

# Referencing the Qur'an: A Proposal, with Illustrative Translations and Discussion

## Part 1: A Proposal for a Standard System of Notation

The following constitutes a proposal to standardise the way(s) in which we refer to the Qur'an, both in prose (words) and when referencing passages (numbers).

### Words

For those wishing to invoke the name of a sura or aya in Arabic, transliteration, italics, and *idāfa* are de rigueur, e.g. *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa*, or, for example, the following, culled from recently published scholarship:<sup>1</sup>

... Fārāhī's Interpretation of *Sūrat al-Fil*

A Close Reading of Sura 93 (*al-Duḥā*) and the *basmala*

... a short Meccan sūra which describes ...

... Verse of the Sword (*ayat as-sayf*) ...

However, there is no standard way of referring to suras and ayas in English prose. Some scholars opt for 'chapter'/'Chapter' and 'Verse'/'verse' to render them, abbreviating them 'ch.'/'Ch.' (pl. 'chs'/'Chs'), and 'V.'/'v.' (pl. 'Vv.'/'vv.'). I am not against these – though there are, to be sure, a number of arguments for not using terms borrowed from English – but given that 'sura' ('surah' too) is now part of English, there is, to my mind, no reason not to use it unitalicised. I suggest the h-less form, viz. sura.

Aya has not yet made it into the *Oxford Concise English Dictionary*, but ayah (with a final 'h') has, in the meaning of nanny. I suggest, therefore, using the h-less form aya – hence my preference also for h-less sura. Below is a chart together with corresponding abbreviations (where applicable):

	<i>Common noun</i>	<i>Proper noun</i>	<i>Common noun abbrev.</i>	<i>Proper noun abbrev.</i>
<i>singular</i>	sura	Sura Surat ( <i>in construct</i> )	[n/a]	S.
<i>plural</i>	suras	Suras	[n/a]	S.
<i>singular</i>	aya	Aya Ayat ( <i>in construct</i> )	aya	Aya
<i>plural</i>	ayas	Ayas	ay.	Ay.

There are very few occasions indeed when one would need to abbreviate the common noun *sura* or its plural *suras*. As for the proper noun, I propose not abbreviating it to ‘Ss.’ Besides the obvious distastefulness of the ‘SS’ sequence, a single ‘s’ works just fine, as in the following example sentences:

In his discussion of S. 5 to 7, Lowry underscores ...

Stewart emphasises the importance of S. 93–114 in ...

In the case of *aya*, because ‘a.’ might look like a sequential reference – a, b, c and so on, which I propose be reserved for use as italicised boldfaced subscripts to footnote or endnote – ‘ay.’ would be preferable, though using the full word turns out to require the same number of characters (three): [a] [y] [.] and [a] [y] [a]. That being the case, I propose always using the full word in the singular. As for the plural, abbreviating *ayas* as ‘ay.’ has the serendipitous advantage of corresponding to one of the plurals of the Arabic word *āya*. Thus, for example, ‘see *aya* 7’, and ‘the *Khiḍr* account occurs at *ay.* 60–83’. (The spellings *Qur’an*/*Qur’anic* and *Qur’ān*/*Qur’ānic* are, happily, prevailing.)

### Numbers

There is as yet no standardised way of referring to *Qur’anic* passages. A numerical reference to the first five *ayas* of the ninety-sixth *sura* of the *Qur’an* might read, for example: 96: 1–5; Q 96:1–5 (as per the *Encyclopaedia of the Qur’ān*); Q. 96:1–5 (as per the *Journal of Qur’anic Studies*); *Qur’an* 96: 1–5 (as per the *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*); or *la sourate* 96, 1–5, (as per Schoeler, *Ecrire et transmettre*).<sup>2</sup> Scholarly users of the *Qur’an* tend to identify its parts as above, that is, by *sura* and *aya number*. Liturgical users tend to refer to its parts by *sura name*, *aya cluster* (and, quite often also by *juz’* number) – though many scholars are, it must be said, also sensitive to this form of identification<sup>3</sup> – thus, e.g. from recent scholarship:

Sura Fatiha	Sura Rahman
<i>Sūrat al-Fātiḥa</i>	<i>Sūrat al-Raḥmān</i>
The Fatiha	S. al-Raḥmān

I would like to propose a system of notation that takes into account both scholarly practices and needs on the one hand, and *Qur’anic* or liturgical practices on the other. Thus, one might refer to the first five *ayas* of S. 55 thus:

Q RAHMÂN 55:1–3	or	Q Rahman 55:1–3	or	Q Raḥmān 55:1–3
(small caps)		(regular lettering)		(if transliterated)

This is an expansion of already widely used notation, with the insertion of the Romanised (and unitalicised) name of the sura, allowing for easy identification by lay and liturgical users too. Aesthetically, my personal preference is for small caps (RAHMÂN) but it is the placement, not the font, that is important. If transliteration is unavailable or unfeasible, I suggest at the very least the use of circumflexes to represent long vowels – to avoid misreading e.g. AL °IMRAN for ÂL °IMRÂN. Inasmuch as °*ayn* and *hamza* are discrete letters, they must be represented somehow.

In the case of suras for which the Arabic name is not standard, this notation, by including the number, avoids any ambiguity. Thus, 'Q DAHR 76' will be recognised through its number to be (also) 'Q INSÂN 76'. This system also allows for a dropping of the initial Q, or even the name, once the reference is unambiguous, thus e.g. if it is the first reference to a Qur'anic passage, as in the following example sentence (from my entry 'Trips and Voyages' in the *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ân*):

Solomon's hoopoe brings news at Q NAML 27:32, Solomon despatches a human and jinn embassy at NAML 27:37–40 prompting the Queen's visit (NAML 27:43).

or as in the following, once the sura in question has been identified:

Solomon's hoopoe brings news at NAML 27:32, Solomon despatches a human and jinn embassy at 27:37–40 prompting the Queen's visit (27:43).

#### *Optional additional notation*

a) *Final aya*. I propose notating the final aya with a superscripted § as follows: Q RAHMÂN 55:1–78<sup>§</sup>. Not only does this refer to the range of ayas, but it also tells us that aya 78 is the final aya of the sura. This is also helpful, and informative, when referring to a final aya or ayas alone, thus, for example: Q NÂS 114:5<sup>§</sup> and Q HASHR 59:22–24<sup>§</sup>. I also suggest using the symbol in translations.

b) *Juz' number*. *Juz'* is not typically important to scholars but is frequently cited by liturgical users of the Qur'an. This number may be added as a small subscript to the 'Q' as follows: Q<sub>27</sub> RAHMÂN 55; Q<sub>30</sub> NÂS 114 (A superscript might look better, but runs the risk of being confused for a footnote or, in a translation, for an aya number.)

c) *Translated title*. Inclusion of a translated title (in any language), about which there is anyway no consensus, would go (anywhere) outside the set; it would also not be italicised; quotation marks would be optional. Thus, for example, Q °ASR 103 (Time); Q °ASR 103 ('The Afternoon').

One could, of course, add other information to the basic notation. *Maşâhif* do often indicate two other features that are of interest and that may easily be accommodated

in the proposed notation, namely prostration (*sajda*) ayas, and chronological/revelational number.

d) *Prostration aya*. There are fourteen places where liturgical recitation of a specific aya is to be followed by a prostration. These are usually overlined. I propose an underline, thus, for example, Q HAJJ 22:18, or, in the case of a prostration aya that is also a final aya, Q A<sup>°</sup>RÂF 7:206<sup>§</sup>.

e) *Chronological/revelational number*. There is no scholarly consensus about Qur'anic chronology, but if the imputed chronological number is pertinent to discussion, notation might look like this, using a subscript italicised number before the *compilational* number: Q YUSUF<sub>53</sub>12.

Now, admittedly, if we include all possible information, the notation would look cumbersome (if immensely helpful), for example, Q<sub>8</sub> A<sup>°</sup>RÂF<sub>39</sub>7:1–206<sup>§</sup> where 8 is the *juz*<sup>2</sup> number; A<sup>°</sup>RÂF is the sura name; 39 is the imputed chronological/revelational number; 7 is the sura number in the °Uthmānic compilation; 1–206 is the range of ayas; and 206 is the final aya, also the location of a prostration. One of course need only write: A<sup>°</sup>RÂF 7:1–206.

Thematic (*rukū*<sup>c</sup>) and recitational divisions (e.g. *ḥizb*, *manzil*, etc.) do not, to my mind, merit any notation as they are not divisions to which much attention is paid in scholarship, or liturgically. I do, however, suggest indicating *rukū*<sup>c</sup> divisions in translation(s); I do so myself by including a double return, and by boldfacing the first word of every new *rukū*<sup>c</sup>.<sup>4</sup>

I suggested above some of the ways in which words and number might combine. Here are a few more example sentences:

Q °ASR 103 (Time) is the second-shortest sura ...

'The Afternoon' (Q °ASR 103) is the second-shortest sura ...

Muslims often recite *Sūrat al-Insān* (Q INSÂN 36) in the *fajr* prayer. This sura has 36 ayas. The rhyme sound for ay. 1–13 is *-īra*. Several words in this sura are hapax legomena. Hapaxes also occur in S. 113 and 114.

In sum, I propose:

- 1) Standardising the use of: sura, pl. suras, proper noun Sura, pl. Suras; and aya, pl. ayas, proper noun Aya, pl. Ayas, in unitalicised form,
- 2) Abbreviating these: 's.', 's.', 'S.', 'S.', 'aya', 'ay.', 'Aya', 'Ay.', respectively,
- 3) Using a notation that encompasses both scholarly and liturgical practices, on the model: **Q / optional subscript of juz<sup>2</sup> number /space/ Arabic sura name in**

**small caps** with optional circumflexes / **space** / optional subscript of revelational number / **sura (compilational) number** / **colon** / **aya range**,

- 4) That a sura's final aya is followed by a superscripted §,
- 5) That a prostration aya is *optionally* underlined,
- 6) In translations, superscripting the aya number at the beginning of the aya,
- 7) In translations, subscripting and boldfacing italicised letters of the alphabet (a, b, c ...) as footnote or endnote references.

**Part Two: A Rendition into English *saj*<sup>c</sup> (Rhyming Prose) of Q FĀTIHA 1, Q YĀ SĪN 36 and Q INSĀN 76 with Introduction and Notes, According to the Proposed System of Notation**

*History and Background*

Many years ago, I was fortunate to hear Q INSĀN 76 recited in the Prophet's Mosque, though I did not immediately recognise the sura. When bookshops opened, I sought out a concordance and looked up two of the memorable words from the sura, *salsabīl* and *zanjabīl*.<sup>5</sup> It turned out that this sura was the only place either word occurred. When I looked at the sura, I also noticed a large number of (other) quadriliteral and quinquiliteral words (e.g. *zamharīr*, *istabraq*).<sup>6</sup> But when I looked at English translations, I was disappointed to see that none attempted to convey the rhythms (in particular, the *saj*<sup>c</sup>) of the Arabic, and that no attention was drawn in the notes to any of the unique words, *zanjabīl* and *zamharīr*, among others. I resolved then to do two things: first, attempt an English rhyming prose translation of Q INSĀN 76 and second, look into single-occurring words (*hapax legomena*) in the Qur'an. The former I did right away and had a working translation within a few weeks; the latter I did not embark upon until 2002, and in only a cursory way, in the context of an article on Q FALAQ 113 and Q NĀS 114.

In 1996, I translated Q YĀ SĪN 36;<sup>7</sup> in 2001, Q DUHĀ 93;<sup>8</sup> and in 2002, Q FĪL 105 through Q NĀS 114. Encouraged and emboldened by the approbation of friends and colleagues,<sup>9</sup> I decided to translate everything from Q INSHIRĀH 93 onward.<sup>10</sup> I also decided to return to a translation Devin Stewart and I had begun and abandoned in 1992, namely Q RAHMĀN 55, being of the thinking that if a project to render Qur'an in rhyming prose was going to succeed, it would have to succeed with Q RAHMĀN 55.<sup>11</sup>

However, it all began with Q INSĀN 76,<sup>12</sup> so I decided to revisit that translation, which I present below, followed by Q YĀ SĪN 36 and Q FĀTIHA 1. This is not the °Uthmānic sequence, I know, but it is the order in which I translated them.

**Translation of Q INSÂN 76:1–31<sup>8</sup> (with rhyme words in italics)<sub>a</sub>****HUMANITY<sub>b</sub>**

*In the Name of God, Full of Compassion, Ever Compassionate*

<sup>1</sup>Has there ever come over people a length of time that was unexpressed,

*obscure ...?\_c*

<sup>2</sup>Creating them, from a drop of sperm, to test them, we made them see,

made them *hear*.

<sup>3</sup>We guided them to the path, whether mindful or heedless of *favour*.

<sup>4</sup>For the unbelievers we have prepared chains<sub>d</sub> and shackles and blazing *fire*.

<sup>5</sup>But as for the righteous, they shall drink from a cupful of wine blended

with *camphor*:

<sup>6</sup>Those devoted to God shall drink from a fountain, causing it to burst

in full bursting *measure*.<sub>e</sub>

<sup>7</sup>Fulfilling their vows and fearing a Day whose calamity shall spread *far*,

<sup>8</sup>Feeding, uniquely for the love of God, captive, orphan, and *pauper*,

<sup>9</sup>Saying, ‘We feed you for the sake of God alone, and neither reward

nor thanks *desire*:

<sup>10</sup>We fear of our Lord a day of wrath and *anger ...?\_f*

<sup>11</sup>But God will protect them from the calamity of that day, and will surround

them with splendour and *pleasure*,

<sup>12</sup>And for their constancy reward them with a garden and garments of silken *fibre*,

<sup>13</sup>In which they shall recline upon thrones, noticing neither the sun’s fiery heat

nor the frigid *winter*.

<sup>14</sup>The garden’s shadows, humbled, shall shade them, and the boughs of fruit shall

bow close and *humble*,

<sup>15</sup>And among them shall be passed goblets of crystal, and vessels of *silver* –

<sup>16</sup>A silvery crystal from which leisurely to help themselves at *leisure*.

<sup>17</sup>And they will be given to drink from a cupful of wine, blended

with ginger *ethereal*

<sup>18</sup>From a fountain found there, called *Salsabeel*.

<sup>19</sup>Around them shall roam youths eternal who, if you saw them, would be like

pearls *ascatter*,

<sup>20</sup>If you but saw them, you would behold such grace, a realm of such *grandeur* –

<sup>21</sup>Wearing tunics of golden sarcenet and green silk brocade, adorned in bracelets of

silver: their Lord shall give them a draught of spirit *pure*.

<sup>22</sup>All this is your reward – most worthy is your *endeavour*.

<sup>23</sup>**Indeed**, We have imparted to you the Qur'an in parts, *piecemeal*.

<sup>24</sup>Therefore be constant and obey your Lord's commands: do not yield to sinner or

*disbeliever*.<sup>g</sup>

<sup>25</sup>Morning and evening, the name of your Lord, recite and *remember*;

<sup>26</sup>Glorify Him the whole night through, and for part of it prostrate to Him and *kneel*.

<sup>27</sup>These others love the fleeting world, and put behind them a Day weighty,

*unbearable*.

<sup>28</sup>We are the One who created them and made them strong; if We wished, We could

exchange them for others like them, they are *exchangeable* ...

<sup>29</sup>This is an admonition: Let him take a straight path to his Lord, whosoever *will*.

<sup>30</sup>But remember that none of you can wish but that God wishes. God is full of

knowledge, *omniscient*:

<sup>31</sup>He admits to His mercy whomsoever He wishes; for the rejectors He has prepared

an excruciating *punishment* ...§

### Notes

<sup>a</sup> *The sura*. Ḥadīth collections report that the Prophet Muḥammad recited this sura during the *fajr* prayer. Its excellences are reported by various scholars, e.g. Imām al-Ḥaddād, who writes: 'Be careful to read those *suras* and verses which are recommended in the *sunna* at particular times ... read if you can, the Seven Saving Ones every night. They are [Q] *al-Sajda* [32], [Q]

*Yā Sîn* [36], [Q] *al-Dukhān* [44], [Q] *al-Wāqī'a* [56], [Q] *al-Ḥashr* [59], [Q] *al-Mulk* [67], and [Q] *al-Insān* [76].<sup>13</sup>

<sup>b</sup> *The title.* Sura 76 is known both by the names *Insān* and *Dahr*, following the practice of identifying suras by a notable word in the opening aya or ayas: *Hal atā 'ala'l-insāni ḥinun mina'l-dahr* (aya 1). *Insān* is the marginally more prevalent title.

<sup>c</sup> The dominant Arabic rhyme is -īra/-īra, with interspersed -īla, and a closing couplet in -īma: *madhkūra / baṣīra / kafūra / sa'ira / kāfūra / taffīra / mustaḥira / asīra / shukūra / qamṭarīra / surūra / ḥarīra / zamharīra / tadhīla / qawārīra / taqdīra / zanjabīla / salsabīla / manthūra / kabīra / ṭahūra / mashkūra / tanzīla / kafūra / aṣīla / ṭawīla / thaḥīla / tabdīla / sabīla / ḥakīma / alīma.*

In choosing the English rhyme, I have, where possible, replicated the long 'r' and 'l' rhymes. Thus: *obscure, hear, favour, fire, camphor, measure* and so on; *kneel, unbearable* and so on.

<sup>d</sup> Chains renders *salāsīl*. This is the first non-trilateral word in the sura.

<sup>e</sup> *Taffīra* is not *sensu strictu* non-trilateral as the initial *tā'* is part of the form II *fa'ala maṣdar*, but it functions as one. The use of form II verbs and their *maṣādir* as *maf'ūl muṭlaq*, and thus effectively as four-consonant rhyme words, occurs also in ayas 14 (*tadhīla*), 16 (*taqdīra*), 23 (*tanzīla*), and 28 (*tabdīla*). A similar phenomenon occurs with *musta'ara*, a form X *istaf'ala* participle, at aya 7.

<sup>f</sup> It is in this aya that we get the first true quadrilateral: *qamṭarīra*. Its appearance has been presaged by *salāsīla*, *taffīra* and *mustaḥira* and itself presages *zambarīra* (13), *qawārīra* (15, 16), *zanjabīla* (17), *salsabīla* (18), *sundus* and *istabraq* (21). In most cases, these non-trilateral roots describe matters of wonder and awe.

<sup>g</sup> This aya's rhyme-word, *kafūra*, is identical to the rhyme-word in aya 3 (the only case of the re-use of a rhyme), but the usage and meaning are different.

### Translation of Q YĀ SÎN 36:1–83<sup>§</sup>

#### YĀ SÎN

*In the Name of God, Full of Compassion, Ever Compassionate*

<sup>1</sup>By the letters *yā* and *sîn*, <sup>2</sup>and by the Qur'an most wise, We bear witness <sup>3</sup>That you<sub>a</sub> are indeed one of the messengers, <sup>4</sup>Sent on a straight path, <sup>5</sup>That it is a revelation of the Almighty, the Full of Compassion, <sup>6</sup>With which you are to warn a people whose ancestors were unwarned and therefore are heedless.



<sup>7</sup>Most of them deserve punishment because they are faithless.

<sup>8</sup>We have placed iron collars around their necks and shackled their hands beneath their chins so that their heads are pushed up, motionless.

<sup>9</sup>We have placed barriers in front of them and barriers behind them, and enveloped them, so that they are sightless.

<sup>10</sup>It is all the same to them, whether you warn them or whether you do not: they will never believe. <sup>11</sup>You can only warn the one who heeds the Reminder and who fears the All-Merciful, even though he cannot see Him. To such a believer, give assurances of generous reward and forgiveness.

<sup>12</sup>We are the One with the power to bring the dead back to life. We record the deeds they have performed and the legacy they leave behind. And We take account of all things in a Register that is faultless.

<sup>13</sup>**Give** them the example of the city<sup>b</sup> in which messengers were sent to its populace:

<sup>14</sup>When two messengers were sent, the people rejected them, so We reinforced them with a third. The three then said, 'Truly, we have been sent to you by God.' <sup>15</sup>But the people said, 'You are just men, like us.

The All-Merciful has sent down nothing. Your words are nothing but falseness.'

<sup>16</sup>Our Lord knows that we have been sent to you,' they replied, <sup>17</sup>'Our duty is to convey a clear warning.' <sup>18</sup>But the people said, 'For us, your presence is an omen inauspicious –

If you do not stop immediately, we will stone you and inflict on you a punishment painful and dangerous.

<sup>19</sup>The messengers replied, 'Your omen is for you. Is it because you have been reminded? You are a people of excess.'

<sup>20</sup>Then a man came running from the far side of the city, saying, ‘My people, follow the messengers, <sup>21</sup>Follow those who warn, asking for nothing in return, who are well-guided and pious.

<sup>22</sup>Why should I not worship the One who created me? It is to Him that all of you shall be recalled (as He decrees). <sup>23</sup>Instead of Him, do you expect me to worship mere idols? If the All-Merciful wishes me harm, their alleged intercession will be futile and worthless:

They will not be able to save me. <sup>24</sup>If I did (worship them), I would be in error most grievous!

<sup>25</sup>O messengers, I believe in your Lord! My people, heed my advice!’ <sup>26</sup>We said to him, ‘Enter Paradise.’

And he exclaimed, ‘If only my people knew <sup>27</sup>How my Lord has forgiven me and made me one of those honoured and righteous.’<sup>c</sup>

<sup>28</sup>We sent no heavenly army against his people after him: We did not need to send anyone: <sup>29</sup>One Blast is enough for them to fall down lifeless.

<sup>30</sup>Mankind is a disgrace –

Every messenger sent to it is mocked. <sup>31</sup>Do they not see how many preceding generations We have destroyed, generations they will never see again? <sup>32</sup>Every one of them will be gathered for judgment before Us.

<sup>33</sup>A sign for them is the dead Earth. We bring it to life and produce grain from it for them to eat to fullness.

<sup>34</sup>We have laid out vineyards, date palm oases, and gushing springs, <sup>35</sup>So that they can enjoy their fruits. Their hands did not produce this artistry: Will they persist in being thankless?

<sup>36</sup>Glory to God who created in pairs the yield of the earth, humanity itself, and other creations of which they are oblivious.

<sup>37</sup>A sign for them is the Night: We strip the Day from it, and suddenly they are plunged in darkness.

<sup>38</sup>The Sun hastens to its resting-place; that is the decree of the Almighty, All-Knowing. <sup>39</sup>As for the Moon, We have apportioned its phases, until it wanes like a spike of dates, shrivelled and listless.

<sup>40</sup>The Sun is unable to overtake the Moon, and the Night unable to outpace the Day. Each travel its own orbit, swerveless.

<sup>41</sup>A sign for them is the fact that We carried their descendants in the brimful Ark,<sup>d</sup> <sup>42</sup>That We created for their journeying similar vessels of purpose.

<sup>43</sup>If We wished, We could drown them, regardless – <sup>44</sup>There would be no-one to help and no-one to save them, except through Our forgiveness, except as a short recess.

<sup>45</sup>When they are told, 'Beware the dangers of this world before you and of what comes Next, so that you may be spared,' they are heedless.

<sup>46</sup>Every one of the numerous signs of their Lord that comes to them they reject as meaningless.

<sup>47</sup>When they are told, 'Spend of what God has given you,' the unbelievers say to the pious:

'Why should we feed those whom Allāh can feed? Your error is clear and obvious.'

<sup>48</sup>And they say, 'If what you say (about the Last Day) is true, when will that promise be kept, tell us?'

<sup>49</sup>They will not have to wait for anything but a single Blast. While they are busy haggling it will knock them senseless.

<sup>50</sup>They will have no time to reach home or to will what they possess!

<sup>51</sup>**The** Blast will sound and they will surge from their graves into the presence of their Lord, <sup>52</sup>saying, 'What! Who has roused us from our sleep?', saying, 'This must be the Day the All-Merciful promised us ...

And which the messengers affirmed!' – <sup>53</sup>One Blast will be enough to gather them before Us.

<sup>54</sup>On that Day, not a soul will be shown the least injustice –

You will be rewarded based only on what you accomplished. <sup>55</sup>On that Day, the endeavours of the dwellers of The Garden will be effortless.

<sup>56</sup>They and their spouses will recline upon divans in shaded coolness.

<sup>57</sup>They will have fruits and they will have whatever they request in abundance. <sup>58</sup>The All-Merciful Lord will greet them with a salutation of peace,

<sup>59</sup>And say, 'Sinners, this Day, stand apart! <sup>60</sup>Children of Adam, did We not charge you not to obey Satan, that he is your avowed enemy, <sup>61</sup>And to obey and worship Us, that this is the path, straight and errorless?

<sup>61</sup>And yet, he has led a great many of you astray. Could you not recognise this?

<sup>63</sup>This is the Hell you were promised. <sup>64</sup>Embrace it now for your were faithless.'

<sup>65</sup>On that Day, We shall seal their disbelieving lips so they are speechless –  
Of their deeds, their hands will speak, their feet will bear witness.

<sup>65</sup>If We wished, We could have blotted out their eyes, and forced them to grope for the path, sightless.

<sup>66</sup>But then how would they see this Day? <sup>67</sup>And if We wished, We could have paralysed them where they stood, unable either to progress or regress.

<sup>67</sup>**Someone** We've allowed to grow old, We can make ageless. Can they not see this?

<sup>68</sup>We have not taught him<sub>a</sub> poetry or verse – that is below his status.

<sup>69</sup>This (revelation) is simply a Reminder, a crystal-clear Recitation, <sup>70</sup>With which to warn the living, and to justify the punishment against the beliefless.

<sup>71</sup>Do the unbelievers not see that the livestock they possess is fashioned by Us,

<sup>72</sup>That We have made animals for their profit, to eat, <sup>73</sup>To ride, from which to draw milk and other benefits? Still are they thankless?

<sup>74</sup>Still they forsake God, worshipping instead false gods, hoping for their help. <sup>75</sup>They will not be able to help, and will instead be like an army sent against them. <sup>76</sup>So do not let their words affect you – We know what they keep in their hearts, and what they openly express.

<sup>77</sup>Does Humanity not see that We created it from a mere drop of semen? Even then, it challenges us with brazenness!

<sup>78</sup>Forgetting its own origins it asks as example, 'Who can revive bones decayed and lifeless?'

<sup>79</sup>Answer thus: 'The One Who created them in the first place will revive them, the One who has knowledge of all creation, <sup>80</sup>The One who gave you the gift of fire from the greenest of trees.'

<sup>81</sup>Can the one who created heavens and earth not create others in their likeness? Surely! He is the real Creator, All-Knowing. <sup>82</sup>When He wills a thing he has only to say 'Be!' – and it is!

<sup>83</sup>So all glory to Him in Whose grasp is true dominion, and to Whom you will all be recalled as He decrees. §

#### Notes

<sup>a</sup> That is, Muḥammad.

<sup>b</sup> Many exegetes identify the city as Antioch, and the Messengers as emissaries dispatched by Jesus.

<sup>c</sup> The man is stoned by his people and is admitted to Paradise when he dies (see e.g. *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*).

<sup>d</sup> A reference to the Ark of Noah.

**Translation of Q FĀTIHA 1:1–7<sup>s</sup>**

## THE OPENING

<sup>1</sup>*In the Name of God, Ever Compassionate, Full of Compassion,<sup>a</sup>*

<sup>2</sup>Praise to the Lord of all Creation,

<sup>3</sup>Ever Compassionate, Full of Compassion.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Sovereign of The Day of Determination:

<sup>5</sup>You alone do we worship, and from You alone do we  
seek alleviation.

<sup>6</sup>Guide us on the path of True Direction,

<sup>7</sup>The path of those you favor, not of those  
who earn Your wrath, nor of those in deviation.§

## Notes

<sup>a</sup>Inverting my usual ‘Full of Compassion, Ever Compassionate’ for the sake of rhyme.

SHAWKAT M. TOORAWA

## NOTES

1 The citations below are from, respectively, Mustansir Mir, ‘Elephants, Birds of Prey, and Heaps of Pebbles: Fārāhī’s Interpretation of *Sūrat al-Fīl*’, *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 7:1 (2005), pp. 33–47; Bruce Lawrence, ‘Approximating *saj*’ in English Renditions of the Qur’an: A Close Reading of Sura 93 (*al-Duḥā*) and the *basmala*’, *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 7:1 (2005), pp. 64–80; Shawkat M. Toorawa, art. ‘Trips and Voyages’ in *Encyclopedia of the Qur’an*; Bruce Lawrence, *The Qur’an, A Biography* (London: Atlantic Books, 2006), p. 181.

2 Gregor Schoeler, *Ecrire et transmettre dans les débuts de l’Islam* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2002), p. 31.

3 E.g. Mustansir Mir and Bruce Lawrence in the articles cited in n. 1 above (‘*Sūrat al-Fīl*’; ‘Sura 93 (*al-Duḥā*)’).

4 See, for example, my translation of Q YĀ SĪN 36 below.

5 Muḥammad Fu’ād ‘Abd al-Bāqī, *al-Mu’jam al-mufahras li-alfāz al-Qur’ān al-karīm*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1988).

6 There is, to my knowledge, no study of the quadrilaterals, quinquilaterals and reduplicated roots in the Qur’an.

7 Shawkat M. Toorawa, *Surah Ya Sin (36), An Explanatory Translation in Rhymed Prose (saj’)* (Port Louis, Mauritius: The Haji I.I. Toorawa Waqf, 1996, reprinted 1999), an effort

solicited by my *‘amm*, Firoz H. Toorawa. It also appears in *Selections from the Qur'an. Suras Fatiha, Ya Sin, and Duha to Nas* (New Delhi, 2006), a booklet self-produced for free distribution.

8 An early incarnation appears in Dwight F. Reynolds (ed.), *Interpreting the Self: Autobiography in the Arabic Literary Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), p. 62.

9 Notably, Lawrence, 'Approximating *saj‘*'.

10 These appear in *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 8.2, and also in *Selections from the Qur'an* cited in note 7 above. Translations of Q FALAQ 113 and Q NĀS 114 first appeared in my 'Seeking Refuge from Evil: The Power and Portent of the Closing Chapters of the Qur'an', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 4:2 (2002), pp. 54–60.

11 I completed this translation in Ramadan 1427/October 2006. It is forthcoming in *al-‘Arabiyya: the Journal of the American Association of Teachers of Arabic*.

12 I take this opportunity to acknowledge my Qur'an teachers over the years: Sh. Abdullah Diop in Paris, Moulavi M.H. Babu Sahib in Singapore, and Prof. Gerhard Böwering at the University of Pennsylvania; I dedicate this essay to them. Thanks are also due to Joseph Lowry and Devin Stewart, from whom I have learned much.

13 Imām al-Ḥaddād, *Book of Assistance*, trans. Mostafa Badawi (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 1993), p. 63.