down angels with this divine inspiration, [bestowed] by His will on such of His servants as He pleases: 'Warn [mankind] that there is no deity other than Me: so fear Me.'* (2)

*He has created the heavens and the earth in truth; sublimely exalted is He above anything people may associate with Him. (3)*

*He creates man out of a drop of sperm; yet this same man is openly contentious. (4)*

*He creates cattle which give you warmth and other benefits; and from them you obtain food. (5)*

*And you find beauty in them when you drive them home in the evening and when you take*

أَتَى أَمْرُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَسْتَعْجِلُوهُ ۗ سُبْحٰنَهُ  
وَتَعَالَىٰ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿١﴾

يُنزِلُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةَ بِالرُّوحِ مِنْ أَمْرِهِ عَلَىٰ مَنْ  
يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ أَنْ أَنْذِرُوا أَنَّهُ لَا إِلٰهَ  
إِلَّا أَنَا فَاتَّقُونِ ﴿٢﴾

خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ ۗ  
تَعَالَىٰ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٣﴾

خَلَقَ الْاِنْسَانَ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ فَاِذَا هُوَ  
خَصِيْمٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿٤﴾

وَاللّٰنَعَمَ خَلَقَهَا لَكُمْ فِيْهَا دِفْءٌ  
وَمَنْفَعٌ وَمِنْهَا تَاْكُلُوْنَ ﴿٥﴾

وَلَكُمْ فِيْهَا جَمٰلٌ حِيْنَ تَرْجُوْنَ وَاِِ  
تَسْرَحُوْنَ ﴿٦﴾