

# **Al-Naml** [The Ants]

## **Makkan Period**

*In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate*

[1] *Ta' Sin*. These are the verses of the Qur'an and a Clear Book; <sup>1</sup>

[2] a guidance and good tidings for the believers

[3] who establish Prayer and give *Zakah*, and have firm faith in the Hereafter.

[4] As for those who do not believe in the Hereafter, We have made their deeds seem attractive to them so they stumble around in perplexity.

[5] It is they for whom a grievous chastisement lies in store; it is they who shall be the greatest losers in the Hereafter.

[6] As for you, (O Muhammad), you are receiving the Qur'an from the Most Wise, the All-Knowing.

[7] (Recount to them) when Moses said to his family: "I perceive something like fire: soon will I bring to you some information from there, or I will bring you a burning brand that you may warm yourselves,"

[8] But when Moses came to the fire, a call was sounded: "Blessed is He Who is in the fire and whatever is around it, Glory be to Allah, the Sustainer of all in the Universe.

[9] O Moses, verily this is Me, Allah, the All-Mighty, the All-Wise!

1. "*Kitab Mubin*", a Clear Book which expounds its teachings, instructions and commands in clear terms.

[10] Now cast your rod!" But when he saw the rod writhing as though it were a serpent, he turned his back in retreat and did not even look behind, "O Moses, have no fear. Messengers have no fear in My presence,

[11] except he who has committed some wrong, But if he substitutes good in place of evil, I am Most Forgiving, Most Compassionate.

[12] Now put your hand into your bosom, and it will come forth shining without any blemish. (These are two of the) nine Signs to be carried to Pharaoh and his people. They are surely a wicked people."

[13] But when Our Clear Signs came to them, they said: "This is plain magic."

[14] They denied those Signs out of iniquity and arrogance although their hearts were convinced of their truth. So see how evil was the end of those mischief-makers!

[15] (On the other hand), We granted knowledge to David and Solomon and they said: "All praise be to Allah Who has exalted us above many of His believing servants!"

[16] And Solomon succeeded David and said: "O people, we have been taught the speech of birds and we have been endowed with all kinds of things.<sup>2</sup> Surely this is a conspicuous favour (from Allah)."

[17] Hosts of *jinn* and humans and birds Were marshalled for Solomon and were kept under full control.

[18] (Solomon was once on the move with them) until when they reached a valley of ants one of the ants said: "O ants, get into your holes, lest Solomon and his hosts crush you (under their feet) without even knowing,"

[19] Smiling at the ant's utterance, Solomon burst into laughter and said: "My Lord! Hold me under (Your) control<sup>3</sup> that I may render thanks for the favour which You have bestowed on me and on my parents, and that I may act righteously in a manner that would please You. Include me, out of Your Mercy, among Your righteous servants."

*2. That is, God bestowed on them a great many favours.*

*3. This prayer of Solomon consists of acknowledging the great gifts and abilities and power that God had bestowed on him which were such that if he were to succumb to negligence even for a moment, he was likely to transgress the bounds of his servitude and fall a prey to excessive arrogance and vanity. So he prayed to God to restrain him from it in order that he might remain grateful to his Lord for His bounties.*

[20] (On another occasion) Solomon inspected the birds and said: "Why is it that I do not see the hoopoe? Is he among the absentees?"

[21] I will inflict a severe punishment on him or maybe even slaughter him unless he comes forth with a convincing reason (for his absence)."

[22] Not before long the hoopoe came up and said: I have obtained a knowledge which you could not. I have brought for you sure news about Sheba.<sup>4</sup>

[23] I found there a woman ruling over them, one who has been endowed with all things and has a mighty throne.

[24] I found that she and her people prostrate themselves before the sun rather than Allah." Satan<sup>5</sup> has made their deeds appear attractive to them and has, thus, debarred them from the Right Path so they do not find true guidance

*4. Saba' was the renowned trading nation of southern Arabia. Their capital city was Ma'arib, located 55 miles northeast of San'a', the present capital of Yemen.*

*5. The style of this and the next verse suggests that the passage from here till the end of verse 26 is God's addition to the hoopoe's speech.*

[25] that they would prostrate themselves before Allah Who brings to light all that is hidden in the heavens and the earth and knows all that you conceal and all that you reveal.

[26] Allah - none is worthy of worship save He; He is the Lord of the Mighty Throne.

[27] Solomon said: "Soon shall we see whether you have spoken the truth or are one of those that lie.

[28] Take this letter of mine, deliver it to them, and then draw back from them, and observe what they do."

[29] The Queen said: <sup>6</sup> "Know my nobles that a gracious letter has been delivered to me.

[30] It is from Solomon, and it is: "In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate."

[31] (It says): "Do not act towards me with defiance, but come to me in submission."<sup>7</sup>

[32] (After reading the letter) the Queen said: "Nobles, let me have your counsel in this matter for I make no firm decision without you."

[33] They said: "We are strong and are given to vehement fighting. But the decision is yours. Therefore, consider what you would like to command."

[34] The Queen said: "When the kings enter a country they cause corruption in it and abase those of its people who are held in honour. This is what they are wont to do.

[35] I will send them a gift and then see with what answer my envoys return."

*6. The story now resumes from the point where the hoopoe had dropped the letter in front of the queen.*

*7. That is, go to Solomon as a Muslim, or in the state of submission.*

[36] Now, when (the envoy of the Queen) came to Solomon, he said: "Do you want to aid me with wealth? Whatever Allah has granted me is much more than what He has given you. (Keep for yourselves) your gift in which you are exulting,

[37] Envoy go back to those who sent you and we shall certainly come upon them with hosts whom they will be unable to resist. We shall drive them out from there, and they will suffer humiliation and disgrace,"

[38] Solomon said: "My nobles, which of you can bring me her throne before they come to me in submission?"

[39] A stalwart of the *jinn* said: "I will bring it to you before you rise from your council. Surely I have the power to do so and I am trustworthy."

[40] And he who had some knowledge of the Book said: "I will bring it before the twinkling of your eye." When Solomon saw the throne placed firmly beside him, he cried out: "This is by the grace of my Lord so that He may test me whether I give thanks for (His Bounty) or act with ingratitude. Whoever is grateful is so to his own good; and whoever is ungrateful, let him know that my Lord is Immensely Resourceful, Most Bountiful."

[41] Solomon said:<sup>8</sup> "Set the throne before her casually, and let us see whether she gets to the Truth or is one of those who are not guided to what is right."

[42] When the Queen arrived, she was asked: "Is your throne like this one?" She said: "It seems as if it is the same. We had already come to know this and we had submitted ourselves."<sup>9</sup>

*8. The narration now turns to the events after the Queen's arrival at Solomon's palace.*

*9. Queen Sheba made it clear that even before observing this miracle, she and her nobles were convinced, on the basis of what they had heard about Solomon (peace be on him), that he was a Prophet, not just a King.*

[43] What prevented her (from accepting the True Faith) was her worshipping deities other than Allah, for she belonged to an unbelieving people.

[44] She was told: "Enter the palace." But when she saw it, she thought it was a pool of water and she bared both her calves (to enter into it). Solomon said: "This is a slippery floor of crystal." Thereupon she cried out: "My Lord, I have been inflicting much wrong on myself. Now I submit myself with Solomon to Allah, the Lord of the whole Universe."

[45] And We sent to Thamud their brother Salih (with the Message): "Serve Allah," but all of a sudden they became split into two quarrelling factions.

[46] Salih said: "My people, why do you wish to hasten that evil rather than good should come upon you? Why should you not seek pardon from Allah so that mercy be shown to you?"

[47] They said: "We augur ill of you and those who are with you." Salih replied: "Your augury is with Allah. The truth is that you are a people who are being tried."

[48] Now there were nine ring-leaders in the city who created corruption in the land and never worked to set things right.

[49] They said: "Swear to one another in the name of Allah that we shall make a sudden night swoop on Salih and his family and will then tell their heirs<sup>10</sup> that we did not witness the destruction of his family. We are indeed truthful."

10. *This refers to the chief of Salih's tribe who, according to the ancient tribal usage, would have had the right to claim retaliation for his blood. This was the same position in which Abu Talib, the Prophet's uncle, found himself. The Makkan unbelievers had refrained from killing the Prophet (peace be on him) because if they had done so, Abu Talib, the chief of Banu Hashim, would have demanded blood revenge on behalf of his clan.*

[50] Thus they planned and We too planned, the while they did not know.

[51] So see what was the outcome of the plan they made: We utterly destroyed them and their people, all of them.

[52] Now behold their houses that lie in utter ruins because of their wrong-doing. Verily there is a Sign in this for the people who know.

[53] And We delivered those who believed and were wont to avoid disobeying (Allah).

[54] We also sent Lot, and recall when he told his people: "Do you commit shameless acts with your eyes open?"<sup>11</sup>

[55] Do you lustfully approach men instead of women? Nay, you engage in acts of sheer ignorance."

[56] But this had only one answer from his people. They said: "Expel Lot's folk from your city. They pretend to be absolutely clean."

[57] Eventually We saved (Lot) and his family, except his wife. We had decreed that she should be among those who would remain behind.

[58] And We rained down upon them a rain. It was an evil rain for those who had already been warned.

11. *They committed this abominable act publicly, as mentioned in Surah al- 'Ankabut 29:29.*

[59] Say, (O Muhammad): "All praise be to Allah, and peace be on those of His servants whom He has chosen." (Ask them): "Who is better: Allah or the false gods that they associate with Him as His partners?"

[60] Who is it that has created the heavens and the earth and sent down for you water from the sky and then We caused to grow therewith orchards full of beauty whose trees you could never grow. Is there any god associated with Allah (in these tasks)?" Nay, they are a people who are veering away from the Right Path.

[61] Who is it Who has made the earth a place of resort, and has caused rivers to flow in its midst, and has placed upon it firm mountains, and has placed a barrier between two masses of water? Is there any god associated with Allah (in these tasks)? Nay; but most of them do not Know.

[62] Who is it Who heeds the prayers of the distressed when he calls out to Him and Who removes his affliction? And who is it Who makes you vicegerents of the earth? Is there any god associated with Allah (in this task)? How little do you reflect!

[63] Who is it Who guides you through the darkness on land and sea? And Who sends winds as heralds of good tidings ahead of His Mercy? Is there any god associated with Allah (in this task)? Exalted be Allah above whatever they associate with Him in His Divinity!

[64] Who is it Who creates in the first instance and then repeats it? Who is it Who provides you with sustenance from the heavens and the earth? Is there any god associated with Allah (in these tasks)? Say: "Bring forth your evidence, if you are truthful."

[65] Say: "None in the heavens or on the earth has knowledge of the Unseen save Allah. They do not know when they will be raised to life."

[66] Nay, but they have lost their knowledge of the Hereafter. They are steeped in doubt and uncertainty about it: rather they are blind to it.

[67] The unbelievers say: "When we become dust, we and our forefathers, shall we really be brought out (from our graves)?"

[68] We were told about this and so were our forefathers before us. But these are no more than fairy tales that have been recounted from ancient times."

[69] Say: "Go about through the earth and see what has been the end of the evil-doers."

[70] (O Prophet), do not grieve over them, nor be distressed at their designs.

[71] They also say: "Tell us when this threat will come to pass, if you are truthful."

[72] Say: "The chastisement whose hastening you have been asking for, maybe a part of it has drawn quite near to you."

[73] Indeed Your Lord is exceedingly bountiful to mankind. Yet most of them do not give thanks.

[74] Verily your Lord knows all that their hearts conceal as well as all that they reveal.

[75] There is nothing that is hidden - be it in the heaven or the earth - but is recorded in a Clear Book.<sup>12</sup>

[76] Surely this Qur'an explains to the Children of Israel most of the matters concerning which they have disagreements

[77] and it is a guidance and mercy for the believers.

<sup>12</sup>. The expression "Clear Book" means the Book of Destiny.

[78] Indeed your Lord will decide between them<sup>13</sup> by His judgement. He is All-Mighty, All-Knowing.

[79] So put your trust in Allah for you are on the manifest truth.

[80] Surely you cannot make the dead hear you,<sup>14</sup> nor can you make the deaf hear your call if they turn back in flight,

[81] nor can you direct the blind to the Right Way, preventing them from falling into error. You can make only those who believe in Our verses to hear the call and then submit.

[82] And when the time for the fulfilment of Our Word against them will come, We shall bring forth for them a beast from the earth who will speak to them because people did not believe in Our Signs.<sup>15</sup>

[83] Just imagine the Day when We shall muster from every nation a large group of those who gave the lie to Our Signs, and they shall be duly arranged in ranks

*13. That is, between the Qurayshite unbelievers and the believers.*

*14. These people are such that their conscience is dead, and they have been rendered incapable of differentiating between truth and falsehood. This because of their obduracy and their propensity to blindly follow inherited customs and usages.*

*15. According to 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar, this will happen when there will remain none on the earth who will bid people to do good and forbid them from evil. Ibn Mardawayh has reported a hadith from Abu Sa' id al-Khudri in which he says that he, himself, had heard this from the Prophet (peace be on him). This shows that when people stop exhorting others to do good and cease to forbid them from doing evil, God will bring forth a beast just before the resurrection as a final warning. It is not clear whether it will be one animal or a whole species of animals whose members will spread all over the earth. Dabbah min al-ard could mean both. The time of the coming of this creature was mentioned by the Prophet (peace be on him) in his saying: "The sun will rise from the west and this beast will appear in the broad light of the day." As for the question of an animal talking to human beings in their language: this is one of the manifestations of God's Power. God can grant the power of speech to whomsoever He wills. Before the Day of Resurrection, He will grant this power to a beast, but after the Resurrection, He will grant this power to the eyes, ears and skins of human beings and they will speak out and give evidence before God, as clearly stated in Ha' Mim al-Sajdah 41: 20-21.*

[84] until, when all of them have arrived, Allah will say: "Did you give the lie to My Signs even without encompassing them with your knowledge? If that is not so, what did you do?"

[85] And the Word will come to pass against them because of their wrong-doing: they will then be able to utter nothing.

[86] Did they not perceive that We had made the night so that they may repose in it and made the day clear and shining. Surely there are Signs in this for those who believe.

[87] The Day when the Trumpet will be blown all those who are in the heavens and on the earth shall be terror-stricken-all except those whom Allah wills-and everyone shall come to Him utterly abject.

[88] You now see the mountains and consider them firmly fixed, but then they shall pass away even as clouds pass away. That will be the handiwork of Allah Who has created everything with perfect wisdom. He is well aware of what you do.

[89] Whosoever comes with good will receive a reward better than his deed, and they will be made secure from the terror of that Day.

[90] And whosoever comes with evil, they will be flung upon their faces into the Fire. Will you be recompensed for aught other than what you do?

[91] (Tell them, O Muhammad): "I have been commanded only to serve the Lord of this city that He has made inviolable, to serve Him to Whom all things belong. I have been commanded to be of those that submit to Allah,

[92] and to recite the Qur'an." So, whosoever is guided, his guidance will be to his own good. As for those who stray, tell them: "I am none but a warner."

[93] And say: "All praise be to Allah, Who will soon show you His Signs that you will recognize." Your Lord is not unaware of what you do.