



LESSONS
FROM THE
STORIES
OF THE
QURAN

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Lessons from the Stories of the Quran

“So relate the stories that perhaps they
will give thought.” (Quran 7:176)

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Fourth Edition, 2020

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Contents

Arabic Names and their English Equivalentents	5
Note on Abbreviations	6
Introduction	7
The First of Humanity (Lessons 1—7)	11
The Great Ship (Lessons 8—13)	20
The Perished Nations (Lessons 14—19)	27
A Friend of God (Lessons 20—24)	35
The Estranged Brother (Lessons 25—32)	44
The Saviour of the Israelites (Lessons 33—40)	54
The Warrior King (Lessons 41—44)	64
Two Splendid Kingdoms (Lessons 45—50)	69
The Man of the Fish (Lessons 51—54)	76
A Miraculous Birth (Lessons 55—61)	81
The Man with the Two Horns (Lessons 62—64)	90
The Hidden Cave (Lessons 65—70)	95
Conclusion	102

Arabic Names and their English Equivalents

Adam Adam	Majuj Magog
Alyasa Elisha	Makkah Mecca
Ayyub Job	Maryam Mary
Babel Babylon/Babel	Musa Moses
Binyamin Benjamin	Nuh Noah
Dawud David	Qabil Cain
Habil Abel	Qarun Korah
Hajar Hagar	Saba Sheba
Harun Aaron	Samiri Samaritan
Hawwa Eve	Samoeel Samuel
Ibrahim Abraham	Sulayman Solomon
Ilyas Elias/Elijah	Talut Saul
Imran Amram	Uzayr Ezra
Isa Jesus	Yahya John
Ishaq Isaac	Yajuj Gog
Ismail Ishmael	Yaqub Jacob
Jalut Goliath	Yunus Jonah
Jibril Gabriel	Yusuf Joseph
Lut Lot	Zakariya Zechariah
Madyan Midian	

Note on Abbreviations

The following abbreviations have been used in this book to denote salutations.

AS: *Alaibi Salam*, meaning “Peace be upon him/her” – traditionally used alongside names of pious individuals, especially prophets

SAAS: *Sal Allahu Alaibi wa Sallam*, meaning “Allah bless him and grant him peace” – used exclusively for Prophet Muhammad

RA: *Radbi Allahu anhu/anha*, meaning “Allah be pleased with him/her” – traditionally used alongside names of Prophet Muhammad’s companions

Introduction

The Quran was revealed by Allah for the guidance of the entire humanity. While this guidance is often conveyed directly, the Quran also enlightens its readers through narrations and examples from the lives of earlier generations. We tend to learn readily through parables, and the lessons conveyed using narrations often make a lasting impact on our minds. Moreover, people are generally curious about the lives and circumstances of the prophets and others whom Allah honoured. It is for such reasons that stories, quotations, and examples from the past are plentiful in the Quran, with many *ayaat* (verses) and even complete surahs (chapters) dedicated to these.

Allah states in the Quran, **“We relate to you the best of stories in what We have revealed to you of this Quran although you were, before it, among the unaware.” (12:3)** Allah describes the stories of the Quran as the “best of stories”; the corresponding Arabic phrase *absan al-qasas* has alternatively been translated as “the most beautiful of stories”. The purpose of these stories is not to entertain, however.

They inspire us to attain true faith, and motivate us to act righteously under all circumstances. Some of these stories may even appeal to us in a personal way, and give us ideals to follow.

The stories of the Quran are further meant to strengthen our trust in Allah, to highlight the power of prayer, and to demonstrate what great things can be achieved with Allah's help and our own unwavering determination. These stories give us beautiful lessons in courage, steadfastness, love, repentance, truthfulness, and trust in Allah. Indeed, each story has its own set of lessons and insights. We must remember though that the Quran does not mention all the stories of previous prophets and their respective nations; it only speaks about the most important ones, as well as those most relevant for all times and places, in keeping with the universal status of the Quran.

Another important aspect of the stories of the Quran is their varied nature. Musa (AS), for instance, belonged to a tribe in slavery to the Pharaoh whereas Sulayman (AS) possessed a magnificent kingdom; the father of Ibrahim (AS) was a staunch idol-worshipper whereas the father of Yahya (AS) was a prophet with a noble lineage; Nuh (AS) lived for nearly a thousand years whereas Isa (AS)

was raised by Allah at a young age. Some prophets were granted greater authority than others; some were assigned more laborious tasks; and some were honoured by Allah above the rest.

However, all prophets, despite their contrasting circumstances, conveyed the same message of true monotheism, and emphasized good values. They called upon their people to reflect on the universe and recognize Allah through His signs. They informed people about the Day of Judgement, and made clear the consequences of their actions. Moreover, Allah commands us in the Quran to respect all prophets equally and not to discriminate between any of them:

“Say: We believe in Allah and that which is revealed to us and that which was revealed to Ibrahim and Ismail and Ishaq and Yaqub and the tribes, and that which was vouchsafed to Musa and Isa and the prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and to Him we have surrendered.” (3:84)

Although the stories of the Quran mostly revolve around the prophets, they were not the only ones to be honoured by Allah. For example, Allah blew into

Maryam (AS) through His Spirit, miraculously granting her a son, which was a tremendous tribute to her piety and chastity. Similarly, the great strength of Dhul-Qarnayn, the fore-knowledge granted to Khidr, and the resolve of the young men who hid in the cave, all have an honourable mention in the Quran. It is thus clear that any individual can attain a lofty status in the sight of Allah by always being conscious of Him, and remaining steadfast on what is just. The stories of the Quran give us much to ponder over and implement in our lives.

The First of Humanity **(Lessons 1—7)**

Allah created the first human being, Adam (AS), from *turaab* – translated as dust or soil. He then blew into him through the Spirit, and commanded the angels to prostrate to Adam (AS) out of respect, which they did. However, one of the jinn known as Iblis (Satan), present among the angels, refused to do so, and Allah expelled him from the kingdom of heaven for his impertinence. Iblis then asked Allah to grant him respite till the Day of Judgement, so he could try and lead the descendants of Adam (AS) astray. Allah granted his wish, revealing that His true servants shall not be misled.

Meanwhile, Adam (AS) dwelled in the garden of Paradise where Allah created his mate, Hawwa (AS), the first woman, so the two of them could enjoy the blessings of Paradise together. Allah commanded them not to eat from a particular tree, but Iblis caused them to disobey Allah, leading to their expulsion from Paradise and descent on earth. Adam (AS) and Hawwa

Lessons from the Stories of the Quran

(AS) repented to Allah; He pardoned them, chose Adam (AS) as a prophet, and promised Paradise in the hereafter for whoever among humanity lived righteously.

Let us examine the lessons learnt from this account and analyse its various aspects in detail.

1

Human intellect is a great blessing

Why did Allah command the angels to prostrate to Adam (AS)? What made Adam (AS) superior to such a noble creation as the angels? It was his superior intellect: the higher faculties of thinking, perceiving, learning, and memorizing. That is why when the angels remarked that the human would cause bloodshed and corruption on earth, Allah commanded Adam (AS) to replicate to the angels all the names Allah had taught him, thus proving to the angels his superior intellect. We should, therefore, engage our minds for the purpose of gaining knowledge, researching, reflecting on the universe, and making scientific advancements. Allah repeatedly commands us in the Quran to use our cognitive abilities, frequently asking the rhetorical question, **“Then will you not use reason?” (37:138)**

2

Arrogance brings about one's downfall

When Allah commanded Iblis to prostrate to Adam (AS), he objected, saying, **“I am better than him! You created me from fire and created him from clay.”** (7:12) Iblis's view that he had been created from a superior substance led him to disobey Allah; his arrogance thus changed his status from that of a devoted servant of Allah to becoming an outcast, destined for Hell. Arrogance is an enormous sin that deprives us of Allah's favour, and distances us from Him. Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) said, *“He who has in his heart the weight of a mustard seed of arrogance shall not enter Paradise.”* (Muslim)

3

Love and mercy are basic ingredients of marriage

What was Allah's wisdom in creating the first pair of human beings a male and a female? We learn from the Quran that this was not just so they would procreate, but because they should find comfort and love in each other's company: **“And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates [i.e. spouses] that you may find tranquillity in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy.”** (30:21) This ayah further asserts that Allah has placed love and mercy between spouses as a gift from Him. Hence, the husband and wife should be sincere in their love for each other, and adopt mercy by overlooking each other's faults and shortcomings.

4

Be content with what you have

After Allah had forbidden Adam (AS) and Hawwa (AS) to eat from a particular tree, Iblis approached them and said, **“O Adam, shall I direct you to the tree of eternity and possession that will not deteriorate?” (20:120)** Iblis tried to tempt them with promises of eternal life and kingdom, and succeeded. It is intrinsic in human nature to continuously desire more and not feel satisfied for long. Even though Adam (AS) and Hawwa (AS) enjoyed the great blessings of Paradise, Iblis used trickery to arouse their curiosity, promising them even greater rewards. We should try to be content with what we can lawfully possess – be it little or much – and not be greedy for worldly possessions and luxuries. Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) said, *“Wealth is not in having many possessions; rather, true wealth is the richness of the soul.” (Bukhari)*

5

Allah accepts true repentance

After Adam (AS) and Hawwa (AS) had erred, they became remorseful, and prayed to Allah, **“Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves, and if You do not forgive us and have mercy upon us, we will surely be among the losers.” (7:23)** Because they sincerely repented, Allah turned to them in mercy, and forgave them. Indeed, He loves to forgive, and pardons all sorts of sins, of all magnitudes. As the Prophet (SAAS) said, *“Verily, Allah is more delighted with the repentance of His slave than is a person who finds his lost camel in a desert.” (Bukhari)* We should thus repent to Allah frequently and fervently.

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