This document provides a small preview from the galleys of the forthcoming *Study Quran* (HaperOne, 2015). The annotated commentary provided here was prepared by Joseph Lumbard. Other sections of the annotated commentary were prepared by Maria Dakake, Caner Dagli, and Mohammed Rustom. For bibliographies and citing the work as a whole:


For notes:

When citing the *translation*, attribution should be to Nasr, Dagli, Dakake, and Lumbard together, e.g.


When citing the annotated commentary, attribution should be to the primary author for that commentary, as detailed above, e.g.

UNDERSTANDING THE CITATIONS IN THE COMMENTARY

Passages from the Quran

When a passage from this translation of the Quran is quoted in the commentary, it appears in *italics*. For example, in the following sentence from the commentary on 3:18, the italicized words come from the translation of 3:18:

*Upholding justice* is thought by most to refer to *God* or *He*, but grammatically it could refer to the *angels* and *possessors of knowledge* as well.

Longer Quranic quotations in the commentary are italicized as well. Alternate translations or variant readings appear in standard quotation marks. Thus, all italicized words in English in the commentary are words or passages from this translation. Transliterated Arabic words, such as *hadith* and *tafsir*, also appear in italics.

Unless otherwise identified, all references in the form of two numbers separated by a colon denote Quranic passages. For example, 12:34 refers the 34th verse (or *āyah*) of the 12th chapter (or *sūrah*) of the Quran. The numbering of the verses matches that of the standard Egyptian edition, which is found in other widely distributed editions such as the *Mushaf al-Madinah*. Other translations, such as those of Yusuf Ali and Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall, number verses somewhat differently in a few cases. This difference exists because traditionally scholars, while agreeing on the text, have disagreed about where some verses end and others begin. The most famous example of this is in the *Fātiḥah*, the first *sūrah* of the Quran. According to some scholars, its first verse is *In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful*, while others say it begins with *Praise be to God, the Lord of the worlds*.
References to the Sayings of the Prophet

Rather than appearing in the commentary text, full citations for the sayings of the Prophet (sing. *ḥadīth*, pl. *ḥadīth*) are located in Appendix A, in the sequence they appear in the commentary. Sayings of the Prophet are cited in the text using standard quotation marks.

References to the Traditional Commentators on the Quran

Throughout the commentary, capital letters in parentheses follow immediately after various opinions or interpretations. These letters correspond to the commentators listed in the “Commentator Key,” whose biographies are provided in Appendix C. For example, when one reads in the commentary on 12:34 the phrase, “Some interpret *x* to mean *y* ([T]),” this means that the opinion is to be found mentioned in al-Ṭabari’s commentary on 12:34. This does not mean that it is al-Ṭabari’s personal opinion, only that the argument or interpretation can be found discussed or recorded by al-Ṭabari, whether he accepts or rejects it. By extension “((R, Q, T))” means that some interpretations can be found in multiple sources. These citations are not meant to be exhaustive; very often a given opinion will be found in dozens of commentaries, though only one is cited. We have generally preferred to mention those that are the most widely available and universally recognized.

Other times the individual opinions of these commentators are cited, as are those of other Islamic scholars such as al-Ghazzālī (d. 505/1111). For example, “According to al-Rāzī ...” signifies the personal opinion of al-Rāzī, not only an opinion that he records in his commentary from his contemporaries or earlier sources. Opinions other than al-Rāzī’s own but discussed by him would be cited using “([R]).”

Full scholarly citations of all the interpretations and opinions in this commentary would have been impractical for a work of this kind. However, writing a commentary without any citations, although it would have saved space and smoothed the style, would have severed a crucial and fruitful connection to the tradition and left our commentary unmoored and ambiguous in its sourcing. Since the traditional commentaries are also histories of the intellectual activity of interpreting the Quran, and since they are arranged verse by verse in sequence like the present work, citing them in the commentary maintains transparency without weighing down the text with innumerable book titles and page numbers. All of the commentaries we cite exist in print and are also available from various dependable online resources, such as altafsir.org.

These citations serve several functions. First, they make clear which elements in the commentary come directly from the traditional commentaries and which parts constitute analysis and contributions by the editors. Second, they provide a research tool for further scholarly investigation. Third, since the traditional commentaries are slowly becoming available in English, these citations will allow English readers easier access to the traditional scholarship on the Quran.

Cross-References

Cross-references in the commentary text use a lowercase *c* appended to a verse number to indicate a cross-reference to another portion of the commentary. For example, “See also 2.4.35c” means “See also the commentary on 2.4.35.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commentator</th>
<th>Key</th>
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<tr>
<td>AF</td>
<td>Abu’l-Futuḥ Husayn ibn ‘Ali al-Rāzī (d. 525/1131), Rawḥ al-jinān wa rūḥ al-janān</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aj</td>
<td>Āḥmad ibn ‘Ajibah (d. 1224/1809), al-Bahr al-madid fi ṭafsīr al-Qur’ān al-majid</td>
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<tr>
<td>Āl</td>
<td>Shihāb al-Dīn al-Ālūsī (d. 1270/1854), Rūḥ al-MA’ānī fi ṭafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘azīm wa’l-sab’ al-mathānī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ās</td>
<td>Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir ibn Āshūr (d. 1393/1973), al-Tahīr wa’l-tanwīr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bāl</td>
<td>‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar ibn Muḥammad al-Bayḍawī (d. 685/1286), Anwār al-tanzil wa’l-asrār al-tawīl</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bg</td>
<td>Al-Ḥusayn ibn al-Farrā’ al-Baghawī (d. 516/1122), Ma’ālim al-tanzil</td>
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<td>Bq</td>
<td>Burhān al-Dīn Abu’l-Ḥasan Ibrāhīm al-Bīqā’ī (d. 885/1480), Naẓm al-durar fī tanāṣīb al-‘ayāt wa’l-suwar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IA</td>
<td>Qāḍi Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn al-‘Arabī (d. 543/1148), Abkām al-Qur’ān</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IH</td>
<td>Ismā’īl Haqqī al-Burūsawī (d. 1137/1725), Rūḥ al-bayān</td>
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<td>IJ</td>
<td>Abu’l-Faraj ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Alī ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201), Zād al-masir fī ‘ilm al-ṭafsīr</td>
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<tr>
<td>IK</td>
<td>“Imād al-Dīn Abu’l-Fidā’ Ismā’īl ibn ‘Umar ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373), Ṭafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘azīm</td>
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Commentator Key

Iṣ Al-Rāghib al-İfshānī (d. 502/1110), Mufradāt al-fāṣaṣ al-Qurʿān

Iṭ Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Haqiq ibn ʿAṭīyyah al-Andalusi (d. 543/1147), al-Muharrar al-wajiz fi tafsīr al-kitāb al-ʿazīz

JJ Jalāl al-Dīn al-Mahalli (d. 864/1459) and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505), Tafsīr al-jālālān

K ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī (d. 736/1336), Taʾwil al-Qurʿān al-kārim, known by many as Tafsīr ibn ʿArabī

Kā Muḥammad Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī (d. 1091/1680), Tafsīr al-jāfī

KI Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Ḥazīm al-Kalbī (d. 741/1340), al-Tashīḥ li-ʿulūm al-tanzīl

M Abū Maṣūr Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Māturīdī (d. 335/944), Taʾwilat abī al-sunnah

MṢ Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shirāzī (Mullā Ṣadrā; d. 1050/1640), Tafsīr al-Qurʿān al-kārim

Mu Muqāṭil ibn Sulaymān (d. 150/767), Tafsīr Muqāṭil ibn Sulaymān

Mw ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad al-Māwardī (d. 450/1058), al-Nukat wa l-ʿuyūn fī tafsīr al-Qurʿān

My Rashīd al-Dīn al-Maybūdī (d. ca. 520/1126), Kashf al-ansār wa ʿuddat al-ahrār

N ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Ḥazīm al-Kalbī (d. 731/1330), Muhārik al-tanzīl wa ṣaqqāʾīq al-taʾwil

Nī Niẓām al-Dīn Ḥasan al-Nisābūrī (or al-Naysābūrī; d. 728/1328), Tafsīr gharaʾib al-Qurʿān wa ṣaqqāʾīq al-furqān

Q Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Malik al-Qūṭūbī (d. 671/1272), al-Jāmiʿ li-abkām al-Qurʿān

Qb Sayyid Qūṭb (d. 1386/1966), Fi ḥālāl al-Qurʿān

Qm ʿAlī ibn ʿAbd al-Qāsim al-Qurṭubī (d. 328/939), Tafsīr al-Qurʿān

Qū Abū ʿAbd al-Qāsim al-Qurṭubī (d. 465/1072), Lashāʾif al-ishārāt

R Fākh al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210), al-Tafsīr al-kabīr

Rb Rūzbihān Bāqli al-Shirāzī (d. 606/1209), ʿArāʾīs al-bayān fī ṣaqqāʾīq al-Qurʿān

Sa Naṣr ibn Muḥammad al-Samarqundī (d. 375/983), Bahāʿ l-ʿulūm

Sh Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Shawkānī (d. 1250–55/1834–39), Faith al-qādir

ST Sahl ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Tustarī (d. 283/896). Tafsīr al-Qurʿān al-ʿazīz
<table>
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<th>Commentator Key</th>
<th>Name and Year of Death</th>
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<tr>
<td>Su</td>
<td>ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Sulamī (d. 1021)</td>
<td>Ḥaqīq al-tafsīr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sy</td>
<td>Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 1505)</td>
<td>al-Durr al-manṭhūr fī tafsīr al-maʿthūr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ẓ</td>
<td>Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 923)</td>
<td>Jāmiʿ al-bayān ʿan taʿwil āy al-Qurʿān</td>
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<td>Ẓb</td>
<td>Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabarī (d. 1508)</td>
<td>al-Mīzān fī tafsīr al-Qurʿān</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Th</td>
<td>ʿAbd al-Rahmān ibn Muḥammad al-Ṭabarī (d. 928)</td>
<td>al-Jawāhir al-bisān fī tafsīr al-Qurʿān</td>
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<td>TH</td>
<td>Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Qalāʾī (d. 1035)</td>
<td>al-Kashf waʿl-bayān ʿan tafsīr al-Qurʿān</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ṭs</td>
<td>Abū ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭabrisī (or al-Ṭabarī; d. 1134–41)</td>
<td>Majmaʿ al-bayān fī tafsīr al-Qurʿān</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ṭū</td>
<td>Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī (d. 1067)</td>
<td>al-Tibyān fī tafsīr al-Qurʿān</td>
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<td>W</td>
<td>Abū ʿAbd Allāh Ḥasan al-Wāḥidī (d. 1076)</td>
<td>Asbāb nuzūl al-Qurʿān</td>
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<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Qāsim Maḥmūd ibn ʿUmar al-Zamakhshārī (d. 1144)</td>
<td>al-Kashf ʿan ḥawāmiḍ ḥaqīq al-tanzil wa ʿuyūn al-aqāwil fī wujūb al-taʿwil</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There is consensus among all scholars that ْن س ى ْن is a Makkan sûrah from the early part of the middle Makkah period. Some maintain that the whole of the sûrah is Makkan, though many commentators believe that v. 12 is from the Madinan period. The sûrah takes its name from the mention of the Arabic letters َٰ and َٰ in the opening verse. Some also refer to it as “The Heart of the Quran,” after a well-known hadith: “Everything has a heart, and the heart of the Quran is ْن س ى ْن. Whosoever recites ْن س ى ْن, God records for him the recitation of the Quran ten times for his recitation of it” (Āl, Q).

Seen as the heart of the Quran, this sûrah plays a very important role in traditional Islamic piety. Many Muslims recite ْن س ى ْن regularly as part of their supererogatory devotions, and it is often the only sûrah longer than a page or so that Muslims have memorized in full. A famous hadith says, “Recite ْن س ى ْن over your dead” (Q, Sy). It is thus recited for those who are close to death, those who have just died, and at the graves of loved ones. It is also recited for those who are sick, for another hadith states, “Verily, in the Quran there is a sûrah that heals through its recitation and forgives through its being heard—indeed, that is Sûrat ْن س ى ْن” (Āl, Q). ْن س ى ْن is also recited by many Muslims after the performance of the obligatory prayers in the morning and the evening. Regarding the latter, another report, sometimes recorded as a hadith, states, “Whosoever recites Sûrat ْن س ى ْن at night, desiring the Face of God, is forgiven during that night” (IK, Q). Although many believe that the exhortation to recite ْن س ى ْن in the morning is a hadith, it most likely derives from a saying attributed to Ibn َٰ Abbâs: “Whosoever recites ْن س ى ْن when he awakens is given ease for his day until the evening comes. And whosoever reads it in the midst of the night is given ease for his night until he awakens” (Q).

Several scholars maintain that ْن س ى ْن is the heart of the Quran because it addresses its central teachings regarding God, prophethood, and the Hereafter. The sûrah begins with an address to the Prophet that clarifies both his mission and the nature of revelation (vv. 1–12) followed by a parable regarding those
who reject prophets (vv. 13–30) that segues into a discussion of Resurrection and the signs of it in the natural world (vv. 31–44). Responses to various objections common to the disbelievers and the consequences of them (vv. 45–52) then lead into a discussion of the disparate ends of the disbelievers and the believers (vv. 53–68), which concludes with another reflection on the nature of Muhammad’s prophethood (vv. 69–70). The final section returns to a discussion of the signs in the created order that serve to inform one of God’s creative Power and ability to resurrect (vv. 71–81) and concludes with an affirmation of God’s Omnipotence (vv. 82–83).

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

1 Yā Sin. 2 By the Wise Quran, 3 truly thou art among the message bearers, 4 upon a straight path, 5 a revelation of the Mighty, the Merciful, 6 that thou mayest warn a people whose fathers were not warned; so they were

1 The Arabic letters yā’ and sin are among the separated letters (al-muqatta’āt) that are found at the beginning of twenty-nine sūras and whose meaning is considered by most to be known only to God; see 2:1c. Some allow that yā’ sin could be an abbreviation meaning “O human being” (Q). In this interpretation, the yā’ is the vocative “O,” used in many Quranic verses, and the sin is an abbreviation for ansān, the diminutive of insan (“human being”). In this context, the diminutive “O little human being” is a term of endearment interpreted as God’s address to the Prophet Muhammad. Others say that Yā Sin is a name given to the Prophet by God whose exact meaning is unknown (Q). For this reason it is sometimes used in the Islamic world as the name for a male. ‘Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib is reported to have said, “I heard the Messenger of God say, ‘Verily, God has named me by seven names in the Quran: Muhammad [3:144; 32:40; 47:21; 48:29], Ahmad [61:8], Tā Ḥā [20:1], Yā Sin [36:1], thou enwrapped [al-Muzammili; 75:1], thou who art covered [al-Mudaththir; 74:1], and servant of God [’Abd Allāh; 72:19]’” (IA, Q). Other commentators take Yā Sin to be a name of the Quran itself, while al-Qushayri identifies it with the Day of the Covenant (yatan al-mithāq), when God made a covenant with all the children of Adam (see 7:172c).

2 Hakim, here translated Wise, can also mean “determined” or “made firm” (mubakham), as in 11:1, where the Quran is described as a Book whose signs have been determined (ṣāhīmat; Q). According to Ibn Kathīr, its being determined (mubakham) indicates that falsehood comes not upon it from before it or from behind it (4:142). Hakim could also mean something that makes wise (muḥkim), indicating that the Quran teaches the truth. According to Ibn Kathīr, the use of hakim here alludes to the Quran as a revealed book. The Quran is also described as wise in 10:1; 31:3; 43:3–4.

3–4 These verses affirm the Prophet’s mission, thus supporting the interpretations that see Yā Sin as a reference to the Prophet himself. For straight path, see 1:6c.

5 Revelation can be read as the object of an implied verb, meaning, “We revealed it as a revelation,” in which case it refers back to the Wise Quran, or it can be read in the nominative, meaning, “It is a revelation.” Most commentators say revelation in either reading refers to the Quran, although some say it refers to the Prophet (Q, R), in which case “it” in the elided phrase would be rendered “he.” Both interpretations are possible, as the Prophet is also said to be sent down, as in 65:10–11: God has certainly sent down unto you a reminder: a Messenger reciting unto you the clear
The Word has indeed come due for most of them, for they do not believe. Truly We have put shackles upon their necks, and they are up to their chins, so that they are forced up. And We placed a barrier before them.
and a barrier behind them and veiled them; so they see not. 10 It is the same for them whether thou warnest them or warnest them not; they do not believe. 11 Thou only warnest whomsoever follows the Reminder and fears the Compassionate unseen. So give such a one glad tidings of forgiveness and a generous reward. 12 Truly We give life to the dead and record that which they have sent forth and that which they have left behind. And We have counted all things in

did so, he could hear the Prophet but not see him. When a third man went to smash the Prophet’s head, he saw before him a tremendous camel that was about to swallow him (Q). These particular examples of the incident to which this verse may refer are not, however, taken to contravene the more general implications, but rather to be manifestations of particular forms of denial and disbelief represented by the acts described.

10–11 Cf. 2:6. The last phrase of v. 10 could also be read, “they will not believe.” For similar verses where warnings and guidance are of no avail to disbelievers, see 7:193; 26:116; 63:6. These verses remind the Prophet that he cannot guide those whom God has not guided and should simply leave them to God: Truly God leads astray whomsoever He will and guides whomsoever He will; so let not thy soul be expended in regrets over them. Truly God knows that which they do (35:8). The Reminder is a reference to the Quran itself (IK, Q, R, T); for the Quran as Reminder, see 36:69c. Fears the Compassionate unseen (cf. 50:33) can be interpreted as a reference to worshipping God while God remains unseen or to worshipping God in seclusion (Q, Ts). A generous reward here means Paradise or the Garden. See also 67:12c.
12 This verse follows upon the counsel to the Prophet to deliver the warning and leave the disbelievers to their own devices, since the price of their wrongdoing will come due upon the Resurrection. We give life to the dead can be seen as a reference to the Resurrection; to God’s bringing the earth back to life, as in 57:17: Know that God revives the earth after its death (IK); to bringing people from idolatry to faith (Z); or to the revivification, through knowledge and truth, of hearts made dead through heedlessness and ignorance (Aj, IK). That which they have sent forth refers to the deeds that will testify for or against them in the Hereafter; see 5:80; 75:13c; 82:5c. Here, that which they have left behind literally means “their footsteps” or “their traces.” It is said to refer to one of the tribes of Madinah, the Banū Salamah, who were settled far from the Prophet’s mosque and desired to relocate closer to it. This verse was then revealed. So the Prophet said to them, “Your footprints are recorded [i.e., you receive reward for walking to the mosque]. Why then do you want to move?” (IK, Q, T, W). More broadly, it is understood as a reference to the traces of good deeds that one leaves behind (Aj, T). As a well-known hadith states, “When the son of Adam dies, all his deeds come to an end except three: knowledge that is beneficial, a righteous child who prays for him, or ongoing charity that he leaves behind” (IK); see 75:13c. And We have counted all things in a clear registry (imām) is taken by some to allude to the inscription of all things from the beginning of time to its end on the Preserved Tablet (85:12; Aj, Tb, Ts), which is the imām (“leader”) of all other books (Aj) and which is said to comprise all of God’s Decrees (Tb, Ts); for the inscription of God’s Decrees, see 68:1c. Others say imām refers to the book or “registry” in which all human actions are recorded (Aj, IK, Q, Ts); see 17:71c; 18:49c. This is also one of the central verses cited by Shiite theologians as Qur’anic support for the Shiite understanding of Divinely ordained leadership in the form of the imamate after the death of the Prophet. In this vein al-Qummī relates a saying from ‘Ali ibn Abī Ţalīb: “I, by God, am the clear imām; I clarify truth from falsehood. I inherited it from the Messenger of God” (Qm, Tb). Shiite sources also relate that the Prophet said regarding ‘Ali, “He is the Imam in whom God records the knowledge of all things” (Qm, Tb).
And set forth for them as a parable the people of the town, when the message bearers came unto it. When We sent two unto them, they denied them. So We strengthened them with a third, and they said, “Verily, we have been sent unto you!” They said, “You are but human beings like us, and the Compassionate has not sent down anything. You are but lying.” They said, “Our Lord knows. Verily, we have indeed been sent unto you! And naught is incumbent upon us save the clear proclamation.”

13–14 The Prophet is here commanded to provide the Quraysh with an example of the fate that befell those who treated previous message bearers as they were treating him. The first phrase of v. 13 could also be rendered, “Set forth for them a parable, the people of the town.” Most identify the town as Antioch (IK, Q, T, T6), though this identification cannot be verified (IK). Most commentators view the message bearers (mursalin, rather than rasul, “messengers”) as apostles sent to the town by Jesus. In this interpretation, that God is said to have sent them indicates that Jesus was commanded by God to send them (Q, T6). After the first two were sent, the people of the town beat and imprisoned them (Q, T, T6). Some say this punishment was ordered by the king (Aj), after which a third message bearer, whom some identify as Jonas, was sent.

According to another opinion, the message bearers are prophets (Aj, T6) rather than apostles sent by a prophet. This interpretation seems more likely, as the Prophet Muhammad is referred to as a mursal (message bearer) in v. 3 and in 2:252, and other prophets are referred to as mursalun (message bearers) in over a dozen verses. We have been sent unto you here and in v. 16 could also be rendered, “we are message bearers unto you.”

15 In other passages, many communities reject prophets because they are human, claiming that if God had wanted to send a message, He would have chosen an angel as His message bearer or messenger. As 17:94 states, And naught hindered men from believing when guidance came unto them, save that they said, “Has God sent a human being as a messenger?” (see also 6:8–9, 50; 11:12; 14:10; 23:33; 41:14; 64:6). In other verses, this same objection is attributed to those who opposed the Prophet Muhammad: And they say, “What ails this Messenger, who eats food and walks in the markets? Why is there not an angel sent down unto him to be a warner with him?” (25:7).

16 The message bearers’ second statement of their mission is more emphatic than the first (v. 14), because it is a reaffirmation in the face of denial and rejection.

17 Like the Prophet Muhammad, the message bearers are only instructed to deliver the message and to guide those who heed it; they are not responsible for those who deny it; see 36:10–11C. That the prophets are only responsible for delivering the message is emphasized in many passages; see, e.g., 3:10; 5:92, 99; 13:40; 16:35, 82; 2:4:54; 29:18; 42:48; 64:11.

18 This is the response of the disbelievers to the message bearers, meaning, “We see an ill omen or foretell a punishment that will befall you.”

19 The response from the message bearers to the disbelievers is that the punishment the disbelievers foretell will befall them because of their disbelief. In the most widespread reading of this verse, though you are reminded (in dbukkirtum) is read a in dukkirtum, meaning, “Even if you are reminded . . . .” In this reading, the ellipsis indicates a rhetorical elision that constitutes the object of the
people!” And from the outskirts of the city, a man came running. He said, “O my people! Follow the message bearers! Follow those who ask not of you any reward and who are guided. Why should I not worship Him who originated me, and unto Whom you will be returned? Shall I take gods apart from Him? If the Compassionate desired harm for me, their intercession would avail me naught, nor would they save me. Truly would I then be in

interrogative and serves as a rebuke, as if to say, “Do you augur ill and disbelieve, even when you have been reminded?” In another canonical reading, a in dhukkirtum is read aya dhukkirtum, meaning, “now that you have been reminded” (al-an dhukkirtum; Q, T). Another reading is an dhukkirtum, meaning, “because you have been reminded” (Z). Cf. 17:13. And [for] every man We have fastened his omen upon his neck, and We shall bring it forth for him on the Day of Resurrection; see also 7:111; 27:47. That the disbelievers’ auguring ill rebounds upon them indicates the “reflexive” nature of good and evil deeds, which is emphasized throughout the Quran. For example, if one spends in charity, one spends it for oneself, as in 2:272: Whatever good you spend, it is for yourselves, when you spend only seeking the Face of God. Conversely, whosoever is miserly is only miserly unto himself (47:38); if one tries to deceive, one only deceives oneself (2:9); if one tries to lead astray, one only goes astray (3:69; 4:113); and if some devise a plot against God and His Messenger, God will devise a plot against them (52:42); see 4:111c. For the meaning of prodigal people, see 10:12c.

20 The man in this verse is usually identified by the name Ḥabīb al-Najjār. Some claim that he worshipped God in seclusion, and when the news of the message bearers came, he proclaimed his faith (Aj). Others attribute a saying to the Prophet: “The foremost among the people are three who did not disbelieve in God for the blinking of an eye: 'Ali ibn Abī Ṭalīb, the companion of Yā Sīn, and the believer among the people of Pharaoh [see 40:28–29]. They are the truthful (ṣiddiq)” (Sy, Th, Ts). Another interpretation says that Ḥabīb al-Najjār followed the first two message bearers after they healed his son (Aj, Q).

21 A mark of prophethood is to ask for nothing from the people, except that they follow the message the prophets are sent to deliver. As Noah says, And if you turn your backs, I have not asked of you any reward. My reward lies only with God, and I am commanded to be among those who submit (10:72). Thus the Prophet Muhammad is commanded in 6:90; 38:86; and 42:23. Say, “I ask not of you any reward for it” (see also 26:109, 127, 145, 164, 180).

22 Originated me translates ḥātari, which derives from the same root as fīrah, or primordial nature, alluded to in 10:10: Set thy face to religion as a hānīf, in the primordial nature from God upon which He originated mankind—there is no altering the creation of God; that is the upright religion, but most of mankind know not. Read in light of 30:30 and 51:56. And I did not create jinn and mankind, save to worship Me, this verse implies that the worship of God is central to the primordial nature with which human beings were created.

23 The question means, ‘Shall I take gods other than God, worship them, and leave the worship of the One Who is worthy of worship?’ (Sh). The Quran indicates that angels and prophets will be able to intercede on the Day of Judgment, but that intercession is entirely by the Will of God. As 2:109 states, On that Day intercession will be of no benefit, save that of those whom the Compassionate has granted leave and with whose word He is content. Thus 2:255 asks rhetorically, Who is there who may intercede with Him save by His Leave? For intercession, see 2:148c; 2:255c.

24 Manifest error (dalāl mubin) is employed throughout the Quran to indicate one whose wrongdoing makes him stray from the path of truth (T). It can also be understood to mean “error that makes manifest” or “makes clear.” It is also read by some as dalāl mubayyin (Bd), which would then indicate “error that has been made manifest” or “made clear.”
manifest error. 25 Truly I believe in your Lord, so listen to me.” 26 It was said unto him, “Enter the Garden!” He said, “Would that my people knew how my Lord forgave me and placed me among the honored.” 27 And after him We did not send down a host from Heaven against his people; nor would We send down. 28 It was but a single cry. Then, behold, they were extinguished. 29 Alas for the servants! Never did a messenger come unto them, but that they mocked him. 30 Have they not considered how many generations before them We destroyed, such that they return not unto them? 31 Each of them shall be a group arraigned before Us. 32 A sign unto them is the dead earth: We revive it and bring forth grain therefrom, that they may eat thereof. 33 And

25 According to some, so listen to me is a call to the people to follow God and His message bearers; others say it is a call to the message bearers, asking them to bear witness for the man before God (IK).

26 Some say that after his declaration to the people (v. 25), the man was stoned and killed (Aj, IK, Ts). Then he was told by God, or by the angels and the righteous, Enter the Garden! (Aj, Ik). Others maintain that God took him alive to heaven.

27 This verse could also mean “for what my Lord forgave me and that He placed me among the honored” (Ts), which may imply the bad deeds that were forgiven or the good deed(s) for which God forgave him his sins. According to Qatādah (d. 117/736), one of the foremost commentators from the third generation of Muslim scholars, the people began to stone him while he was praying for God to guide them, and as they continued to stone him, he continued to pray for them, even while suffering a gruesome death at their hands (IK).

28 This verse is taken by many as a reference to the punishment that God inflicted upon his people for rejecting the message bearers and for killing (or seeking to kill) Habīb al-Najjār, in which case it indicates that God wiped them out with a single cry (v. 29) rather than sending angels against them (IK, Q). Others say that a host from Heaven refers to the angels of revelation (Ts), meaning that God did not send another revelation after having sent the message bearers (T). The second interpretation is more consistent with this story in its function as a warning to the Quraysh, for it implies that accepting the revelation sent to the Prophet Muhammad is their only opportunity and they will not receive another. The last phrase could also be rendered “nor what We used to send down” (Ka, Ts).

29 This verse indicates that the destruction for having disbelieved was instant.

30 Cf. 15:11. Alas for the servants! is interpreted by most to indicate amazement at the extreme injustice disbelievers do to themselves and the punishment they will suffer (IK, Q). Others take servants as a reference to the prophets, in which case the verse expresses God’s lament for the hardships they endure when mocked by disbelievers (Q, Ts).

31 They and them can be read as a reference to the former peoples who were destroyed, to the inhabitants of Makkah who deny the prophethood of the Prophet Muhammad, or to both.

32 This verse and v. 33 indicate that all human beings, believers and disbelievers alike, will be arraigned on the Day of Judgment. But other verses indicate that only the disbelievers will be arraigned unto the punishment (30:16; 34:38). It appears that these verses indicate two arraignments: the first is the gathering of all human beings referred to here and in v. 33; the second, which comes after the gathering of all human beings, is the Reckoning the disbelievers will endure before they are cast into Hell.

33–34 These verses mark the beginning of what can be seen as the second section of the sūrah. They employ a common Quranic rhetorical
We place gardens of date palms and grapevines therein and make springs flow forth, that they may eat of its fruit and of that which their hands have worked. Will they not then give thanks? Glory be unto Him, Who has created the pairs, all of them, from what the earth makes grow, and from themselves, and from what they know not. And a sign unto them is the night: We strip the day therefrom, and behold, they are in darkness. And the sun device by which the wonders of creation are cited as signs of God’s Oneness, Perfection, Wisdom, and Omnipotence; see 3:190–91c; 41:3c. The phrase a sign unto them can have three meanings: it is something to be contemplated; it is a blessing upon human beings; or it is a warning to human beings (Q). Here God’s Ability to revive the earth is cited as evidence of His Ability to resurrect (cf. 7:57; 16:64; 22:5; 39:6; 50:19; 50:25; 50:30; 41:13; 41:31; 41:33; 45:15; 50:9–11). As in v. 12, it can also be seen as an allusion to the revivification, through faith and knowledge, of a heart that has been hardened. Gardens of date palms and grapevines (cf. 2:166; 23:19) are specified because they were thought by Arabs to be the best of fruits; they can thus be seen as an allusion to all forms of plant life by which people are nourished (Q).

35 Its fruit refers to the fruit produced by plants through the water from the springs (Q). Or it could be rendered “His fruit,” meaning the fruit that God has produced (Aj, IK). As translated, the verse can be read as a positive affirmation of eating the fruits of one’s own labor, for as a hadith says, “No one eats any food that is better than that from the work of his own hand.” That which their hands have worked could also be rendered “though their hands did not make it” (IK, Q, R, T), a reference to the fact that all fruits are ultimately produced by God (cf. 17:60; 56:64). People’s lack of gratitude is a common Qur’anic theme, as in 2:43: Truly God is Possessed of Bounty for mankind, but most of mankind do not give thanks (cf. 10:60; 12:38; 22:66; 23:50; 40:61).

36 Glory be indicates both God’s being beyond all that the idolaters associate with Him and amazement at what they say. Pairs translates azwāj, which can also mean “kinds” in the sense of species, thus indicating the many different kinds of things that God has created (Q). It can also be seen as a reference to the creation of all things in pairs, as in 51:49: And of all things We created pairs, that haply you may remember (IK). From themselves could also mean “from their souls,” in which case it can be seen as a reference to the male and female, as in 53:45. And that He creates the two (azwāj)—male and female, which are said to be mates (azwāj) created from a single soul (4:11: 6:98; 7:189; 39:6). From what they know not can be seen as an allusion to the unseen realm or to the many things in the created world that humans have not experienced, as in 16:8: And He creates that which you know not.

37 The alteration of night and day are cited throughout the Qur’an as a sign of God’s Power and Perfection, as are the sun and the moon. As 39:5 says, He rolls the night up into the day and rolls the day up into the night, and He made the sun and the moon subservient, each running for a term appointed. For the relationship between night and day, see 10:66; 17:112. Strip translates nisālaka, which originally means to remove the skin from an animal.

38 It is reported that a Companion of the Prophet, Abū Dharr, said, “The Prophet asked me at sunset, ‘Do you know where the sun goes [when it sets]? I replied, ‘God and His Messenger know best.’ He said, ‘It travels till it prostrates itself underneath the Throne and asks permission to rise again, and it is permitted. Then it is about to prostrate itself, but its prostration will not be accepted, and it will ask permission to go on its course, but it will not be permitted and will instead be ordered to return whence it has come, and so it will rise in the west’” (IK). In light of this account, the verse alludes to the sun’s final dwelling place on the Day of Judgment. Others see the verse as a reference to the sun following its winter and summer orbits until each solstice, when it reaches its northernmost or southernmost extreme before reversing direction (IK). Dwelling place then indicates the solstice. In this interpretation it bears a close resemblance to the
runs to a dwelling place of its own. That is the decree of the Mighty, the Knowing. 39 And for the moon, We have decreed mansions, till it returns like an old palm stalk. 40 It befits not the sun to overtake the moon, nor the night to outstrip the day. Each glides in an orbit. 41 And a sign unto them is that We carried their progeny in the full-laden ark. 42 And We created for them the like thereof upon which they ride. 43 And if We will, We drown them, such that they would have none to call upon and would not be saved, 44 save as a mercy word "solstice," which derives from the Latin solstitial, meaning "sun-stopping." Another reading, "And the sun runs; it has no dwelling place (lā mustaqarrā labā)," was reportedly preferred by some of the Prophet’s Companions, such as the famous Quran scholars Ibn Mas‘ūd and Ibn ‘Abbās (IK, T, Ts).

39 This verse is a reference to the waxing and waning of the moon through the twenty-eight stations (mānzil) of a single lunar month (Q). Like an old palm stalk is a reference to the appearance of what remains from a date cluster after its fruit has been removed and it has withered, when it resembles the thin crescent moon in shape, width, and color (Q, Z).

40 Cf. 3:133. The sun, moon, and other celestial bodies move in separate measurable orbits that are essential for navigating space and calculating time; without them human beings would lose their bearings and not be able to continue their lives on earth; more specifically, they would not be able to perform the religious rites required of them. In this way they can be seen as manifestations of God’s Guidance and Mercy. As 10:5 states, He it is Who made the sun a radiance, and the moon a light, and determined for it stations, that you might know the number of years and the reckoning of time (see also 17:12). In 2:189 the stations of the moon are specifically linked to performing the pilgrimage: They ask thee about the new moons. Say, "They are markers of time for mankind and for the hajj." In this way, the sun and the moon serve humanity in this life, though on the Day of Judgment the sun and the moon are brought together (75:9).

41 According to most, this verse refers to Noah’s Ark, by which God preserved one generation of humanity and thereby all of humanity (IK, T, Ts, Z). Others interpret it as a reference to past generations being carried in the wombs of women, which are here likened to the full-laden ark (Q, Z).

42 This verse is taken by many as a reference to other ships that are similar to Noah’s Ark (IK, T, Ts), though many understand it as a reference to camels, which were known as "the ships of the desert" (IK, T, Ts, Z). Others say that it is a reference to all beasts of burden (Q, T, Ts).

43 This verse indicates that God could drown people at any moment (IK). In this sense it is a reminder that one’s life is always in God’s Hands, as in other passages that speak of those who remember God when they are on the verge of drowning, yet forget Him when danger is no longer imminent; see 10:22-23; 17:66-67. They would have none to call upon for help or protection. This phrase could also be rendered, "None would call upon them," indicating that they are completely forgotten. This latter interpretation is supported by several verses that speak of the disbelievers being forgotten (e.g., 7:51: 9:67; 10:126; 32:14; 45:34; 59:19).

44 For a while indicates that God will postpone the disbelievers’ punishment, thus giving them time until the moment of their death to repent or to prove their true nature, as in 3:178: And let not those who disbelieve suppose that the respite We grant them is good for them. We only grant them respite that they may increase in sin, and theirs shall be a humiliating punishment. In this context, enjoyment for a while indicates the ephemeral delights of this world, which are naught but the enjoyment of delusion (3:185; 57:20) and stand in stark contrast to the rewards of the next life (see 3:14; 4:77; 9:38; 13:16; 20:131; 28:60; 40:39; 42:16).
from Us and an enjoyment for a while. \(\text{45}\) And when it is said unto them, “Be mindful of that which is before you and of that which is behind you, that haply you may receive mercy.” \(\text{46}\) Never did a sign from among the signs of their Lord come unto them but that they turned away from it. \(\text{47}\) And when it is said unto them, “Spend of that wherewith God has provided you,” those who disbelieve say to those who believe, “Are we to feed one whom, if God willed, He would feed him? You are in naught but manifest error.” \(\text{48}\) And they say, “When will

\(\text{45}\) That which is before you can be taken as a reference to the Hereafter, which is to come and for which one must work, and that which is behind you as a reference to this world, by which one should not be deluded (Q, Ts). According to others, the first phrase refers to what is apparent, and the second to what is hidden (Q), as in 34:9: Have they not considered that which is before them and that which is behind them of the sky and earth? If We will, We cause the earth to engulf them or fragments from the sky to fall upon them. Truly in that is a sign for every penitent servant. According to Mujāhid and Ibn 'Abbās, the former refers to the sins one has committed (IK, Q), and the latter to the sins one will commit (Q), meaning that one should be mindful of God so as to avoid sin in the future and repent for the sins of the past (Ts). “They turn away from it” could be placed at the end of the verse as an implied response to the conditional phrase when is it said unto them (Q, Ts).

\(\text{46}\) Cf. 6:4. This verse can be understood as a reference to the signs mentioned in the preceding verses, to the whole of the created order, to the whole of revelation, or to all three, as all are said to be signs for those who possess intellect (3:190). Thus 18:57 says, And who does greater wrong than one who has been reminded of the signs of his Lord, then turns away from them and forgets that which his hands have sent forth? Surely We have placed coverings over their hearts, such that they understand not, and in their ears a deafness. Even if thou callest them to guidance, they will never be rightly guided (see also 32:23). It is not that these people cannot see the signs, but that God veils them due to their arrogance and disbelief, as in 7:146: I shall turn away from My signs those who wax arrogant upon the earth without right. Even if they were to see every sign, they would not believe in them.

\(\text{47}\) Although there are several different accounts identifying the subject of this verse, they all agree that it responds to those who scoffed at the injunction to spend in the way of God—to feed the poor—found throughout the Quran. It is said that some disbelievers among the Quraysh said to Abū Bakr, who used to feed the destitute among the Muslims from his own wealth, “O Abū Bakr, do you claim that God is able to feed these people?” He replied, “Yes.” To which they replied, “So why is it that he does not feed them?” He said, “Some people are tried with poverty, others with wealth. The poor are commanded to be patient, and the wealthy are commanded to give.” So they replied, “O Abū Bakr, surely you are in error. Do you claim that God is able to feed these people, yet He does not feed them, then you feed them?” Then this verse was revealed, as were 92:5–6 (Q).

\(\text{48}\) Cf. 10:48; 21:38; 17:71; 54:29; 67:24. The disbelievers are said to have mocked the Prophet for not knowing exactly when the Hour and the Day of Resurrection, about which he warned them, would come to pass, for they expected a prophet to be able to see the future. In response to this expectation, 7:187 states: They question thee about the Hour, when it will set in. Say, “Knowledge thereof lies only with My Lord. None save He shall manifest it at its proper time. Heavy shall it weigh upon the heavens and the earth. It shall not come upon you but suddenly.” They question thee as if thou knew it well. Say, “Knowledge thereof lies only with God, but most of mankind know not.” According to some, the disbelievers referred to the Resurrection as this promise, because they thought they would be the ones to be rewarded with good. Thus Ibn Kathîr glosses this verse with 42:18: Those who believe not in it would seek to hasten it.
this promise come to pass, if you are truthful?” They await naught but a single cry that will seize them while they dispute among themselves, and then they can make no bequest, nor return to their people. And the trumpet will be blown. Then, behold, they will rush forth from their graves unto their Lord. They will say, “Oh, woe unto us! Who has raised us from our place of sleep?” “This is that which the Compassionate did promise; and the message bearers spoke true.” It shall be but a single cry. Then, behold, they will all be arraigned before Us! This day no soul will be wronged in any way, and you will not be recompensed save for that which you used to do. Truly the inhabitants of the Garden on that Day will be busy rejoicing, and their spouses

49 A single cry refers to the first blast of Seraphiel’s trumpet (see 39:68a), which will level all that is on the earth. It will come while they are oblivious to it, disputing, bargaining, eating and drinking, and engaging in other affairs of the world.

50 The Hour will come upon people in an instant, so that they cannot attend to any affair of this world, thus indicating that one should be ready for death at every moment. Make no bequest could also mean “Do not exhort or enjoin” or “Give no advice,” which would then imply that there must be no delay in following the command to exhort one another to truth, and exhort one another to patience (103:3).

51 The second blast from Seraphiel’s trumpet will herald the Resurrection. Between the two blasts there is said to be an interval of forty years (AI, IK, Q, T); see also 70:43. For the relation between the two cries or blasts, see 39:68–70.

52 In an alternate reading, Oh, woe unto us! Who has raised us (waylun lanā man ba’athandā) is understood to mean, “Oh, woe unto us for our having been raised” (waylun lanā min ba’thinā; AI, Q). From our place of sleep could also be read “from our sleep” (AI). The last sentence of the verse is an answer to the question posed by the disbelievers in v. 48, as if to say that it does not matter when the promise will come to pass, only that people must be prepared for it. It can be seen as a continuation of what the disbelievers say to themselves, or as words of the angels addressed to them (IK).

53 Cf. 79:13–14; that it is but a single cry is said to imply that the matter of the Hour is as the blinking of an eye, or nearer still (16:77). For arraigned, see 16:11c.

54 This verse does not mean that none shall be punished; rather, it indicates that the punishment the disbelievers receive is because they have wronged themselves by having disbelieved and turned away from God’s signs. This idea is mentioned throughout the Quran, as in 3:117: God wrongs them not, but themselves do they wrong; and 10:44: Truly God does not wrong human beings in the least, but rather human beings wrong themselves. In this respect, even those who receive the worst of punishments are not wronged in the sense of having been treated unjustly; rather, Judgment will be made between them in truth, and they shall not be wronged (39:69); see also 43:22; 46:19.

55 This verse implies that the inhabitants of the Garden are busy with the delights of Paradise and spiritual realities (IK, Q) rather than preoccupied by the concerns of this world. According to some, those in different levels of Paradise are occupied with different delights (Q), the highest of which involves being absorbed in the vision of God (R).

56 Cf. 43:70. Those in Paradise are reclining upon couches, indicating that they are content and at peace (R on 18:31; 55:4). Some also view the couches as thrones, indicating that they have attained a high rank. Believers are to be rewarded with spouses made pure (2:25; 3:15; 4:57), which can
reclining upon couches in the shade. 58 Therein they have fruit and whatsoever they call for. 59 “Peace!” a word from a Lord most Merciful. 60 Stand apart this Day, O guilty ones! 61 Did I not enjoin upon you, O Children of Adam, that you not worship Satan—truly he is a manifest enemy unto you— and that you worship Me? This is a straight path. 62 For indeed he has led many among you astray. Did you not understand? 63 This is the Hell that you were promised. 64 Burn therein today for having disbelieved! 65 On that Day We
shall seal their mouths. Their hands will speak to Us, and their feet will bear witness to that which they used to earn. 68 And had We willed, We would have blotted out their eyes. Then they would race to the path; yet how would they see? 67 And had We willed, We would have transformed them in their places. Then they could neither advance nor go back. 68 And whomsoever We give long life, We cause him to regress in creation. Do they not understand? 69 And We have not taught him poetry; nor would it be befit him. It is but a reminder and a clear Quran, 70 to warn whomsoever is alive, and so that the Word may

what I am laughing?’ We replied, ‘God and His Messenger know best.’ He said, ‘At what a servant says to his Lord. He says, “O Lord will you not protect me from injustice (gulm)?’ He replies, “But of course.” He says, “I will not accept any witness against myself but myself.” God replies, “Today your soul suffices as a witness against you, as do the noble scribes [i.e., the angels who have recorded your deeds; see 8:15–16c].” Then his mouth will be sealed and it will be said unto his limbs, “Speak!” So they will speak of his deeds. Then he will be permitted to speak and will say [to his limbs], “Away with you! Be doomed! It was on your behalf that I contended”’ (IK, Q).

66 Blotted out their eyes means God will make them blind to guidance and the straight path (Q, T); cf. 4:47.

67 In their places could also mean “in their dwellings.” In either reading it indicates that no matter where they may be, God can alter people’s state instantly or destroy them if He wills. This is seen by some as an allusion to God punishing disbelievers by transforming them into animals such as monkeys and pigs (T). See also 4:47c.

68 We cause him to regress in creation refers to physical and mental decline in old age. Here it is meant as an argument, as if to say, “Does not the One who has power to do this have the power to resurrect you?” This is similar to 30:54: God is He Who created you from weakness, then ordained strength after weakness, then ordained weakness and old age after strength. See also 2:233, in which all of the stages of earthly life from conception to old age are cited as signs of God’s Power.

69 This verse resumes the discussion of the nature of revelation from the beginning of the surah. As in 2:224–27, it alludes to those who accused the Prophet of being merely a poet. According to several accounts, the Prophet did not have any facility with poetry, either its rhyme or meter (IK, Q). Regarding the accusations that the Prophet had himself authored the Quran, 29:48 replies, And thou didst not recite before this any Book; nor didst thou write it with thy right hand, for then those who make false claims would have doubted. That the Quran is but a reminder is repeated in several verses (6:69, 90; 11:104; 38:87; 68:52; 74:31; 81:7). To remind is the function of all revelation; hence the Torah is called a Reminder (40:54) and the People of the Book (Jews and Christians) are referred to as the people of the Reminder (16:43; 21:7). In this vein, the Quran is presented as a continuation of the previous Reminders that clarifies what humans may have forgotten from them. Thus 16:44 addresses the Prophet Muhammad: And We have sent down the Reminder unto thee that thou mightest clarify for mankind that which has been sent down unto them, that haply they may reflect.

70 From one perspective, to warn whomsoever is alive indicates all of humanity, as in 6:19: And this Quran has been revealed unto me, that thereby I may warn you and whomsoever it may reach (IK). From another perspective, it refers to those whose hearts are alive (Q) and thus able to hear the warning and soften unto the remembrance of God (39:23). For the meaning of the Word coming due, see 16:7c.
come due for the disbelievers. 71 Have they not considered that among that which Our Hands have wrought We created cattle for them, and that they are their masters, 72 and that We have subdued these for them, such that some are a mount for them and of some they eat? 73 And they have benefits and drinks therein. Will they not then give thanks? 74 Yet they have taken gods other than God, that perhaps they might be helped. 75 They cannot help them, though they be a host made ready for them. 76 So let not their speech grieve thee. Truly We know what they hide and what they disclose. 77 Has not man seen that We

71–73 God created Adam as a vicegerent upon the earth (2:30) and has also appointed human beings as vicegerents upon the earth (6:165; 35:39); humanity is thus told, Hast thou not considered that God has made whatsoever is on the earth subservient unto you? (2:65). But this vicegerency requires that a human being remain a servant of God (‘abd Allah), recognizing that all these benefits are from that which God’s Hands have wrought, and thus be thankful. For vicegerent, see 2:306; 6:166c.

This passage is one of several to invoke the benefits of cattle—their usefulness for riding and transporting goods, for providing clothing and furnishings, food and drink, and even their beauty—as signs of God’s beneficence toward human beings; see 6:142; 16:5, 66, 79; 23:21–22; 40:79; 43:12–13. For v. 73, cf. 16:66; 23:22. Drinks could also mean “drinking places.”

74 This verse refers not only to polytheism and idolatry, but also to the fact that in not giving thanks to God and failing to acknowledge that He is the Creator and Sustainer of all things, human beings arrogate powers to themselves and others that have in fact only been lent to them by God. In a hadith the Prophet warns against the subtler forms of idolatry: “The most frightening thing that I fear for my community is associating others with God. I do not mean that they will worship the sun, the moon, or idols. I mean that they will perform works for other than God with a hidden desire.”

75 Though they be a host made ready for them may be seen as a reference to the idolaters who are ready to fight on behalf of their gods, though their gods will not be able to fight for them (Ṭ). Some take it as a reference to the gods they worship becoming a host who will testify against them at the Reckoning (IK, Q, Ṭ), but this interpretation is problematic, because it implies that such gods are real beings. The verse also implies that the hidden desires for which deeds are performed are a host of difficulties that continue to create obstacles in this life until one achieves full sincerity and strives only for God.

76 On the one hand, this verse counsels the Prophet that he should not be grieved by the disbelievers’ accusations or their plotting against him in secret, since God will protect him in this world and they will receive the proper punishment for their deeds, either in this life or the next. On the other hand, it indicates that the Prophet must not be concerned with their continuing disbelief, for once he has warned them, he has fulfilled his responsibilities (see 3:176; 5:41; 68; 6:1; 10:65; 15:88; 16:127; 18:6; 165; 27:70; 31:23; 35:8). As 2:272 says in addressing the Prophet, Thou art not tasked with their guidance, but God guides whosoever He will (also see 28:36).

77 Cf. 16:4; the creation of the human being from a drop (cf. 18:37; 22:5; 35:11; 40:67; 51:46; 75:37; 76:2; 80:19), meaning sperm or as phrased elsewhere a draught of base fluid (32:8; cf. 77:20), is cited in several verses as testimony to God’s Ability to resurrect human beings in the Hereafter; see commentary on 32:7–11. For the phases of gestation, see also 22:5; 23:14. An argument implied here and elsewhere is that in not recognizing the nature of one’s own creation and that to which it bears witness, one is a manifest adversary to oneself.
created him from a drop, and behold, he is a manifest adversary. 76 And he has set forth for Us a parable and forgotten his own creation, saying, “Who revives these bones, decayed as they are?” 77 Say, “He will revive them. Who brought them forth the first time, and He knows every creation, 80 Who made for you fire from the green tree, and, behold, you kindle from it.” 81 Is not He Who created the heavens and the earth able to create the like thereof? Yea, indeed, He is the knowing Creator. 82 His Command when He desires a thing is only to say to it, “Be!” and it is. 83 So glory be to Him in Whose Hand lies the dominion of all things, and unto Whom you shall be returned.

78–79 These verses express a common objection to the Quranic understanding of bodily resurrection (cf. 11:35; 17:49; 98; 23:35, 82–83; 27:67; 37:16–17, 53; 50:3; 56:47–48; 79:1). Regarding this particular instance, it is reported that a man by the name of Abī Iḥn Khalāf brought some withered bones to the Prophet and crushed them into pieces, saying, “Do you think that God can revive these [bones] after they have decayed and become rot?” The Prophet answered, “Yes, indeed! And He will also throw you into the Fire.” Then these verses were revealed (IK, JJ, Q, W). And forgotten his own creation could also be rendered “having forgotten his own creation.” For a passage similar to v. 79, see 17:51.

80 Just as God makes fire emerge from wood that is wet and moist, or that had been wet and moist, so too can He make life emerge from bones that are dead and decayed (Q). According to Ibn ‘Abbās, this refers to the Markh and ‘Aftar trees that grow in the Hijaz, in western Arabia; rubbing two green branches from these trees together is known to produce fire (IK).

81 Several passages maintain that the first creation itself is clear evidence of God’s Ability to re-create and to resurrect: He created you the first time and unto Him shall you be returned (41:21); As We began the first creation, so shall We bring it back—a promise binding upon Us. Surely We shall do it (2:104); see also 50:11; 79:27.

82 This verse is one of the most frequently quoted verses of the Quran. He says to it, “Be!” and it is (2:117; 3:47; 6:73; 16:50; 19:35; 40:68) points to the fact that God’s creative Act is dependent upon no other and is like the blinking of an eye (4:450); see 2:117. Be! and it is (kun fa-yakūn) has become an aphorism in Arabic and other Islamic languages that is used often in daily discourse.

83 Glory be indicates both God’s being beyond all that the idolaters associate with Him and amazement at what they say. Dominion translates malakūt, which is closely related to mulk, meaning sovereignty and found in the recurring phrase Unto God belongs sovereignty over the heavens and the earth (e.g., 2:107; 3:189; 51:17, 18, 40, 120; 9:116). Both words derive from the same root, w-l-k, which in verbal form means “to possess,” “to control,” “to rule,” or “to reign.” According to some, malakūt and mulk have the same meaning (IK). According to others, malakūt refers to God’s Lordship over the unseen realm, and mulk refers to His Lordship over the visible world. In some Islamic cosmologies, this world is designated by mulk, while malakūt is understood as the level of being above this world, and above that lies the archangelic realm, which is designated by the term jabarūt. From one perspective this verse is an answer to the question posed in 3:88: Who is it in Whose Hand lies the dominion of everything, who protects but is not protected against, if you know? The phrase shall be returned could also be rendered “are being returned,” which would emphasize the ongoing process of return to God experienced by all beings. The fact that both renderings are in the passive voice indicates that humans have no choice regarding whether they return or not.