# Sura 36 - *Yāʾ-Sīn*

# يس

## Introduction

Sura 36 is one of 29 suras that begin with isolated letters or *muqaṭṭaʿāt* and is one of four that are named after those letters (along with *Ṭāʾ-Hāʾ* (20), [*Ṣād* (38)](file:////quran/week-3-suras-19-38/sura-38.md) and *Qāf* (50)). After the *Juz Amma*, that is, the last thirty-seven chapters of the Qur’an, (most of which we covered in [week 1](file:////quran/sura-1.md)), *Ya Sin* is the most memorized chapter of the Qur’an.[[1]](#footnote-1) It is often recited for the benefit of the dead or dying people, chiefly because of the last six verses which speak to God’s ability to resurrect the dead. In the words of Ibn Qayyim al-Ğawzīya, “[t]his sura is the heart of the Qur’an and something wonderful occurs when it is recited in the presence of a dying person.”[[2]](#footnote-2)According to al-Ghazali, this sura has 25 jewels which can be found in the middle and at the end of the sura (including the last six verses alluded to above).

The tripartite structure of this sura is thus: (I, 1–12; II, 13–68; III, 69–83)[[3]](#footnote-3). The introduction consists of a confirmation of revelation and a message regarding unbelievers. As with the prophets Moses (Exodus 14:17) and Isaiah (Isaiah 6:10), we see a message that it is God’s will that some refuse to listen to the prophet’s message.

The middle part can further be divided into three sections. Traditionally, these would be 13-32, 33-50, 51-67. Neuwirth divides them slightly differently: 13-32, 33-47, 48-68. Neuwirth[[4]](#footnote-4) titles the first of these with just a transliteration of the phrase مَثَلًا أَصْحَبَ الْقَرْيَةِ which translates literally as “an example (of the) companions (of) the city”.[[5]](#footnote-5) She further posits that verse 46 belongs after verse 30. With that adjustment, the end of this section would read as follows (using Dr. Nazeer Ahmed’s translation[[6]](#footnote-6)):

30: Alas for My servants!  
There does not come any Messenger to them,  
But they ridicule him.

[46: And there has not come for them a Sign  
From the Signs of their Rabb,  
Except that they excuse themselves from it.]

31: Have they not observed,  
How many settlements (civilizations) We destroyed before them  
So that they cannot return (to their former status).

32: And every one of them shall not but be presented before Us

## *Ayat*

The heart of the sura lies in verses 33-44, which make up 12 of the 25 jewels in this chapter. These are the *ayat* or signs:

And a Sign for them is the earth that is dead.  
We give it life,  
And We bring forth from it crops of which you eat.

And We make in it gardens of dates and grapes,  
And We cause springs to gush forth from it,

So that they eat the fruits thereof.  
Lo! It is not their hands that produced them!  
Therefore, will they not be thankful?

Glorified is He  
Who made everything in complements (pairs)  
In what grows on earth –  
And among their own selves –  
And of which they have no knowledge.

And a Sign for them is the night,  
We take away from it the (light of the) day,  
And lo! They are in darkness!

And the sun moves in its determined orbit –  
That is the decree of the Mighty, the Knower.

And for the moon We have decreed the phases,  
Until it becomes (shriveled) like an old stalk of a date palm.

The sun dare not defy (what is decreed for) it  
And catch up with the moon,  
Nor for the night to appear before the day –  
Lo! Each one rotates in its own orbit!

And a Sign for them is that We carried their progeny  
In a ship filled,

And We made for them similar (vessels) which they ride.

And had We so willed it,  
We would have drowned them;  
In which case, they would have none to supplicate,  
And none to rescue them,

Except the Mercy from Us,  
And a worldly respite for a time.

Closing this section is an admonition to heed these signs. While Neuwirth moves verse 46 above, it fits also in its traditional spot below:

45: And when it is said to them:  
“Beware of what is in between  
What is ahead of you  
And what is behind you –  
(What is happening here and now) –  
Perhaps you will find Mercy.”

(46: And there has not come for them a Sign  
From the Signs of their Rabb,  
Except that they excuse themselves from it.)

47: And when it is said to them:  
“Set aside (in charity) from what Allah has provided you”,  
The disbelievers say to the believers:  
“Should we feed one whom Allah would feed if He was so disposed?”  
You are not but in manifest error.

Following this is a section about يَوْمَ, “the Day” (vv. 48-68). It evokes the sound of the trumpets described in the Christian book of Revelation (chapter 8) which is, in turn, an allusion to the trumpets that brought down Jericho (Joshua 6) which is an extension of the use of trumpets described in the Torah (Numbers 10).

## Revelation, Promise, Omnipotence

In verse 69, the attention is returned to the prophet and his message, as at the beginning of the sura. This section, beginning with verse 71, contains the final 13 jewels in this sura that further reveal the nature of God.

Do they not see,  
That We created for them domesticated animals  
With Our power,  
So that they may own them?

And We made them obedient,  
So that some of them they ride,  
And of some they eat.

And in them there are benefits for them,  
And drink,  
Will they not be thankful?

Yet (even after all these blessings)  
They take deities besides Allah  
Thinking that they will help them.

No capacity do they have to help them!  
And they shall be presented in arrays (as witness) against them.

Therefore, do not be dismayed by what they say,  
We do indeed know what they hide and what they reveal.

We see in this section the call for gratitude, a recurring theme throughout the Qur’an.

Finally, the jewels concerning the miracle of life and death:

Does not the human see that We did indeed create him  
From (a drop of) seminal fluid?  
And then he hastens to become an open contender!

And he has invented a likeness for Us,  
And has forgotten his creation (his origins);  
(And) he says: “Who will give life to the bones  
When they have dissolved (in the earth)?”

Say: “He will give them life,  
Who conceived of him (created him) in the first place,  
And He is the Knower of all creation.”

“He who derives for you a spark from a green tree (brings forth energy from matter),  
Then with it you make fire!”

Does He not, who created the heavens and the earth,  
Have the power to create the likes of them?  
No! He is the Creator Supreme (Creator of the essence of creation),  
The Ultimate Knower!

Indeed, when He wills something,  
His command is not but:  
“Be!” And it was!

So, glorified is He,  
In Whose hands is the dominion of all beings!  
And to Him shall you return!

1. Federspiel, Howard M. 1994.Popular Indonesian Literature Of The Qur’an. 1st ed. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, Southeast Asia Program, Cornell Univ. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ibn Qayyim al-Ğawzīya, Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr, and Layla Mabrouk. 1987.The Soul’s Journey After Death. 1st ed. London: Dar al-Taqwa. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ernst, Carl W. (2011-12-05). How to Read the Qur’an: A New Guide, with Select Translations (p. 219). The University of North Carolina Press. Kindle Edition. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Neuwirth, Angelika. 2007.Studien Zur Komposition Der Mekkanischen Suren. 1st ed. Berlin: de Gruyter. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. “The Quranic Arabic Corpus - Word By Word Grammar, Syntax And Morphology Of The Holy Quran”. 2017.Corpus.Quran.Com. <http://corpus.quran.com/wordbyword.jsp?chapter=36&verse=13>. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. “Surah 36. Surah Ya Sin”. 2017.History Of Islam. <https://historyofislam.com/the-quran/surah-36-surah-yasin/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)