

## Chapter 16, An-Nahl (The Bee) (part 1 of 2)

**Description:** Proof of the Oneness of God, a refutation of polytheism and a warning.

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Published on 11 Jan 2016 - Last modified on 15 May 2016

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### Introduction

An-Nahl is the 16<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Quran. It is named after the bee mentioned in verses 68 and 69. The bee is one of many examples mentioned in this chapter of God's grace towards His creation. An-Nahl was revealed in Mecca and contains 128 verses. Up to verse 88 its contents are addressed to the idolaters and polytheists. In the concluding verses Prophet Muhammad and his companions are instructed how to act in the face of antagonism and persecution.



### Verses 1-9 There is no true deity but God

The Day of Judgement is coming so do not be impatient to experience it. God sends down angels to inspire some people to warn others that there is no true deity but God. Fear Him for He is far above anything they associate with Him. People are created from a tiny drop of sperm but soon they become strong and openly challenge God. For the benefit of humankind God created cattle for food, clothing and to carry burdens. He also created horses, mules and donkeys to ride and other things that are beyond the comprehension of humankind. For some, God distinguishes the right path from the wrong paths and He could have done this for everybody had it been His desire to do so.

### Verses 10 - 21 God's blessings for humankind

God sends down rain. It provides drinking water and it nourishes crops and fruit including olives, date palms and vines. This is a sign for those who ponder. God has made the day, the night, the sun, the moon and stars for the benefit of humankind. These are signs for those who think. The Earth is filled with things of many different colours; these are signs for those seeking to learn a lesson from them. God has made the sea for the benefit of humankind; it is a source of food and adornment. Ships to sail through it so that humankind may seek God's bounties and perhaps give thanks. God has also set the mountains firmly into the earth to prevent it from shaking and He has made rivers and paths with landmarks and stars to guide people through the lands.

This is a reminder of His power and generosity and if a person wanted to count all the blessings that God had sent down he could not do so. God is Forgiving and Merciful and

He knows what people keep hidden. The deities that are invoked along with God are unable to create anything for they are creations themselves, who do not even know when they will be resurrected.

## **Verses 22 - 29 Punishment for arrogance**

God is One, those who do not believe in the Hereafter are arrogant and their hearts contain no faith. God does not like the arrogant because He knows what they keep hidden and what they say or do openly. When they are asked about what God has revealed they say that it is nothing but fairy tales from the old days. On the Day of Resurrection they will bear their own burdens plus some of the burdens of those they led astray.

People from earlier times felt the punishment come upon them from out of nowhere. On the Day of Judgment they will be humiliated once again. Those with knowledge know that it will be a day of misery for the disbelievers. Those who die doing wrong will deny their wrongdoing but God is aware of what they were doing. So they enter Hell and will remain there in the evil home of the arrogant.

## **Verses 30 - 40 The good are rewarded and God's promise is true**

Those who feared God and were righteous will be asked about what God sent down and they will describe it as good. There are rewards in this world for the righteous but their home in the Hereafter is even better, it is an excellent abode. They will be rewarded with gardens under which rivers flow and they will have whatever they desire. When the pious people die the angels greet them with words of peace and show them into the gardens of reward.

God was not unjust to the disbelievers, they were unjust to themselves. They will be struck by the consequences of their actions and will be swallowed up by what they used to mock and ridicule. Those who face the punishment say they would have worshipped God alone if that is what God had willed; their forefathers said that too. Messengers were sent to every nation and their only duty was to warn. If anyone travels through the earth they can see what happened to those who did not heed the warning. Those who God led astray cannot be guided. God's promise to raise the dead to life is true. Everything will be made clear and the disbelievers will realise how wrong they were. When God intends anything to happen He need only say, "Be", and it is.

## **Verses 41 - 50 Reflection**

Those who had to leave their homes in order to worship God will find a home in a good place but the home they have in the Hereafter will be even better. A very happy end awaits those who are steadfast and put their trust in God. All the messengers God sent were human beings, the people of the scripture (Jews and Christians) know this, so ask them if you need to. Now this Quran has come so that Prophet Muhammad can explain things clearly and the people can think and reflect. Are those who do wrong really sure that the punishment will not come upon them suddenly, or perhaps it will sneak up on them gradually. The disbelievers have not truly reflected on what God has created -

everything humbly fulfilling its purpose, fearing God and doing what He commands.

## Verses 51- 60 False worship

God says do not worship two deities because there is only One God and He has dominion over everything in the heavens and the earth. All blessings are from God and it is to God that the distressed person turns. Yet as soon as the relief comes some people turn to something other than God. There will be consequences for the ingratitude. Even the sustenance God provides is sometimes spent on false deities but anyone who does this will be called to account. They wrongly say that God has daughters but they themselves want to have only sons. When the birth of a female child is announced the father is consumed with grief and has to decide whether to bear their perceived humiliation or bury the girl alive. Those who do not believe in the Hereafter set the worst example to follow.

## Chapter 16, An-Nahl (The Bee) (part 2 of 2)

**Description:** Admonitions and rewards, lessons and examples.

By Aisha Stacey (© 2016 IslamReligion.com)

Published on 18 Jan 2016 - Last modified on 15 May 2016

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## Verses 61-69 A warning to make things clear

If God punished humankind for the evil that they do there would not be one person left on the earth. Instead He gives them respite, until an appointed time. It is a time that cannot be delayed or bought forward. They attribute to God the daughters that they themselves dislike. They think they will have a good reward but their reward is Hell and they will be among the first to be sent there. The followers of Satan will face a painful punishment. The Quran was revealed in order to make the things they argue about clear and it is a guidance and a mercy for those who believe.



God has sent down rain to revive the earth. The cows produce milk and the vines and gardens grow wholesome foods of all kinds. These things are a sign of God's bounty; in them is a lesson to be learned. And God created the bee, which feeds on all kinds of fruit and produces honey for the benefit of humankind. It comes in many colours and has healing properties. This is another sign for those who think.

## Verses 70 - 81 God gives examples

God created you and it is He that will cause you to die. Some people will live well into old age and will lose their faculties. Some people have been given more provision than others and many of them do not share their wealth. Is that a way of rejecting the blessings of God? God has given you spouses and children and grandchildren, yet still some people deny His blessings. Those deities worshipped other than God have no power.

God gives examples. Are slaves and those who have been provided with everything equal? Is a person unable to care for himself equal to one who is righteous and dispenses justice? The Day of Judgment is coming. Babies emerge from their mother's wombs knowing nothing but God provides them with hearing, sight and minds so that they can be thankful to Him. God has made the birds able to fly without falling. He provides humankind with shelter and warmth and everything you need for the term of your lives. You have garments that protect you from the heat and the cold and other garments that protect you in battle. He bestows the favours so that you will submit to Him.

## Verses 82 - 89 The disbelievers will feel no respite

The Prophet's duty is only to deliver the message. Most people understand but are ungrateful and turn away. On the Day of Judgment there will be a witness (their Messenger) from every nation. Then it will be too late for excuses. The disbelievers will see what awaits them and there will be no respite. When the disbelievers appeal to their false gods, the gods will call them liars and disassociate themselves from the ones who worshipped them. Those who disbelieve and prevent others from believing will have their punishment increased. God will bring a witness from every nation and Prophet Muhammad will be the witness over the Muslims. And the Quran has been sent down as guidance, mercy and good tidings.

## Verses 90 - 100 God commands righteousness

God commands humankind to be just and behave with righteousness whilst being supportive of their relatives. He forbids immorality and oppression. This is a reminder. Fulfil any oaths you take in the name of God, and do not deceive each other or conspire against others. This is a test. On the Day of Judgement the things you argued about will be made clear.

God could have made everybody one nation but He allows people to practice their free will - however you will be responsible for your actions. Do not deceive each other or hinder other people from worshipping God. To do so will result in a great punishment. Do not break agreements and oaths. Worldly things are transitory but what is from God is everlasting. The righteous will have a new life in the Hereafter. Whenever you recite from the Quran seek refuge in God from the accursed Satan. Satan has no power over those who are submitted to God; his power only affects those who align themselves with him (Satan) and worship something other than God.

## **Verses 101 - 111 God does not guide the disbelievers**

When God substitutes one verse for another they say that Prophet Muhammad has invented lies but they do not understand that angel Gabriel has brought the verses down piecemeal in order to gradually strengthen the believers. They say that a human being has taught Prophet Muhammad the revelations but this Quran is in clear Arabic. If people do not believe, God does not continue to guide them and a painful punishment will be the end result. They love this world more than the Hereafter. God has sealed the hearts, ears and eyes of the heedless, but those who must flee persecution or are compelled to say words of disbelief will feel God's mercy and forgiveness. Anyone who denies the correct faith willingly will feel the wrath of God. On the Day of Judgement everyone will be dealt justly with and get what they deserve.

## **Verses 112- 117 Eat from the good things provided**

God presents an example of a town that was secure with provisions in abundance. The people became ungrateful so they were afflicted with famine and fear. They denied their Messenger and the punishment overtook them. So eat from the good things God has provided and be grateful. God has forbidden only carrion, blood, pig meat and that which has been dedicated to something other than God. But if a person must eat these things out of necessity God will be forgiving. Do not invent lies about what is lawful and what is unlawful because those who tell lies about God will have only a little enjoyment before the punishment overtakes them.

## **Verses 118 - 128 Follow the example of the righteous and use wisdom when you talk about God**

The Jews were prohibited certain things but it was not a hardship upon them, they turned it into a hardship. God is most forgiving to those who do wrong out of ignorance and then repent. Prophet Abraham is a good example, he was devout and obedient. He was grateful and did not associate anything with God. He had a good life and will be amongst the righteous in the Hereafter. The Sabbath day was made obligatory because they argued and differed about it and on the Day of Judgment God will judge between them.

Call the people to God with wisdom and good advice. Reason with them in a courteous manner. God knows best who will be guided and who will go astray. If you must retaliate make your response proportionate to how you were harmed, however it is better to be patient. Prophet Muhammad is told to be patient and not to grieve or be distressed by the conspiracies of the disbelievers. God is with those who are mindful of Him and have an attitude of righteousness.

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