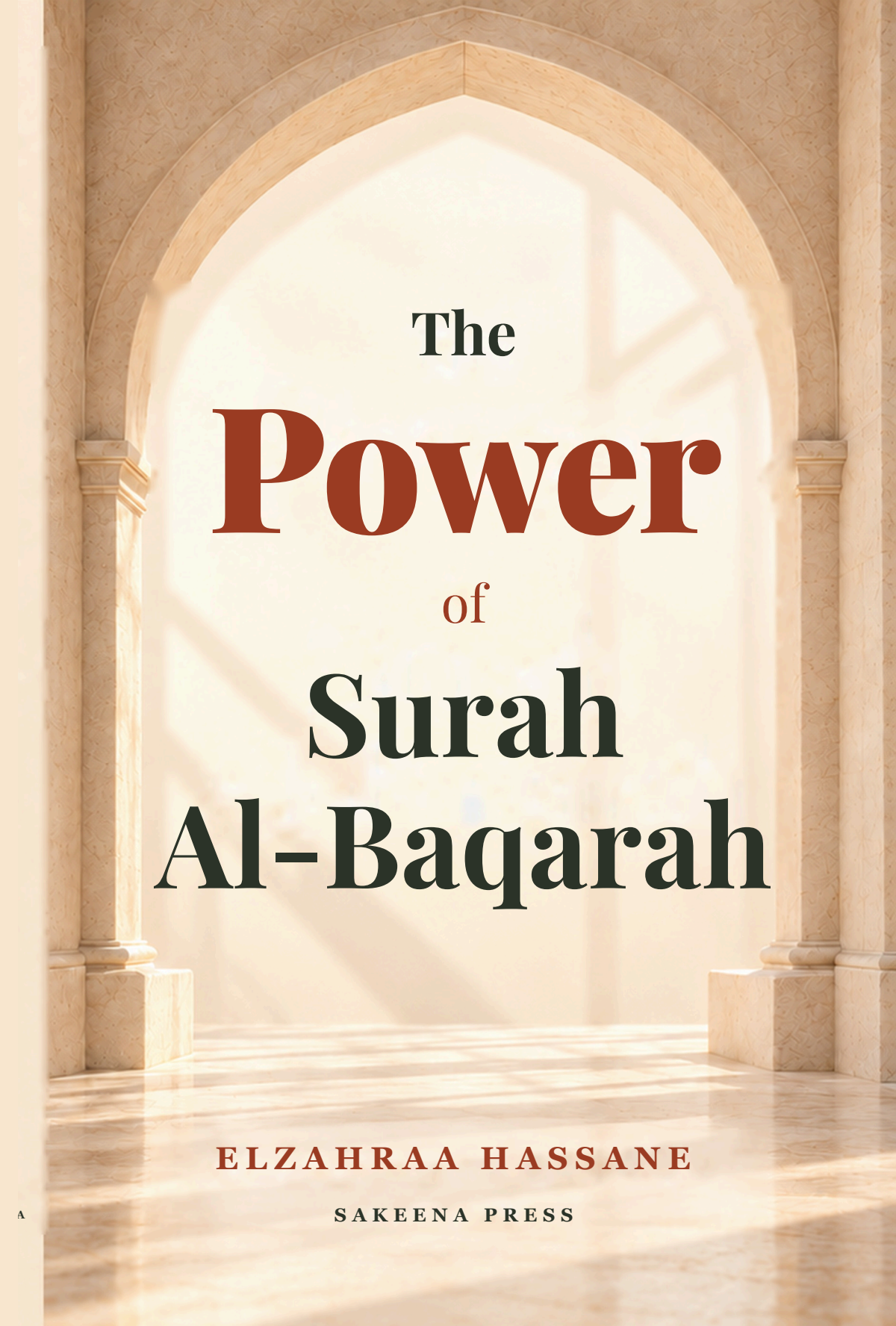


The Power of Surah Al-Baqarah

ELZAHRAA HASSANE

SAKEENA PRESS

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What the Longest Surah Does for the Mind, the Heart and the Life of the One Who Holds On to It

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The experiences described in this book from our own time are drawn from many conversations and have been combined and anonymised. They are offered as what people commonly report, not as a promise or a guarantee. This book is for education and reflection and does not replace medical or psychological care.

First edition. Printed on demand.

For everyone who postponed the longest surah,
and for everyone who finally opened it.



About the Author

Elzahraa Hassane is the Founder and Executive Director of Sakeena Institute, an international educational platform dedicated to integrating authentic Islamic knowledge with contemporary psychology, neuroscience and education to promote emotional wellbeing, resilience and personal growth.

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PREFACE

A Word Before You Begin

I did not plan to write this book. It wrote itself over several years, in the lives of people I was teaching, in my own home, and in the pages of a surah I kept returning to when nothing else would settle.

Surah Al-Baqarah is the longest surah in the Quran, and most of us treat its length as a reason to postpone it. We read Al-Mulk at night and Al-Kahf on Friday, and we tell ourselves we will get to Al-Baqarah one day. That is a loss, because the length is not an obstacle. It is the point. This surah was revealed to carry a person, slowly and completely, from doubt to certainty, from fear to trust, from a scattered life to a guided one. Every reader who has held on to it for long enough knows what I mean, and those who have not yet begun deserve to know what is waiting for them.

This book is about what Surah Al-Baqarah does. The books of tafsir explain what it says far better than I could. What I want to describe is what happens to a person and a household when the surah becomes a companion. For every claim I make there is evidence: a verse, a hadith with its reference, or the recorded experience of the Companions and the scholars who held this surah closer than anyone. Where something is a widespread experience rather than a text, I say so plainly, because this surah of all surahs teaches us not to mix truth with anything else.

Read it slowly. Then open the surah itself.

How this book is arranged

- **Part One** explains why the surah is so long, why it carries the name of a cow, and the single question it asks of every reader.
- **Parts Two to Six** each take one thing the surah does: it guides, it protects, it brings blessing, it heals, and it carries you toward what you hope for. Each claim comes with its evidence.
- **Part Seven** shows how to make the surah a companion for life, with reading plans for one sitting, three days, five days and seven days, a forty-day beginning, and what people notice when they do.
- **Verses and hadith** are given in Arabic with their meaning in English and their reference. Hadith numbers follow the standard printed editions as used on sunnah.com, and gradings are noted where a narration is outside Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim.
- **Experiences** appear in marked boxes. Those from the Companions and scholars are referenced. Those from our own time are drawn from many conversations with students and readers, combined and anonymised, and they are offered as what people commonly report, not as a promise.

PART ONE

The Surah That Carries You

Why it is long, why it is called The Cow, and the one question it asks of everyone who reads it.

1 Why a Surah This Long
2 Why It Is Called The Cow
3 Three Ways of Hearing
4 The Map of the Surah

CHAPTER ONE

Why a Surah This Long

1

Two hundred and eighty-six verses. Two and a half juz. A surah so long that Umar ibn al-Khattab رضي الله عنه is reported to have spent twelve years learning it, and to have slaughtered a camel in gratitude when he finished. The length is the first thing anyone notices, and it is the first thing we need to understand, because nothing about it is accidental.

The Quran was revealed over twenty-three years, and Surah Al-Baqarah was the first major surah revealed in Madinah, in the years when a scattered group of believers was becoming a community. Everything a community needs is in it: belief and its opposite, the story of where humanity came from, the history of the nation that received revelation before us, the direction of prayer, fasting, marriage, divorce, inheritance, charity, debt, war and peace. Then it ends with a prayer. A surah that was given the task of building a people could not have been short.

But there is a second reason for the length, and it concerns you more directly. The surah is long because transformation is slow. Allah could have given the believers a list of commands on a single page. Instead He gave them stories, repeated in different forms, and laws placed between the stories, and warnings, and promises, and finally a du'a. A person who reads this surah from beginning to end is taken on a journey, and the journey is the medicine. By the time you reach the last verse,

something in you has been reorganised, and it could not have been reorganised faster.

The hump of the camel

The Prophet ﷺ gave the surah a name that captures this. In a narration recorded by al-Tirmidhi he said that everything has a hump, a sanam, and the hump of the Quran is Surah Al-Baqarah. A camel's hump is where its strength is stored. It is what carries the animal across the desert when there is nothing to eat. The Prophet ﷺ was telling us that this surah is where the Quran keeps its reserves, and that a believer who carries it carries provisions for a long road.

HADITH

لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ سَنَامٌ، وَإِنَّ سَنَامَ الْقُرْآنِ سُورَةُ الْبَقَرَةِ

"Everything has a hump, and the hump of the Quran is Surah Al-Baqarah."

Jami' at-Tirmidhi 2878. Al-Tirmidhi called it hasan gharib; al-Albani graded its chain weak. The same description is also reported as a saying of Ibn Mas'ud.

He also called Al-Baqarah and Al Imran the two bright ones, al-Zahrawayn, and said they would come on the Day of Resurrection like two clouds, or two flocks of birds in ranks, arguing on behalf of the one who recited them. That image of shade on the Day when there is no shade belongs to this surah and to its sister.

HADITH

اقْرَءُوا الزَّهْرَاوَيْنِ الْبَقَرَةَ وَسُورَةَ آلِ عِمْرَانَ، فَإِنَّهُمَا تَأْتِيَانِ يوم الْقِيامةِ كَأَنَّهما غَمامتانِ

“Recite the two bright ones, Al-Baqarah and Al Imran, for they will come on the Day of Resurrection as two clouds.”

Sahih Muslim 804

A journey, not a list

Think of what a person meets on the way through. First the three kinds of people and the question of where you stand. Then Adam, and the first command, the first slip, the first return. Then the long story of Bani Israil, with its signs and its stubbornness. Then Ibrahim, who heard and obeyed. Then the change of the qiblah, and the laws that build a life. Then the stories of revival: the cow, the thousands who fled death, the man said to be Uzayr and his donkey, the four birds. Then the longest verse in the Quran, about writing down a debt. Then the last three verses, where the believers answer with the words that the whole surah was teaching them to say: we hear and we obey.

No one who travels that road arrives the same. The length is not there to test you. It is there to carry you.

The length of Surah Al-Baqarah is not an obstacle to overcome. It is a road built long enough to change the one who walks it.

CHAPTER TWO

Why It Is Called The Cow

2

Of all the names Allah could have given the greatest surah of His Book, He chose the name of an animal, and of a story about people who argued. The story is told in verses 67 to 73, and once you understand it, you understand the whole surah.

Among Bani Israil a man was killed and no one knew who had killed him. They came to Musa عليه السلام and asked him to ask his Lord to reveal the murderer. The answer came, and it was not what anyone expected: Allah commands you to slaughter a cow. Their response is recorded for all time.

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِۦٓ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَن تَذْبَحُوا۟ بَقَرَةً ۖ
قَالُوٓا۟ أَتَتَّخِذُنَا هُزُوًا ۖ قَالَ أَعُوذُ بِٱللَّهِ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ
ٱلْجَٰهِلِينَ

"And [recall] when Moses said to his people, 'Indeed, Allah commands you to slaughter a cow.' They said, 'Do you take us in

ridicule?' He said, 'I seek refuge in Allah from being among the ignorant.'"

Surah Al-Baqarah 2:67

Then the questions began. What kind of cow? Call on your Lord to make clear to us what it is. The answer narrowed: neither old nor young, but in between. What colour? A yellow cow, bright in colour, pleasing to those who see it. Still they asked: cows look alike to us, call on your Lord again to make it clear. And with every question the command became harder to fulfil, until the cow they finally had to find was one that had never been yoked, never ploughed, never watered the field, free of blemish and with no spot on it. The Quran records the sentence they said when they at last found it, and it is the saddest line in the story.

قَالَ إِنَّهُۥ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقَرَةٌ لَّا ذَلُولٌ تُثِيرُ ٱلْأَرْضَ وَلَا تَسْقِى
ٱلْحَرْثَ مُسَلَّمَةٌ لَّا شِيَةَ فِيهَا ۚ قَالُوا۟ ٱلْـَٰٔنَ جِئْتَ بِٱلْحَقِّ ۚ
فَذَبَحُوهَا وَمَا كَادُوا۟ يَفْعَلُونَ

"He said, 'He says, "It is a cow neither trained to plow the earth nor to irrigate the field, one free from fault with no spot upon her." ' They said, 'Now you have come with the truth.' So they slaughtered her, but they could hardly do it."

Surah Al-Baqarah 2:71

Now you have come with the truth. As if the first command had not been the truth. As if Allah had been testing their patience rather than they His. The scholars of tafsir, from Ibn Abbas onward, drew one lesson from this: had they slaughtered any cow at the beginning, it would have sufficed them. The difficulty was not in the command. It was in the arguing.