

# Introduction

## Surah Name: Al-Baqarah (سورة البقرة) — The Cow

\*Surah Number: 2\*

\*Number of Ayaat: 286\*

The name comes from **Ayaat 67–73**, which narrates the story of the **cow commanded by Allah to the Israelites**.

The Israelites were commanded to **slaughter a cow** as a test of obedience and submission. This story is **unique in the Qur'an** and symbolically significant, highlighting **obedience to divine command even when the reason is not fully understood**.

### Literal Meaning

• البقرة

- literally means “*the cow*”.
- The root is ب-ق-ر (B-Q-R), which generally conveys the idea of **splitting, cutting, or goring** in Arabic.
  - From this root, بقر (baqar) is used for a **cow or bovine animal**, because cows are traditionally known for their **strong, goring nature and physical strength**.

### Why the Surah Was Named After This Story

- Even though the story is only a **small part** of the surah, it encapsulates a **central theme of the surah**:
  - ♦ The need for **faithful obedience** to Allah’s commands.
  - ♦ The consequences of **hesitation, stubbornness, or questioning divine wisdom excessively**.
- The surah contains many lessons on **guidance, law, discipline, and community order**, and this story is a **microcosm of those principles**: a society must obey Allah, not merely rely on reasoning or whims.
- Classical scholars, like **al-Tabari and al-Qurtubi**, also mention that the name is **from a notable incident within the surah**, not from its main theme.
- This naming is **typical of Qur’anic style**: sometimes surahs are named after a **distinctive story or word** rather than their full thematic content.
  - ♦ The name *Al-Baqarah* reminds the reader that **obedience to Allah is the cornerstone of faith**, just as the Israelites’ obedience (or lack thereof) in the story illustrates the perils of doubt, delay, or defiance.

### Approximate Time of Revelation

The majority of the surah was revealed during the first two years of the Prophet's life in Madinah. Some later Ayaat were revealed afterward, but the thematic continuity led to their inclusion in this surah. The revelation of this surah may have occurred over a span of nine to ten years. The final Ayah (Ayah 281) may have been the last Ayah of the entire Qur'an to be revealed.

## Historical Context

Surah Al-Baqarah, the longest surah in the Quran, was revealed over several years during the Prophet Muhammad's (ﷺ) time in Madinah, following the Hijrah (migration) from Makkah. The surah addresses the new challenges faced by the Muslim community as they transitioned from living under persecution in Makkah to establishing themselves as a collective society in Madinah.

At Makkah, Islam primarily addressed the polytheistic Quraysh; however, after migrating to Madinah, the Prophet encountered other religious communities, particularly Jews. The Jewish tribes in Madinah had beliefs similar in some respects to Islam—such as the oneness of Allah, prophethood, and the concept of the Hereafter—but they had strayed from the teachings of their scriptures and clung to ritualistic practices that had lost their spiritual essence. These Jewish tribes also resisted and opposed the Prophet's message, despite the similarities between it and their own faith.

This surah was revealed to address these tensions with the Jewish community, their history, and their spiritual decline. It critiques the Israelites' failure to uphold the truth, contrasts their misguidance with the truth of Islam, and offers a clear path forward for the Muslim community. Additionally, the surah focuses on establishing a social, economic, and legal framework essential for the new Islamic society. It discusses matters such as leadership, justice, charity, family law, faith, and the importance of unity among Muslims.

Furthermore, the surah addresses the appearance of hypocrites (munafiqin) who pretended to follow Islam while secretly undermining it from within. Thus, it served as both a guide for personal conduct and a legal framework as the Muslim community established itself both spiritually and politically.

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## Preview of the Sūrah

### Central Theme ('Umūd)

*How a newly forming Muslim Ummah should establish faith, discipline, and societal order under Allah's guidance.*

*It is about laying the foundation of the Muslim Ummah: belief first, then worship, then societal order, and finally reliance on Allah in all affairs.*

*It serves as a **manual for the new Muslim Ummah**, linking faith to societal responsibility.*

# Main Themes

- **Divine Guidance and Categories of Mankind:**

Al-Baqarah starts with the affirmation that the Quran is a guide for humanity, classifying people into three groups: believers, disbelievers, and hypocrites. The surah highlights the importance of adhering to divine guidance and how different groups react to it.

- **Call to Worship Allah Alone:**

Allah invites humanity to recognize Him as the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, urging them to follow His guidance and submit to Him alone. This central message is reinforced through stories of past prophets and their communities, emphasizing submission to divine will.

- **Story of Adam and Human Struggle:**

The story of Adam's creation, his fall due to Satan's temptation, and his repentance symbolizes the human condition. The surah teaches mankind to seek forgiveness and follow the guidance in the face of temptation and weakness, as seen with Adam.

- **Warnings to the Children of Israel:**

A large portion of the surah addresses the Jews, reviewing their history and moral decline, and calling them to reform by accepting the guidance brought by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The surah recalls their deviation from the Torah's teachings and emphasizes that Muhammad (peace be upon him) continues the same divine message.

- **Changing of the Qiblah (Direction of Prayer):**

The surah announces the change of the direction of prayer from Jerusalem to the Kaaba in Makkah.

- **Establishment of Laws and Social Practices:**

The surah lays down essential laws and principles for Muslims on matters such as prayer (Salah), fasting (Sawm), charity (Zakat), pilgrimage (Hajj), and justice. It addresses social issues like marriage, divorce, inheritance, and deals with financial matters like the prohibition of interest (Riba), stressing ethical behavior in societal interactions.

- **Moral and Spiritual Discipline:**

Muslims are reminded to develop patience, self-restraint, and moral integrity. The surah encourages believers to bear hardships and trials with fortitude, reminding them that ultimate success lies in sincerity towards Allah and adherence to His guidance.

- **Struggle and Sacrifice (Jihad):**

The concept of Jihad is introduced in various forms: striving for personal betterment, resisting temptations, and defending the faith from external threats. The surah uses historical examples, such as Prophet David's triumph over Goliath, to illustrate the notion that faith, discipline, and perseverance lead to success.

- **Ayat Al-Kursi:**

Al-Baqarah includes the important "Ayat Al-Kursi" (2:255), which describes the majesty, power, and knowledge of Allah. It serves as a reminder of Allah's omnipotence and His control over all affairs in the heavens and on earth.

- **Prohibition of Interest (Riba):**

A key social and economic principle established is the prohibition of interest. The surah warns against the evil of usury.

- **Final Reminders and Prayers:**

The surah concludes by recapitulating the basic articles of faith and with a beautiful prayer asking Allah for mercy, forgiveness, and guidance. The prayer acknowledges that human beings may fall short in fully adhering to Ayah's guidance and thus regularly seek His aid.

## Key Messages/Lessons

- Guidance for mankind is provided through the Quran and its teachings, covering spiritual, social, and ethical realms.
- Strong belief in monotheism (Tawhid) and reliance on Allah are emphasized, along with prayer, charity, and patience.
- The importance of following divine revelations for guidance is highlighted, starting with the story of Prophet Adam and human creation.
- Israelite history is recounted to warn of deviation from divine teachings and to encourage obedience to Ayah's commands.
- The transition of the Muslim prayer direction (Qibla) from Jerusalem to the Kaaba demonstrated the unity and independence of the Muslim community.
- Obligations related to family, inheritance, fasting, financial transactions, and social conduct are laid out to promote justice and harmony.
- True piety involves good deeds, compassion, and moral behavior, not blind rituals.
- Prohibition of interest, gambling, and other harmful practices safeguard the community's health, unity, and integrity.
- The Surah stresses both individual responsibility to Allah and communal duties toward others, balancing rights between Allah and humanity.
- Jihad (struggle) is multi-layered: it includes self-discipline, overcoming evil desires, and defending the faith.
- The Surah concludes with prayers seeking forgiveness and divine help in upholding the responsibilities outlined in the Quran.

## Major Sections

### (A) Faith and Guidance (Ayaat 1–20)

- Introduction to the Qur'an: guidance for the conscious of ALLAH.
- Classification of people: believers, disbelievers, hypocrites.
- Key principle: faith must precede action.
  - ◆ Foundation: a true Ummah begins with **correct belief and consciousness of ALLAH**.

## (B) Covenant with the Past & Lessons from Bani Isra'il (Ayaat 21–141)

- Reminders of previous prophets and communities.
- Focus on **obedience, covenant, and consequences of defiance**.
- Lessons from Banī Isrā'īl: ingratitude, disobedience, and Allah's guidance.
- Commands for **prayer, charity, fasting, and worship**.
  - ♦ The Ummah learns **discipline, trust in Allah, and moral responsibility**.

## (C) Social, Legal, and Economic Laws (Ayaat 142–242)

- Introduction of **direction of prayer (Qiblah)** — symbol of unity.
- Laws for fasting (Ramadan), trade, contracts, marriage, and social responsibility.
- Guidance on **justice, equity, and community ethics**.
  - ♦ These Ayaat establish the **framework for organized Muslim society**.

## (D) Struggle and Defense (Ayaat 243–286)

- Encouragement for **striving in Allah's path**.
- Emphasis on **patience, repentance, and reliance on Allah**.
- Final Ayah (286): prayer for forgiveness, protection, and strength.
  - ♦ The Ummah is reminded that **success comes through faith, effort, and divine guidance**.

## Notable Ayaat

- **Ayah 2:**  
*"This is the Book! There is no doubt about it—a guide for those mindful of Allah,"*  
The Quran is described as a clear and certain guide for those who are mindful of Allah.
- **Ayah 3:**  
*"Who believe in the unseen, establish prayer, and spend out of what We have provided for them."*  
Characteristics of the believers are mentioned, including their faith in the unseen and their acts of worship.
- **Ayah 25:**  
*"Give good news O Prophet to those who believe and do good that they will have Gardens under which rivers flow..."*  
A promise of Paradise for those who have faith and perform good deeds.
- **Ayah 30:**  
*"Remember when your Lord said to the angels, 'I am going to place a successive human authority on earth.' They asked Allah, 'Will You place in it someone who will spread corruption there and shed blood while we glorify Your praises and proclaim Your holiness?' Allah responded, 'I know what you do not know.'"*  
The appointment of Adam as Allah's vicegerent on Earth.

- **Ayah 62:**

*“Indeed, the believers, Jews, Christians, and Sabians<sup>1</sup>—whoever ‘truly’ believes in Allah and the Last Day and does good will have their reward with their Lord. And there will be no fear for them, nor will they grieve.”*

A recognition of those from diAyah religious backgrounds who believe in Allah and the Last Day.

- **Ayah 102:**

*“They ‘instead’ followed the magic promoted by the devils during the reign of Solomon. Never did Solomon disbelieve, rather the devils disbelieved. They taught magic to the people, along with what had been revealed to the two angels, Hârût and Mârût, in Babylon...”*

A warning against the practices of magic and the associated misconceptions.

- **Ayah 143:**

*“And thus We have made you a middle nation, so that you will be witnesses over the people.”*

The Muslim Ummah is called a “middle nation” symbolizing justice and balance.

- **Ayah 177:**

*“Righteousness is not that you turn your faces toward the east or the west, but [true] righteousness is [in] one who believes in Allah, the Last Day, the Angels, the Book, and the Prophets...”*

A redefinition of righteousness beyond external acts and toward sincere faith and actions.

- **Ayah 185:**

*“Ramadhan is the (month) in which was sent down the Qur’an, as a guide to mankind, also clear (Signs) for guidance and judgment (Between right and wrong).”*

The significance of the month of Ramadan and the revelation of the Qur’an.

- **Ayah 190:**

*“Fight in the cause of Allah ‘only’ against those who wage war against you, but do not exceed the limits. Allah does not like transgressors.”*

The rules regarding just warfare are introduced.

- **Ayah 255:**

*“Allah! There is no deity ‘worthy of worship’ except Him, the Ever-Living, All-Sustaining. Neither drowsiness nor sleep overtakes Him. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. Who could possibly intercede with Him without His permission? He ‘fully’ knows what is ahead of them and what is behind them, but no one can grasp any of His knowledge—except what He wills ‘to reveal’. His Throne encompasses the heavens and the earth, and the preservation of both does not tire Him. For He is the Most High, the Greatest.”*

Known as Ayat al-Kursi, it is a powerful description of Allah’s sovereignty and might.

- **Ayah 256:**

*“Let there be no compulsion in religion, for the truth stands out clearly from falsehood. So whoever renounces false dieties and believes in Allah has certainly grasped the firmest,*

*unfailing hand-hold.”*

A statement on the freedom of religious choice.

- **Ayah 275:**

*“Those who consume interest will stand ‘on Judgment Day’ like those driven to madness by Satan’s touch. That is because they say, “Trade is no different than interest.” But Allah has permitted trading and forbidden interest...”*

Allah forbids interest.

- **Ayah 286:**

*“Allah does not require of any soul more than what it can afford. All good will be for its own benefit, and all evil will be to its own loss. ‘The believers pray,’ “Our Lord! Do not punish us if we forget or make a mistake. Our Lord! Do not place a burden on us like the one you placed on those before us. Our Lord! Do not burden us with what we cannot bear. Pardon us, forgive us, and have mercy on us. You are our ‘only’ Guardian. So grant us victory over the disbelieving people.”*

A reminder of Allah’s justice and mercy in holding individuals accountable within their capacity.

## Scientific Miracle in Surah Al-Baqara

- **Ayah 143:**

*“And thus We have made you a middle nation, so that you will be witnesses over the people.”*

This Ayah refers to the Muslim community as a “Middle Nation,” symbolizing justice and balance. Remarkably, this Ayah is located exactly in the middle of Surah Al-Baqara, which consists of 286 Ayaat, with Ayah 143 positioned precisely at the center.

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## Topical Analysis of Rukus

### Ruku 1: Ayaat 1-7

Allah describes believers and their characteristics.

### Ruku 2: Ayaat 8-20

Allah is talking about the hypocrites.

### Ruku 3: Ayaat 21-29

While Allah invites people to Islam, He invites those who do not believe in the Qur’an to write a chapter similar to a chapter of the Qur’an. After giving the good news of heaven to people, he talks about the denial of unbelievers despite the signs shown to them.

### Ruku 4: Ayaat 30-39

Allah briefly summarizes Adam's (عليه السلام) life.

## **Ruku 5: Ayaat 40-46**

Ayah gives advice to the Israelites.

## **Ruku 6: Ayaat 47-59**

Allah tells the Israelites about the blessings He has bestowed upon them throughout history, the events they experienced with Moses (عليه السلام), and the blasphemous acts they committed.

## **Ruku 7: Ayaat 60-61**

Allah speaks of the ungrateful behavior of the Israelites despite the blessings bestowed upon them through Moses (عليه السلام).

## **Ruku 8: Ayaat 62-71**

Allah is talking about the sons of Israel breaking their promises to Allah and their violating Allah's orders and prohibitions. He tells them to sacrifice a cow through Moses (عليه السلام).

## **Ruku 9: Ayaat 72-82**

Jews' rejecting the truth despite knowing the truth (of their faith).

The hypocrisy and blasphemy they hide inside their hearts are within the knowledge of Ayah. Their claim that Ayah has sent down to them what they have written with their own hands.

## **Ruku 10: Ayaat 83-86**

Allah speaks of the Jews breaking their promise to Him, accepting some of the Ayaat that were revealed to them and rejecting some of them.

## **Ruku 11: Ayaat 87-96**

Allah tells us about the Jews killing prophets and not obeying Ayaat that did not suit them. He tells about their attempts to blaspheme at every opportunity and their denial of the Qur'an that was revealed to the Prophet Muhammed (ﷺ) because he was not one of their own descendants.

## **Ruku 12: Ayaat 97-103**

Jews say that they are enemies of Gabriel (Jibraeel عليه السلام) in order not to accept the prophethood of our Prophet.

Allah says that He is the enemy of those who are enemies of His angels and that only those who go astray will deny the Ayaat of the Qur'an.

And He tells that they (jews) believed the lies that the devils told about Solomon (عليه السلام).



## **Ruku 13: Ayaat 104-112**

Allah talks about the people of the book confusing the believing muslims and calling them back to blasphemy.

And the believers receiving the reward from Him for their good deeds.

## **Ruku 14: Ayaat 113-121**

Jews and Christians denying each other's religions.

Ayah creating the entire universe by saying "be".

The ignorant people still waiting for miracles despite Ayah presenting us with uncountable evidence.

## **Ruku 15: Ayaat 122-129**

After Allah briefly explains the day of reckoning, He talks about the conversation between Abraham (عليه السلام) and Himself and the prayers of Abraham (عليه السلام).

## **Ruku 16: Ayaat 130-141**

Allah tells muslims to believe in the religion of Abraham (عليه السلام). To the religion of Abraham, Jacob and his sons which is His religion.

## **Ruku 17: Ayaat 142-147**

Allah determines the qibla of muslims as Masjid al-Haram (Makka).

## **Ruku 18: Ayaat 148-152**

Again, Allah commands muslims to turn their faces towards the Masjid al-Haram while performing prayers wherever they are, and wants them to only fear Allah, remember Him and be grateful to Him.

## **Ruku 19: Ayaat 153-163**

Allah explains that those who are martyred in the way of Allah are alive.

The characteristics of believers.

Things that awaits those who hide the Ayaat of Allah, and those who die as unbelievers.

## **Ruku 20: Ayaat 164-167**

The truth that a society that thinks about Allah's signs will understand.

The regrets that those who deny and take other deities for themselves will experience on the Day of Judgment are explained.

## **Ruku 21: Ayaat 168-176**

Allah warns us about Satan, describes the state of the unbelievers, informs the believers about which foods are permissible to eat, and explains the punishment awaiting those who conceal and sell the Ayaat of Allah.

## **Ruku 22: Ayaat 177-182**

Allah teaches us the characteristics of true believers.

He explains how the murderers should be punished (in this world).

He teaches how a person should bequeath his property the right way.

## **Ruku 23: Ayaat 183-188**

Allah explains the importance and rules of fasting.

He forbids the unfair use of other people's property.

## **Ruku 24: Ayaat 189-196**

Ayah forbids believing in the superstition of entering houses through the back door.

Allah gives the muslims of Medinah permission to fight against those who fight against them and explains them the rules of war, in case the disbelievers decide to attack them during their pilgrimage in Mekka despite the peace treaty.

He teaches us to spend our wealth in the way of Allah and what we should do in case of pilgrimage that we have started and cannot finish.

## **Ruku 25: Ayaat 197-210**

Allah announces the commandments of pilgrimage, reminds us of the characteristics of ferocious hypocrites and sincere Muslims, and that our return will be to Allah.

## **Ruku 26: Ayaat 211-216**

The world seems adorned to the disbelievers.

In the beginning, all of humanity believed in a single religion.

Money to be spent in the way of Allah and war in the name of Allah are considered obligatory.

## **Ruku 27: Ayaat 217-221**

The provisions of fighting in the haram month, causing strife and dying as an unbeliever are explained.

Allah explains the provisions of alcohol and gambling, what should be spent in the way of Allah, how orphans should be treated, and why we should prefer believers to polytheists when we get married.

## **Ruku 28: Ayaat 222-228**

Ayah talks about sexual relations, vows and divorce.

## **Ruku 29: Ayaat 229-231**

Allah tells about His orders and limits about divorce.

## **Ruku 30: Ayaat 232-235**

Allah tells about the issues that women should pay attention to after divorce and the duties that fall on men.

## **Ruku 31: Ayaat 236-242**

Allah tells about His orders and limits on couples who decide to get divorced before sexual intercourse.

He explains how prayers should be performed in situations where there is danger.

In the event of a man's death or divorce, the alimony that must be given to the woman for her livelihood is mentioned.

## **Ruku 32: Ayaat 243-248**

Allah tells us that the fear of death is useless, that it is better for us to struggle in the way of Allah, and that he will test us with His sustenance.

He talks about the Israelites who came against their prophet and fled from the war that was made obligatory for them, and that they did not accept Talut (Saul) who was chosen as a commander by Allah.

## **Ruku 33: Ayaat 249-253**

Allah talks about how Talut's army was tested by a river on their way to war.

David (عليه السلام) killing Goliath.

Degrees of the prophets عليهم السّلام

## **Ruku 34: Ayaat 254-257**

Allah introduces Himself, tells believers to spend their sustenance in the way of Allah, and explains that there is no compulsion in religion.

## **Ruku 35: Ayaat 258-260**

Allah tells a few events from the life of Abraham (عليه السلام) and talks about the stories in which He shows how He brought the dead back to life.

## **Ruku 36: Ayaat 261-266**

Allah explains the subtleties of spending money in the way of Allah and the things to be considered in this regard.

## **Ruku 37: Ayaat 267-273**

Allah explains the intricacies of giving alms and explains that the person to whom wisdom is given has a great blessing.

## **Ruku 38: Ayaat 274-281**

Allah enumerates the characteristics of believers for whom there is no fear.  
He outright prohibits interest and gives advice to the lender.

## **Ruku 39: Ayaat 282-283**

Allah tells the rules of taking and giving debt.

## **Ruku 40: Ayaat 284-286**

Allah reveals the principles of religion and what believers should say in a prayer.