

An Explanation of Surah Al-Asr

Description: To understand that this *surah* emphasizes the importance of utilizing time wisely. It points out to what can save mankind from loss in this world and the next.

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Objectives:

- To understand the meaning of Surah Al-Asr, one of the greatest *surahs* of the Quran.

Arabic terms:

- *Hadith* - (plural " *ahadith* ") is a piece of information or a story. In Islam it is a narrative record of the sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad and his companions.
- *Sahabah* - the plural form of " *Sahabi*," which translates to Companions. A *sahabi*, as the word is commonly used today, is someone who saw Prophet Muhammad, believed in him and died as a Muslim.
- *Sabr* - patience and it comes from a root word meaning to stop, detain, or refrain.
- *Sunnah* - The word *Sunnah* has several meanings depending on the area of study however the meaning is generally accepted to be, whatever was reported that the Prophet said, did, or approved.
- *Haqq* - truth. Al-Haqq (The Truth) is one of the names of Allah.

Introduction

Surah Al-Asr is the one hundred and third (103) *surah* of the Quran. It has been referred to as a matchless example of comprehensiveness because it explains in three brief verses the way to success and the way to ruin. Imam Ash-Shafi said that if people considered this *surah* well it would be sufficient in the way of guidance. A number of *ahadith* speak about the high esteem in which the *sahabah* held this *surah*. Accordingly whenever any two or more *sahabi* met they would not part company without reciting *surah Al-Asr*.[\[1\]](#)



This web site will help you to learn, recite and memorise *surah Al-Asr*.

<http://www.mounthira.com/learning/surah/103-al-asr/>

oeBy Al-'Asr (the time). Verily, man is [deep] in loss, except for those who believe and do good deeds, urge one another to the truth and urge one another to patience.” (Quran 103)

This *surah* opens with admonition to humankind. Allah takes an oath by oetime” and declares that humankind is in a state of loss. Every single human being, man or woman, is in a state of loss except those who strive and do four things; believe, do righteous deeds, and recommend one another to truth, and to *sabr*.

The meaning of *Asr*

The simple translation for the word *asr* would be time. However *asr* has a much deeper meaning than another Arabic word meaning time, *dahr*. *Dahr* means time with no limits placed upon it, *asr* on the other hand means time that is limited; time that will come to an end. At a linguistic level one of the meanings of *asr* is something that is pressed or squeezed. Allah is swearing an oath by time, a time that is limited, a time that will end and a time that must be squeezed or pressed so that we, humankind, get as much from our limited time as possible.

Allah is also asking us to reflect on the passage of time. Another meaning that is given to the word *asr* is the declining day, the time of the *Asr* prayer, when the day is winding down coming to an end. Allah is telling us that our time is short and limited and if we do not make the most of it we are surely the losers, verily, Allah says, we are in loss.

The meaning of loss

The Arabic word for loss is *khusr* and it is the opposite of profit thus also carrying the meaning of bankruptcy. In this context it could mean that humankind will lose their main capital for the Hereafter if instead of using this life to gain by faith and deeds they bargain it away with disbelief and sin.

We are in danger of losing something very special, and that is a blissful life in the Hereafter. However before that great loss we will lose our closeness to Allah and thus our peace and tranquility in this life. A loss of contentment can sometimes lead humankind to act treacherously, and to run headlong into trouble and strife. But Allah is constantly warning us and here He is once more saying, wait, think and save yourself. Save yourself by aiming to have four character traits:

1. To believe. The first step of salvation is through upholding the correct belief and adhering to it with conviction and certainty.
2. To do righteous deeds. The way in which we gain this certainty is by doing the actions that are pleasing to Allah; we demonstrate our belief through our actions or righteous deeds. Our deeds must be performed in accordance to what is in the Quran and the authentic *Sunnah*. They should not be according to our whims and desires. The true sign of success is to obey Allah’s commandments and to resist the desire to sin.

3. To encourage, recommend or connect to truth. In Arabic *haqq*. Allah is telling us to remind each other and encourage each other to be faithful to the truth, and to let it stand out clearly by striving for justice.
4. To recommend one another to *sabr* is the fourth trait and establishing a commitment to *haqq* would not be possible without *sabr*. Being steadfast in following the commandments of Allah requires patience, staying away from sins requires patience, and not despairing in times of calamities requires patience. Ibnul Qayyim^[2] explained that having *sabr* meant having the ability to stop ourselves from despairing, to refrain from complaining, and to control ourselves in times of sadness and worry.

This *surah* advises those who believe to act collectively to strengthen their position in the Hereafter. It implies asking and inviting people to do righteous deeds and stopping them from falling into sin and disbelief.

The revelation of this *surah* occurred during difficult times. The early Muslims had to contend with the oppression and *surah* Al-Asr gave them strength and confidence in the face of their trials and tribulations. It is perhaps for this reason that it was very dear to the *sahabah* and still is to those who try to lead righteous lives. Nowadays when a person finds himself in loss, his position can be turned around by following the succinct advice Allah gave to us in *surah* Al-Asr.

Endnotes:

^[1] At Tabarani

^[2] Ibn Qayyim al jawziyyah, 1997, *Patience and gratitude*, English translation, United Kingdom, Ta Ha Publishers

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