

Sura 43: Al-Zukhruf (Ornaments)

In the name of God, the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy

This Sura was revealed in Mecca except for verse 45. There is a difference of opinion among the scholars as to where was verse 45 revealed. Some said it was revealed during the trip of Israa and Mi'raj and others say that it was revealed in Medina. The Sura deals with the obstacles that faced the Islamic call and portrays the arguments which the disbelievers used to try to stem the progress of the call. It also describes the characteristics of the Quran.

Verses 1 to 25:

1. *Ha. Mim.*
2. *By the Book that makes things clear.*
3. *We have made it a Quran in Arabic that you may be able to understand.*
4. *And verily, it is in the Mother of the Book, which We possess; it is indeed sublime, full of wisdom.*
5. *Shall We utterly ignore you and hold back the reminder from you because you are a transgressing people?*
6. *How many a prophet did We send to earlier people?*
7. *And never came a prophet to them but they mocked him.*
8. *We destroyed people more powerful than them (the disbelievers of Mecca) - and the example of the people of old has passed away.*
9. *If you were to ask them, "Who created the heavens and the earth?" They would surely reply, "They were created by (Him), the Eminent, the Omniscient."*
10. *It is He, who made the earth a resting place for you, and placed roads for you therein, that you may find your way;*
11. *And who sent down water from the sky in due measure, and We revived a dead land therewith; and likewise you will you be brought forth;*
12. *He who created all the pairs, and made for you ships and the cattle you ride on.*
13. *In order that you may sit firm on their backs, and when so seated, you may celebrate the blessing of your Lord, and say, "Glory to Him who has subjected these to our (use), for we could never have accomplished this (by ourselves);*
14. *And to our Lord, surely, we will return."*
15. *And they assign to Him a part of His servants; humankind is clearly ungrateful.*
16. *Or did He choose daughters from what He created, and honored He you with sons?*
17. *And if one of them is given news of what he attributes to the Lord of Mercy his countenance is darkened and he is full of inward rage.*
18. *Is then one brought up among trinkets, and unable to give a clear account in a dispute (to be associated with God)?*
19. *And they make the angels, who are the servants of the Lord of Mercy, females. Did they witness their creation? Their testimony will be recorded and they will be questioned.*
20. *And they say, "If the Lord of Mercy had willed, we should not have worshipped them." They have no knowledge whatsoever of that. They are merely guessing.*
21. *Or have We given them any scripture before (this Quran) so that they are holding fast to it?*

22. *No indeed, but they say, "We found our fathers following a certain religion, and we are guided by their footsteps."*
23. *And thus, We did not send before you any warner in a town, but those who led easy lives in it said, "Surely we found our fathers on a course, and surely we are following in their footsteps."*
24. *(And the warner) said, "Even though I bring you better guidance than that you found your fathers following?" They answered, "We disbelieve in what you bring."*
25. *We exacted revenge on them; see what was the end of those who rejected (Truth). (43: 1 – 25)*

"Ha. Mim. By the Book that makes things clear, We have made it a Quran in Arabic that you may be able to understand." God takes an oath by the Alphabetical letters of the Arabic language, then another oath by the Book that He revealed, to emphasize the fact that the Book was revealed in Arabic so that it could be understood by the Arabs whom God has chosen to carry His Message to the rest of the world. This Book is a supreme Book. God describes it as a sublime Book full of wisdom, "And verily, it is in the Mother of the Book, which We possess, it is indeed sublime, full of wisdom." The Arabs should have appreciated the great blessing that God bestowed upon them by choosing their language to be the vehicle for the transmission of the Quran. Instead they ridiculed the Message and turned away from it. God then threatened them, "Shall We utterly ignore you and hold back the reminder from you because you are a transgressing people?" In addition to the threat, they were reminded with the fate of the people before them who ridiculed their messengers in the same way, "How many a prophet did We send to earlier people. And never came a prophet to them but they mocked him. We destroyed people more powerful than them (the disbelievers of Mecca) - and the example of the people of old has passed away."

What is astonishing about the behavior of the people of Mecca is that they did believe in God, the Creator. However, they did not translate this belief into its natural conclusion: the belief in the Oneness of God. They associated partners with Him; assigned to God daughters from among the angels; and worshipped these angels. The Quran tried to reason with them in a way that appeals to their initial natural disposition, *"If you were to ask them, 'Who created the heavens and the earth?' They would surely reply, 'They were created by (Him), the Eminent, the Omniscient.'"* The Quran takes the discussion further by portraying the attributes of God which supports His Oneness, *"It is He who made the earth a resting place for you, and placed roads for you therein, that you may find your way; and who sent down water from the sky in due measure, and We revived a dead land therewith; and likewise you will you be brought forth."* The verses reminded them of the wonders of the creation. God brings the water down in due measure to revive the land. Water is the source of life. God started life and He is able to resurrect people after their death as He is able to revive the land.

The fundamental rule underlying the creation, the concept of duality, is then stated, *"He who created all the pairs, and made for you ships and the cattle you ride on. In order that you may sit firm on their backs, and when so seated, you may celebrate the blessing of your Lord, and say, 'Glory to Him who has subjected these to our (use), for we could never have accomplished this*

(by ourselves); and to our Lord, surely, we will return.” The verses also remind humankind with the bounties that God bestowed on him, by making him vicegerent on earth. The verse teaches Muslims how to respond to God’s blessings using appropriate invocations. It also reminds them that these invocations are not merely a lip service but they are activities in which the words enunciated by the tongue are used to evoke feelings of gratitude in the hearts of the believers.

The narrative continues to deal with and refute the claims of the disbelievers about the relationship between the angels and God, *“And they assign to Him a part of His servants; humankind is clearly ungrateful. Or did He choose daughters from what He created, and honored He you with sons?”* The verse ridicules these false claims using simple logic. Why would the Creator choose the daughters and bestow sons on the disbelievers? Especially when they consider that having daughters is demeaning, *“And if one of them is given news of what he attributes to Lord of Mercy his countenance is darkened and he is full of inward rage. Is then one brought up among trinkets, and unable to give a clear account in a dispute (to be associated with God)?”*

They were then questioned about the basis of their claim, *“And they make the angels, who are the servants of the Lord of Mercy, females. Did they witness their creation? Their testimony will be recorded and they will be questioned.”* They will bear the dire consequences of making such false claims. But they made excuses, *“And they say, ‘If the Lord of Mercy had willed, we should not have worshipped them.’ They have no knowledge whatsoever of that. They are merely guessing.”* Were they given a book before this that supported their lame excuse? Not really, they followed blindly what their fathers were doing, *“Or have We given them any scripture before (this Quran) so that they are holding fast to it? No indeed, but they say, ‘We found our fathers following a certain religion, and we are guided by their footsteps.’”*

At the end of this discourse, the end of the previous nations which rejected the truth is portrayed, *“And thus, We did not send before you any warner in a town, but those who led easy lives in it said, ‘Surely we found our fathers on a course, and surely we are following their footsteps.’ (And the warner) said, ‘Even though I bring you better guidance than that you found your fathers following?’ They answered, ‘We disbelieve in what you bring.’ We exacted revenge on them; see what was the end of those who rejected (Truth).”* It is the same excuse that people who rejected the truth over the history made: we were simply following in the footsteps of our forefathers. Islam came to free the human intellect from the shackles of blind imitation, urging people to use their intellect to think logically and rationally.

Verses 26 to 56:

26. *And when Abraham said to his father and his people, “I am innocent of what you worship.”*
27. *(I worship) only Him who created me, and He will certainly guide me.”*

28. *And he left it as a word to endure among his seed that they might return.*
29. *But I let these and their fathers enjoy life (only) till there came to them the truth and a messenger who makes things clear.*
30. *But when the truth came to them, they said, "This is sorcery, and we reject it."*
31. *And they say, "If only this Quran had been revealed to one of the great men of the two towns?"*
32. *Is it they who distribute the Mercy of your Lord? It is We who have apportioned their livelihood among them in the life of this world; and We raised some of them above others in rank, so that some may take others in their service. But the Mercy of your Lord is better than the (wealth) which they amass.*
33. *And were it not that (all) people would become one community (of disbelievers), We would have made for everyone that blasphemes against the Lord of Mercy, silver roofs for their houses and (silver) stairways on which to go up;*
34. *And for their houses doors (of silver) and couches whereon to recline;*
35. *And ornaments of gold. Yet all that would have been but a provision of the life of the world. And the Hereafter with your Lord will be for those who are conscious of Him.*
36. *And whoever is blinded from the remembrance of the Lord of Mercy, We appoint for him a devil, as an associate.*
37. *Such (devils) bar them from the path, but they think that they are being guided.*
38. *Till, when he comes to Us, he says (to his comrade), "If only were between me and you the distance of the east and the west - an evil comrade."*
39. *And it will not benefit you on that day, since you did wrong, that you will be partners in the torment.*
40. *Can you (Muhammad) make the deaf to hear, or can you guide the blind or him who is in evident error?*
41. *And if We take you away, We will surely exact revenge on them;*
42. *Otherwise We will show you that which We have promised them, for verily We have full power over them.*
43. *So hold fast to what has been revealed to you; verily you are on a straight path.*
44. *And indeed, it is a reminder for you and for your people; and soon you will be brought to account.*
45. *And ask our messengers whom We sent before you; did We appoint any deities other than the Lord of Mercy, to be worshipped?*
46. *And verily We sent Moses with Our revelations to Pharaoh and his chiefs, and he said, "I am a messenger of the Lord of the Worlds."*
47. *But when he came to them with Our signs, they laughed at them.*
48. *We showed them signs, one after another, each one was greater than the previous one. And We seized them with torment, in order that they might turn (to Us).*
49. *And they said, "Sorcerer, invoke your Lord for us, by virtue of His covenant with you, for we shall truly accept guidance."*
50. *But when We removed the torment from them, they broke their word.*
51. *And Pharaoh proclaimed among his people, saying, "My people, does not the dominion of Egypt belong to me and these rivers flowing underneath me? Do you not then see?"*
52. *Am I not better than this fellow, who is a contemptible wretch and can scarcely express himself clearly?*

53. *Why has he not been given any gold bracelets, and why did not the angels accompany him?"*
54. *Thus he made fools of his people, and they obeyed him. Truly they were transgressing people.*
55. *When at length they provoked Us, We exacted revenge on them, and We drowned them all.*
56. *And We made them a thing of the past, and an example for those who came after (them). (43: 26 – 56)*

The Arabs used to claim that they were the progeny of Prophet Abraham (PBUH) and that they were the followers of his religion. The first claim is true but the second is false, because Abraham (PBUH) believed in the Oneness of God, he never associated partners with Him, *“And when Abraham said to his father and his people, ‘I am innocent of what you worship. (I worship) only Him who created me, and He will certainly guide me.’”* It is clear from these verses that Abraham’s (PBUH) people also believed in God but they associated partners with Him. Abraham’s (PBUH) religion was propagated by His seed, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad (PBUT), who brought the three monotheistic religions to humanity, *“And he left it as a word to endure among his seed that they might return.”*

Then people forgot the true religion, nevertheless God decreed that they would be reprieved, and He sent them a messenger to remind them and to bring them back to the straight path, *“But I let these and their fathers enjoy life (only) till there came to them the truth and a messenger who makes things clear.”* However, when the messenger came to them they rejected him, *“But when the truth came to them, they said, ‘This is sorcery, and we reject it.’”* The Quran then uncovers their hypocrisy. They were afraid that the belief in the Oneness of God will destroy their power base. So, they rejected the Message. They questioned why did God choose Muhammad (PBUH)? Why did not God choose one of the chiefs to be His Messenger? This way the power structure would remain unchanged, *“And they say, ‘If only this Quran had been revealed to one of the great men of the two towns?’”*

They did not understand that it is God’s decision to choose whomsoever He wills to deliver His Message, *“Is it they who distribute the Mercy of your Lord? It is We who have apportioned their livelihood among them in the life of this world; and We raised some of them above others in rank, so that some may take others in their service. But the Mercy of your Lord is better than the (wealth) which they amass.”* God provides whatever He wills to whomsoever He chooses. Provision in life is not restricted to monetary earnings; but it also includes skills, talents, position in the societal hierarchy, and living conditions. Life is built on the fact that people are different. Diversity is God’s intended plan. People complement each other and this guarantees that life on earth will continue. God also bestows His mercy on those who deserve it.

The material gains in this life are so trivial. Had God wished, He could have given everything to the disbelievers; but that would have been a severe trial for the believers, *“And were it not that (all) people would become one community (of disbelievers), We would have made for everyone that blasphemes against the Lord of Mercy, silver roofs for their houses and (silver) stairways on*

which to go up; and for their houses doors (of silver) and couches whereon to recline; and ornaments of gold. Yet all that would have been but a provision of the life of the world. And the Hereafter with your Lord will be for those who are conscious of Him.” All of these ornaments are transient pleasures; but the real permanent treasures are saved for the God conscious.

The verses continue to describe the condition of the disbelievers, *“And whoever is blinded from the remembrance of the Lord of Mercy, We appoint for him a devil as an associate. Such (devils) bar them from the path, but they think that they are being guided.”* Those who chose to become blinded and heedless of the remembrance of God will be assigned companions from among the devils. Their companions will do their best to keep them away from the straight path. They will keep them in the dark until, at the end they will realize that they were pursuing a mirage, *“Till, when he comes to Us, he says (to his comrade), ‘If only were between me and you the distance of the east and the west - an evil comrade.’”* He will wish that the distance between him and his associate was as long as the distance between the east and the west, *“And it will not benefit you on that day, since you did wrong, that you will be partners in the torment.”* But it will be too late. It will not be a consolation for him that they will be partners in the torment.

The verses now turn to provide comfort to the Prophet (PBUH). His people denied him and rejected the guidance that he brought them, but it is not his mistake, *“Can you (Muhammad) make the deaf to hear, or can you guide the blind or him who is in evident error? And if We take you away, We will surely exact revenge on them, Otherwise We will show you that which We have promised them, for verily We have full power over them. So hold fast to what has been revealed to you; verily you are on a straight path. And indeed, it is a reminder for you and for your people; and soon you will be brought to account. And ask our messengers whom We sent before you; did We appoint any deities other than the Lord of Mercy, to be worshipped?”* This type of address to the Prophet (PBUH) has been repeated often in the Quran. It provided comfort to the Prophet (PBUH) during his struggle against falsehood, defined for him the boundaries of his responsibility, and established the principle that everything is done according to the will of God.

The following verses move on to another theme, going back to Prophet Moses (PBUH), *“And verily We sent Moses with Our revelations to Pharaoh and his chiefs, and he said, ‘I am a messenger of the Lord of the Worlds.’ But when he came to them with Our signs, they laughed at them.”* The verse describes the first meeting between Moses (PBUH), after he was sent by God, and Pharaoh. The description is very brief. It highlights the main points: Moses (PBUH) told Pharaoh that he was sent as a messenger of God and showed him and his chiefs the signs that God sent him with but they rejected these signs and they laughed at them. Then the verses talk about the trials that God inflicted on Pharaoh and his people, *“We showed them signs, one after another, each one was greater than the previous one. And We seized them with torment, in order that they might turn (to Us).”* However, these miracles did not convince them. This verifies the earlier statement, *“Can you (Muhammad) make the deaf to hear, or can you guide the blind or him who is in evident error.”* Miracles cannot change a heart that has been sealed and whose owner does not want to be guided.

However, they appealed to Moses (PBUH) to pray His lord to save them from these trials promising him that they will be guided if God removes His wrath, *“And they said, ‘Sorcerer, invoke your Lord for us, by virtue of His covenant with you, for we shall truly accept guidance.’”* But they were not truthful in their promise, *“But when We removed the torment from them, they broke their word.”*

Pharaoh had the audacity to challenge the truth that Moses (PBUH) brought, *“And Pharaoh proclaimed among his people, saying, ‘My people, does not the dominion of Egypt belong to me and these rivers flowing underneath me? Do you not then see? Am I not better than this fellow, who is a contemptible wretch and can scarcely express himself clearly? Why has he not been given any gold bracelets, and why did not the angels accompany him?’”* He used his crooked logic, a logic that appeals to the superficial signs of power in this worldly life, to deceive his people and they listened to him like fools, *“Thus he made fools of his people, and they obeyed him. Truly they were transgressing people.”* They were really transgressing people because they believed Pharaoh’s crooked logic blindly. They deserved to be punished, *“When at length they provoked Us, We exacted revenge on them, and We drowned them all. And We made them a thing of the past, and an example for those who came after (them).* They were made an example for all those who came after them.

Verses 57 to 89:

57. *When (Jesus) the son of Mary was cited as an example, your people raised a clamor.*
58. *And they said, “Are our gods better, or is he?” They raised their objection only to challenge you. They are a contentious people.*
59. *He was only a servant on whom We bestowed Our blessings; and We made him an example for the Children of Israel.*
60. *And had We willed We could have set among you angels to be successors on earth.*
61. *And indeed, he will be a sign (for the coming of) the Hour (of Judgment); therefore, have no doubt about it, and follow Me. This is a straight path.*
62. *Let not Satan bar you; for he is your avowed enemy.*
63. *When Jesus came with clear signs, he said, “I have come to you with wisdom, and in order to make clear to you some of the (points) on which you dispute. Therefore, be conscious of God and obey me.*
64. *God is my Lord and your Lord; so worship Him. This is the straight path.”*
65. *But the factions among them differed. Then woe to the wrongdoers from the torment of a painful day.*
66. *Are they only waiting for the Hour to come upon them suddenly, while they are unaware?*
67. *On that Day, the friends will be enemies of one another, except for the God conscious.*
68. *My servants, for you there is no fear on this Day, nor will you grieve;*
69. *(Being) among those who believed in Our revelations and submitted to Us.*
70. *Enter the Garden, you and your wives, rejoicing.*
71. *Dishes and goblets of gold will be brought round for them, and therein is all what the soul desire and the eyes find sweet. And you will abide therein eternally.*
72. *This is the Garden of which you are made heirs because of what you used to do.*
73. *You shall have therein abundance of fruit; from which you shall eat.*

74. *But the sinners will abide in the torment of Hell eternally.*
75. *From which there will be not relief, and they will despair therein.*
76. *We did not wrong them, but they were the wrongdoers.*
77. *They will cry, "Malik, let your Lord make an end of us." He will say, "Here you must remain."*
78. *Certainly We have brought you the truth, but most of you are averse to the truth.*
79. *Or did they devise a plan (among themselves)? We will also devise.*
80. *Or do they think that We do not hear their secrets and their private counsels? Indeed (We do), and Our messengers are by them, to record.*
81. *Say (Muhammad), "If the Lord of Mercy has a son, then, I shall be the first among the worshippers."*
82. *Glorified be the Lord of the heavens and the earth, the Lord of the Throne, from that which they ascribe (to Him).*
83. *So leave them to babble and play (with vanities) until they meet that Day of theirs, which they have been promised.*
84. *It is He who is God in the heaven and God on earth; and He is the Wise, the Omniscient.*
85. *And blessed is He to whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth, and all in between them. With Him is the Knowledge of the Hour (of Judgment); and to Him shall you be brought back.*
86. *And those whom they invoke besides God have no power of intercession; only those who bear witness to the truth, and they know.*
87. *If you ask them, who created them, they will certainly say, God. How then are they deluded?*
88. *And he said, "My Lord, indeed these are a people who do not believe."*
89. *So turn away from them and say, "Peace," for they shall soon come to know. (43: 57 – 89)*

"When (Jesus) the son of Mary was cited as an example, your people raised a clamor. And they said, 'Are our gods better, or is he?' They raised their objection only to challenge you. They were a contentious people." These verses describe the objections that the Arabs used to make in their argument with the Prophet (PBUH) and to challenge him. The Quran then turns to the claims that the Christians had about Jesus (PBUH). The verse states clearly that Jesus (PBUH) was not a god to be worshipped but he was a messenger that was chosen by God to deliver the Message to the Children of Israel, "He was only a servant on whom We bestowed Our blessings; and We made him an example for the Children of Israel." Had God willed, He would have created angels on earth. God is all Powerful, "And had We willed We could have set among you angels to be successors on earth."

The verses then remind people of the inevitability of Day of Judgment, *"And indeed, he will be a sign (for the coming of) the Hour (of Judgment); therefore, have no doubt about it, and follow Me. This is a straight path. Let not Satan bar you; for he is your avowed enemy."* Many prophetic traditions were narrated which stated that Jesus (PBUH) will descend back to earth before the Day of Judgment. Thus, the coming of Jesus (PBUH) will be a sign that the Day of Judgment is looming. The Quran keeps reminding people that Satan is their avowed enemy, and

he will try very hard to turn them away from the straight path. They should be alert to the danger of Satan; and should protect themselves from falling a prey to him.

The following verses narrate what transpired between Jesus (PBUH) and his people, *“When Jesus came with clear signs, he said, ‘I have come to you with wisdom, and in order to make clear to you some of the (points) on which you dispute. Therefore, be conscious of God and obey me. God is my Lord and your Lord; so worship Him. This is the straight path.’ But the factions among them differed. Then woe to the wrongdoers from the torment of a painful day.”* Jesus (PBUH) brought them clear signs and brought them wisdom. But they were divided among themselves. He (PBUH) stated unequivocally that he was a messenger of God. God is his Lord and their Lord, who deserves to be worshipped.

“Are they only waiting for the Hour to come upon them suddenly, while they are unaware?” A very clear warning, the Hour may come suddenly while they are heedless. On that day everything will be different; the relationships that we are familiar with will change and friends will be no longer friends, *“On that Day, the friends will be enemies of one another.”* But those who remained God conscious they have nothing to fear, *“except for the God conscious; My servants, for you there is no fear on this day, nor will you grieve; (Being) among those who believed in Our revelations and submitted to Us. Enter the Garden, you and your wives, rejoicing. Dishes and goblets of gold will be brought round for them, and therein is all what the soul desire and the eyes find sweet. And you will abide therein eternally. This is the Garden of which you are made heirs because of what you used to do. You shall have therein abundance of fruit; from which you shall eat.”* Those who heeded the warning of the messenger, they became servants of God, and remained conscious of Him they will be admitted to the Garden where they will reside forever. They will rejoice therein and they will have what pleases the soul and the eyes.

However, the criminals will be taken to Hell where they will abide forever, *“But the sinners will abide in the torment of Hell eternally. From which there will be not relief, and they will despair therein. We did not wrong them, but they were the wrongdoers. They will cry, ‘Malik, let your Lord make an end of us.’ He will say, ‘Here you must remain.’ Certainly We have brought you the truth, but most of you are averse to the truth. Or did they devise a plan (among themselves)? We will also devise. Or do they think that We do not hear their secrets and their private counsels? Indeed (We do), and Our messengers are by them, to record.”* They will suffer the continuous torment that they were warned about. They will wish that God will finish them off. But they were given the truth in the life of the world and they chose to reject it. So, they deserve what they are getting in the Hereafter. Or did they think that they devised a plan to deceive God? But God knows their secrets and their scheming in the dark.

The verses then come back to the Prophet (PBUH) asking him to state that, *“If the Lord of Mercy has a son, then, I shall be the first among the worshippers.”* But God is high above what they ascribe to Him, *“Glorified be the Lord of the heavens and the earth, the Lord of the Throne, from that which they ascribe (to Him).”* So let them indulge in their vain talk, they will meet the Day which they were promised, *“So leave them to babble and play (with vanities) until they meet that Day of theirs, which they have been promised.”*

God is the Creator of everything and He has the knowledge of everything, *“It is He who is God in the heaven and God on earth; and He is the Wise, the Omniscient. And blessed is He to whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth, and all in between them. With Him is the Knowledge of the Hour (of Judgment); and to Him shall you be brought back.”* He has no partners. Those whom they ascribe as partners to Him will not benefit them on the Day of Judgment, *“And those whom they invoke besides God have no power of intercession; only those who bear witness to the truth, and they know.”* How can they make these false claims while they know that God is the Creator, *“If you ask them, who created them, they will certainly say, God. How then are they deluded?”*

At the end of the Sura, God turns to His Messenger (PBUH) listening to him, *“And he said, ‘My Lord, indeed these are a people who do not believe.’* God listened to His Messenger (PBUH) and directed him kindly to ignore the disbelievers, *“So turn away from them and say, ‘Peace,’ for they shall soon come to know.”*