



IN THE SHADE OF *Ramadan* TRIUMPH IN TRIAL

DISCUSSION GUIDE

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REFLECTION POINTS | QUIZ QUESTIONS | CHALLENGES

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IN THE SHADE OF
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ISR 2024

Surah al-Buruj Episode Reflection and Review Guide

This year's **In The Shade of Ramadan** (ISR) web series explores the stories, lessons, and connections that are found in **Surah al-Buruj**, a chapter of the Qur'an that offers us much-needed reminders and reassurances during this time of heightened Islamophobia, continued global conflict, and the ongoing genocide in Gaza.

How To Use This Guide:

Anyone who is watching the ISR web series can use this guide - whether for personal growth, family connection, or even to facilitate group engagement! For every episode, there are **points of reflection** (to explore), **quiz questions** (to review), and a **personal challenge** (to do)!



EPISODE 1

Uniqueness of Surah Buruj



Points of Reflection:

- Given the overview of the main themes in Surah al-Buruj - what resonated with you? Why?
 - What are you looking forward to learning more about due to the themes presented?
- What do you know already about the stories of Surah al-Buruj?
- In what ways do you find yourself more preoccupied with worldly outcomes (whether individually, societally, or worldly)?
 - Does your preoccupation with worldly outcomes cause you to fall into anxiety, depression, or complacency? What helps with this spiral?
- How do you nourish and maintain a God-centered mindset and perspective?
 - What challenges do you face in maintaining this mindset and perspective?
 - What happens when we get wrapped up in our own life experiences and experience a shift from a God-centered perspective to a self-perspective?

Quiz Questions:

- Is Surah al-Buruj Medani or Makki?
 - (Makki)
- What were the early believers facing when Surah al-Buruj was revealed?
 - (hardship, persecution)
- How did Surah al-Buruj reshape the perspective of the believers? (gave them hope, reaffirmed their faith, emphasized the Hereafter vs. the *dunya* by highlighting Allah's Power, Divine Decree, and Justice on the Day of Judgement)

Challenge:

- Take time to read through Surah al-Buruj today. Take a few moments to write down words or references you would like to learn more about or review - check these items off and add notes relating to each thing you wrote down, as the topics are covered in this year's ISR series.





EPISODE 2 A Castle of Stars

Points of Reflection:

- What connections come to mind when reflecting on the meanings of the word “buruj” and the themes presented in Surah al-Buruj?
- Take a moment to reflect on the significance of the juxtapositions clarified in this episode between the three things Allah (swt) swears by at the beginning of Surah al-Buruj, and the stories and lessons contained within Surah al-Buruj (the universe and the trench, the Day of Judgment and the unjust persecution, the witnessed/witnesses and accountability).
 - If you are not familiar with the stories of Surah al-Buruj yet, what do you think might happen based on the things Allah (swt) is swearing by?
- Oftentimes, we hear, “Think of the big picture.” What is the big picture?
 - Is it easier for you to focus on the “big picture” in times of ease or hardship - why?
- In what ways have you witnessed people’s faith helping them triumph over the cruelty of man?

Quiz Questions:

- What does buruj typically mean in general?
 - (something that is prominent - like castles)
- What is a possible metaphorical meaning for al-Buruj within the context of this Surah?
 - (the universe)
- What are the three things Allah (swt) swears by in the beginning of Surah al-Buruj?
 - (the universe, the Day of Judgement, the witnessed , and the witness)

Challenge:

- Choose the verse(s) in Surah al-Buruj that may serve as a reminder for you to refocus on the “big picture” whenever needed. Make a goal to commit the chosen verse(s) to memory during this month of Ramadan. (If you have already memorized Surah al-Buruj, do this challenge with another Surah. If you are hafidh of the Qur’an, do this challenge with a hadith.)





EPISODE 3

Living In A Paradigm of The Promised Day

Points of Reflection:

- What does “preparing for our grave” mean?
- How can we best prepare for our grave?
- How many times a day, a week, a month do you remember the Hereafter?
- How does that impact your actions, reactions, and overall well-being?
- Reflect on how consistently operating within a paradigm of the Promised Day may change how you move and act in your life.
- Reflect on the Promised Day and the four questions we will be asked when standing before Allah (swt).
- How would you be able to answer those questions today?
- How do you hope to be able to answer those questions on the Day of Judgement?
 - How do we align striving to do our best in this life with striving for The Best in the Hereafter?

Quiz Questions:

- In what verse does Allah (swt) first introduce us to the Day of Judgment in the Qur’an?
 - (Surah al-Fatiha)
- What is the “Promised Day”?
 - (the Day of Judgement, Yom al Qiyama)
- What four questions will we have to answer before Allah (swt) on the Day of Judgement?
 - (How was your life? What were the deeds you did? Where did you get your wealth from, and how did you spend it? What did you do with the years of youth Allah (swt) gave you?)

Challenge:

- How do you hope to be better prepared for the Hereafter? Write a letter to yourself including your weaknesses, strengths, hopes, and fears, with a note of encouragement to continue growing stronger in applying faith in your life. Seal this away and put it in a safe place to open at the end of Ramadan so that you may be motivated to continue the habit of good deeds and acts of worship that you cultivate during Ramadan.





EPISODE 4

The Witness and The Witnessed

Points of Reflection:

- What is the difference between observing and witnessing?
 - In what ways do we recognize the inherent responsibility of being a witness when using this word (e.g., witnesses for court, witnesses for marriage contract, etc.)?
- In what ways did this episode’s message change the way you think about bearing witness in your day-to-day life on a personal and local scale?
 - What about on a broader external and global scale?
- Does the idea that everything is documented by Allah (swt) give you more comfort or fear, or both? In what ways? Why?
- Did learning about what Ibn al Qayyim said about the statement, “We belong to Allah and Him we shall return,” expand or deepen how you think about this verse? How so?

Quiz Questions:

- Over how many meanings have scholars mentioned “shaahid wa mashood” has?
 - (over 20)
- What does “shaahid wa mashood” translate to?
 - (Any witness and anything that is witnessed)
- Complete the sentence: The ummah is the witness for _____?
 - (humanity)
- Are criminals witnesses for their crimes on the Day of Judgement?
 - (yes)

Challenge:

- Reserve 30 minutes in the day to reflect on how to live your life consciously aware of being witnessed and draft a personal vision and mission statement. This vision and mission statement can be revised throughout the month and placed strategically to serve as a daily reminder of how you plan to live intentionally as someone who bears witness and is being witnessed.



EPISODE 5

The Boy and The King



Points of Reflection:

- Like the boy discerning the sorcerer's and the monk's teachings, we often have to discern between beneficial and unbeneficial knowledge, true and false information - all from a multitude of sources.
 - Think about how we may deduce certain sources of information are trustworthy and how we may know when someone or something is attempting to lead us astray.
- What do we learn about trust, service, and Truth from the relationship between the boy and the monk? How so?
- Regarding the point at which the boy evolves from being a student and follower to being a caller to Allah and leader of righteousness, discuss the following:
 - Do you think the boy stops being a student and follower when he evolves into being a da'i?
 - Is it possible to be both a student and teacher, follower and leader? How so? Why?
 - What lessons do we learn about our own journey of faith and service from the boy in this lesson?
- Think about your own journey of faith and service.
 - Do you feel that you are a follower, leader, or both? In what ways?
 - Do you feel like there is growth in your knowledge, faith, service, and activism? If yes, how so? If not, reflect on why.

Quiz Questions:

- Who collected the long hadith that gives the narrative detail of the story of the boy and the King?
 - (Imam Muslim)
- Many scholars believe that the group of people in this story refers to what group of people?
 - (a group of unitarian Christians who lived before the Prophet Muhammad (s) received revelation)
- Who does al-rahib refer to? What does this mean?
 - (the monk)

Challenge:

- Think of how your growth and development in knowledge, service, and dawah is more dormant or active. Write down how you would like to revive parts of your faith that are dormant throughout the year in your daily life.





EPISODE 6

A Sacrifice For The Greater Good

Points of Reflection:

- Why would the boy give the king instructions on how to kill him? What was the goal?
- How have we seen the lessons of this story play out in our own lives? In current events?
- What reminders does the story of the boy and the king, within the context of Surah al-Buruj, give us?
- How can we utilize these reminders and apply these lessons?
- Has sacrifice become an uncomfortable concept in modern times? How can we highlight the importance of sacrifice in a highly ambitious, individualistic, and consumption-based society?

Quiz Questions:

- How did the King plan to kill the boy the first time?
 - (throwing the boy from a mountain)
- How did the King plan to kill the boy the second time?
 - (to drown the boy in the middle of the sea)
- What words did the boy tell the King he must utter in order to be killed?
 - (In the name of Allah, God Almighty, the Lord of the boy)

Challenge:

- Reflect on what you would be willing to sacrifice for the sake of Allah (swt). Chances are, your first response may have been big and something that you may or may not be tested with in this life. Now think of something small that you have been unwilling to sacrifice for the sake of Allah (swt) in your life right now. Make a goal to see how you could remedy this by measuring the 'smaller' sacrifice with your initial answer to the prompt.





EPIISODE 7

Do We Lose If We Don't See Victory?



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EPIISODE 07

Do We Lose If
We Don't See
Victory?

Points of Reflection:

- How do we typically define victory?
- Think of the following examples with the lens of 'victory' as described in this episode and reflect individually or discuss with others what can be derived from each:
 - (a) Ibrahim when he was thrown into the fire
 - (b) Malcolm X when he was assassinated
 - What other examples of hardship transforming into victory come to mind? How do they exemplify this transformation?
- How does this reminder of the Qur'anic definition of "ultimate triumph" help you as an American Muslim, especially in times of heightened Islamophobia?

Quiz Questions:

- How should we respond to the Qadr of Allah (swt) even when something is difficult?
 - (with gratitude, thanking Allah)
- Were the Believers in this story victorious?
 - (yes)
- What is the ultimate triumph and victory referenced in Surat as-Saff?
 - (being admitted into Jannah)

Challenge:

- Reframe some significant "losses" or "failures" in your life. Can they be seen as triumphs or victories in any way?





EPISODE 8 Something Worth Dying For

Points of Reflection:

- As the last believer left in his community, the young boy showed tremendous awareness of his limited yet powerful role in spreading the religion while demonstrating his complete understanding and trust in Allah’s power.
 - Reflecting on this point, consider whether you tend to shy away from responsibility or over-inflate your role in different circumstances and scenarios.
- Do you tend to focus more on “tying your camel” or on trusting Allah (swt)? How so?
- In what ways could there be more balance in your mindset regarding being proactive and responsible while striving for excellence and having trust in Allah (swt)?
- What does Allah (swt) teach us through the stories of the prophets and the generations of Believers that came before us?

Quiz Questions:

- Allah (swt) uses this story of the boy and the King to demonstrate what to the companions?
 - (sometimes sacrifices have to be made for the sake of dawah)
- When a companion asked the Prophet (sws) for advice on Islam that would supersede any other advice, what did the Prophet (sws) tell the man he must do?
 - (say you believe in Allah swt and remain steadfast)
- What was the goal of the young boy sacrificing himself in this manner?
 - (for the purpose of dawah)
- Who was the first martyr, shahid, of Allah (swt) mentioned in this episode?
 - (Sumaya)

Challenge:

- Visualize one of the victims in Gaza whose story you have followed closely. Visualize their moment of death, the angels reaching out their hands to greet them, their souls being carried to the highest heaven, them being allowed to remain alive in the bodies of green birds in paradise, instead of being returned to their grave, and their calling out to their families to not be sad. Visualize them eagerly awaiting of the Day of Judgment so they can settle their account with the aggressors. Visualize the shame and fear on the face of the oppressors - the ones who caused their death.





EPISODE 9

The Companions of The Ditch

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EPISODE 09

The
Companions of
the Ditch



Points of Reflection:

- In the world that we live in we are used to seeing quick results. Does this impact how you deal with struggles and hardship in your life? How so? How does this compare to what Allah (swt) reminds us of in this story?
- Have you experienced a time in your life where you tasted a breath of relief in the midst of calamity, something that reminded you that you were on the path of Allah (swt)?
- Is it easy or difficult for you to remember that the journey and the means matter over the results? Do you find yourself forgetting or leaning on the fact that the ultimate results are in the hands of Allah (swt)?
- Is working toward something only worth it if we see the results in our lifetime? Why or why not?
 - Think of an example in your own life, reflect on how you have handled the situation and discuss.
- What are some things in your experience as an American Muslim that you find yourself complaining about that they would have been grateful for in their time?

Quiz Questions:

- What does “eshab al-ukhdud” mean?
 - (people of the ditch/trench)
- What verses in Surah al-Buruj refer to the story of the people of the ditch?
 - (verses 4-7)
- Were the people who were persecuted in this story Muslims for a long time, or were they new Muslims?
 - (new Muslims)

Challenge:

- Take time to connect with a member of a different generation in your community during this blessed month seeking to understand what their experience has been like being a Muslim in America throughout their lifetime. What are some benefits we enjoy as Muslims in America currently that the previous generation helped work toward? What are some challenges that are shared between the generations – how are they similar and how are they different today? What can we learn from one another?



EPISODE 10 Reveling in Destruction



Points of Reflection:

- What was the difference between the error of Adam and the error of Iblis? What do we learn from this comparison? How can we apply this lesson to our own lives?
- How is thinking we are safe from being a wrong-doer dangerous? What are some ways that we can check our intentions, behavior, and actions consistently?
- How can we stand up for justice and Truth daily?
 - Do you feel you do what is in your full capacity to stand up for justice and Truth?
- What are the challenges you've experienced in standing up for justice and Truth in the way that you want to, whether personally or globally?
- Have you ever made the statement or had the thought, "If I were alive during such and such a time, I would have done such and such" when learning about past injustices?
 - If so, this is a common statement or thought, however what does Allah (swt) tell us about having thoughts like this one? How do we put this into perspective?
- Reflect on a time in your life when you feared standing up for something you knew was right. What did you do? How did you learn from that experience?

Quiz Questions:

- What were the disbelievers fanfaring in this story?
 - (the persecution of the Believers)
- As Muslims, are we taught to seek out hardship?
 - (no)
- Why did the companion mentioned admonish a later generation?
 - (for wishing they were among a people who experienced greater hardship)

Challenge:

- Challenge yourself to intentionally protect your mind, tongue, and spaces you are in from backbiting, gossiping, jumping to conclusions, and enjoying the misfortunes of others. Make a commitment to redirect yourself or others by speaking up, sharing a reminder, or removing yourself from the conversation if necessary.





EPISODE 11

The Ways of The Tyrants



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EPISODE 11

The Ways of
Tyrants (Ver. 10)

Points of Reflection:

- Reflect on the story of Musa (as) and Pharaoh.
 - Why would Pharaoh say that he is afraid Musa (as) would lead the people astray?
 - Did Pharaoh have the benefit of his people in mind when he said he would choose what was best for them?
- Why do you think Allah (swt) gave humans the right of choice when He could have made us without choice? How does this relate to our belief, worship, behavior, actions, repentance?
- What ways of the tyrants does Allah (swt) warn us throughout the Qur'an? What do they do to trick and manipulate people? Why do they do this?
- Thinking about your life and our world today, how can we ensure that we are not tricked by the institutions, figures, and tools of our time?
 - How do we know when we can trust those who say they know the best for us?
 - What measures can we use to check whether or not someone or something is trustworthy?
- What are habits and characteristics that we must work on to ensure that we do not exhibit the traits of tyrants in our personal lives?

Quiz Questions:

- What verse in Surah al-Buruj is highlighted in the beginning of this episode and explains that the only thing held against the people of the ditch was their belief in Allah (swt)?
 - (verse 8)
- What right did Allah (swt) give humans that differentiates us from angels?
 - (choice)
- In what surah does Allah (swt) expand upon the steps and progression of tyranny that Pharaoh takes against Musa (as) and the people?
 - (Surah Ghafir)

Challenge:

- Identify something that is particularly misconstrued in the mainstream that you can help raise awareness about whether in-person, online, or both. What is the false narrative being pushed, how can you help share the truth? Make an action plan and commit to doing what you can to speak out and be a voice of truth.



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EPISODE 12

The Collective Work in Surah Al-Buruj

Points of Reflection:

- We learned in a previous episode (ISR Episode 5) that the boy in this story emerged as a da'i and leader in his community by spending time among the people in the service of Allah (swt).
 - What does the king's reluctance to kill the boy in front of the community show?
- As mentioned in this episode, although not explicated in the story, there were most likely parallel dawah efforts happening in the community prior to the critical moment when the boy is killed, which contributed to 20,000 people choosing Belief over life in this dunya.
 - Before this episode, did that thought even occur to you, or did you think the people converted solely because of how the boy sacrificed his life?
- Do you think we, as a society, tend to focus on the ordinary or the grand? How so? What about in our individual lives, our relationships, and our community? (e.g., the daily news or the fantastical story, the community member or the celebrity, the smaller consistent acts or the bigger displays)?
 - Has this impacted how we view and engage with collective work (working in jamiya)?
- What is the importance of working in jamiya?
- How does Allah (swt) remind us that we each have a role to play according to His Divine Design and Decree through this story?
- How does that relate to collective work/working in jamiya?

Quiz Questions:

- What were the disbelievers fanfaring in this story?
 - (the persecution of the Believers)
- As Muslims, are we taught to seek out hardship?
 - (no)
- Why did the companion mentioned admonish a later generation?
 - (for wishing they were among a people who experienced greater hardship)

Challenge:

- Do something "behind the scenes" to help someone out this week (whether it is for a stranger, loved ones, or your community) without expecting anything in return. Remember, no act of goodness is considered insignificant to Allah (swt).





EPISODE 13

Unique Name Pairings of Allah: Al-Azeez & Al-Hameed

Points of Reflection:

- What do we learn about the relationship between Allah (swt)'s Power and Dignity through the pairing of the names Al-Aziz and Al-Hameed?
- In what ways would these names of Allah (swt) be a warning to the tyrants yet a comfort to the Believers?
 - What do these names of Allah (swt) evoke in your heart?
- What did you learn about these names of Allah (swt) that will help you understand and strengthen your relationship to and with Him? How so?
- As Muslims we say Alhamdulillah in every situation - what are we declaring and affirming when we greet both joy and hardship with praise for Allah (swt)?
 - How have the videos of our brothers and sisters in Palestine facing such injustice yet still proclaiming "Alhamdulillah" impacted you?
- Further explore the difference between thanks and praise-
 - How do we use these words in our lives? How are these words used in our culture and society? Do you agree with how these words are used? Why or why not?
 - How was the difference explained and contextualized in this episode?

Quiz Questions:

- What does al-Azeez mean?
 - (the Most Powerful, the Invincible, the Majestic, the Strongest)
- What does al-Hameed mean?
 - (the Most Praiseworthy)
- What verse in Surah al-Buruj mentions the names of Allah (swt) - al-Azeez and al-Hameed?
 - (verse 8)

Challenge:

- Challenge yourself to infuse your Alhamdulillah with conviction - feeling the meaning of the word and actively praising Allah (swt) each time you say it.





EPISODE 14

Having Faith in The Ultimate Witness

Points of Reflection:

- When you are experiencing even a slight amount of hardship or injustice - how do you feel, how do you react? What about when you are witnessing injustice?
- What messages of strength, comfort, or hope can you derive from knowing Allah (swt) is the Ultimate Witness and the Most Just?
- How does Allah (swt) reward the oppressed for their patience and faith?
- What helps you cultivate a way of being patient?
- What helps you deepen and fortify your faith?
- Reflect on a time in your life when you felt alone in your suffering. What helped you through that time?
 - As you grow in your faith, has the way you go through hardship changed? How so? Why?

Quiz Questions:

- What verse in Surah al-Buruj, reminding us that Allah (swt) is the Witness over all things, is quoted at the beginning of this episode?
 - (verse 9)
- Who is the witness over all things?
 - (Allah)
- What reminder did Allah (swt) give the companions through Surah al-Buruj?
 - (to have patience and remain steadfast in their faith)

Challenge:

- Think of someone you know who is facing a time of hardship right now. Take time to reach out to them this week to check-in on them and remind them they are not alone in their struggle.





EPISODE 15

How Can You Serve As A Witness?



Points of Reflection:

- Reflect on the possible reasons Allah (swt) would task us, as an ummah, with witnessing when He Knows and is the Witness of all things?
- What does bearing witness on the Day of Judgement require of us in this life?
- Can we turn a blind eye to wrong-doing and injustice?
- What is our responsibility when we witness wrong-doing and injustice?
- What if we cannot do anything to prevent or stop the wrong-doing and injustice?
- What does being witnessed on the Day of Judgement require of us in this life? (Review who and what testify for us on the Day of Judgement)

Quiz Questions:

- What name of Allah (swt) is referenced in this episode?
 - (Ash-Shaheed)
- Is Allah (swt) the only witness, or does he task others with being witnesses as well?
 - (He tasks others with being witnesses as well)
- Which group of people will be the ones who affirm that a prophet came to them to deliver the message of Allah (swt)?
 - (the ummah)

Challenge:

- Commit to addressing injustice that you witness by speaking up, taking appropriate action, or, when unable to do either safely, acknowledging how wrong it is in your heart (as our Prophet sws instructed us) and making sincere supplication.





EPISODE 16

The Mother and Infant Before the Fire Pit

Points of Reflection:

- Does it mean that you aren't a true Believer if you hesitate or feel fear?
- Sometimes people need others around them to give them reassurance, support or motivation just like in the story of the mother and her child.
- Reflect on a time in your life when Allah (swt) sent you a sign, reminder, or support to remain steadfast in the most unexpected way from the most unexpected source.
 - How do you feel knowing that Allah (swt) Knows you better than you know yourself and is closer to you than your jugular vein?
 - Was it more likely that the mother feared for her own life or for the life of her baby? What is the significance, then, of Allah (swt) sending her reassurance through her baby directly?
- What does it mean to do something for the sake of Allah (swt)?
 - We always talk about setting intentions and renewing intentions - what does this mean? Why is it so important?
 - How can you determine if the intentions you set are authentic? How do you measure if you have strayed from those intentions?

Quiz Questions:

- Is the story of the mother and her child explained in Surah al-Buruj or a hadith?
 - (hadith)
- What did the baby do when the mother was asked whether or not she would give up her belief and faith to avoid being thrown into the fire?
 - (the baby spoke)
- What other mother is found in the Qur'an who is mentioned in this episode?
 - (Musa's mother)
- What other surah is referenced in this episode, reminding us of having full trust and reliance in Allah (swt)?
 - (Surah Talaq)

Challenge:

- Reflect on something that has been causing you stress, uncertainty, or anxiety recently. Seek guidance from Allah (swt) and make the intention to be mindful and open to the signs, interactions, and/or support Allah (swt) may send your way.





EPISODE 17

The Peak: The Greatest Victory



Points of Reflection:

- Reflect on ways we may put comfort in this dunya over eternal comfort in the Hereafter.
- Should we strive for happiness or contentment? Why?
- How does striving for al-Fawz al-Kabeer frame our striving for “success” in this life?
- Reflect on the two people from the hadith referenced in this episode – the one who has the worst life in this dunya tasting a moment of Jannah and saying they did not have any suffering in their life, and the one who has the best life in this dunya tasting a moment of the Fire and saying they did not have any comfort in their life. What does this mean? What do you take away from this hadith?

Quiz Questions:

- What does al-Fawz al-Kabeer mean?
 - (the Greatest Victory, the Ultimate Triumph)
- What is the greatest victory as explained in this episode?
 - (admittance into Jannah, being among the people of Jannah)
- What two people will be brought in front of the people by Allah (swt) on the Day of Judgement?
 - (the one who experienced the most struggle in this dunya and the one who experienced the most comfort in this dunya)

Challenge:

- Look for the descriptions of Jannah throughout the Qur’an – think about what habits and characteristics you may continue to work on to ensure you are striving for and prioritize al-Fawz al-Kabeer continuously.





EPISODE 18

How Do The Stories of Surah Al-Buruj Connect?

Points of Reflection:

- In this episode, we dive deep into what happened after the story of the boy and the king and people of the ditch/trench. Were you surprised with what happened next? Why or why not?
- How does learning more about the socio-political and historical context of the stories within the Qur'an enhance our understanding?
- How does it help give us perspective or draw comparisons as Believers in today's world?
- Reflect on what Allah (swt) is teaching us by using the history of nations throughout the Qur'an.

Quiz Questions:

- How many people survived the 20,000 people killed in the ditch?
 - (1)
- What did Najashi do in response to hearing the story of the ditch?
 - (sent an army of 70,000 people to Yemen)
- What did Abraha want to do in response to the man desecrating the church he built?
 - (destroy the Kaba)

Challenge:

- Choose something mentioned in this episode - a name, battle, event, story - that was new to you and research it further to expand your understanding of the Qur'an in a new way.





EPISODE 19

The Crushing Grip of Allah

IN THE SHADE OF
Ramadan
TRIUMPH IN TRIAL

EPISODE 19

The Crushing
Grip of Allah



Points of Reflection:

- How do we know when something is unjust? How do we define oppression?
- What are the sources of oppression in our society, in our world at large?
- Is oppression only that which comes at the hands of armies and state apparatuses?
- What are examples of oppression in our daily lives that we don't often recognize as oppression?
- How can we guard and protect the rights of others?
- How do we balance safeguarding our personal rights while giving people their due rights?

Quiz Questions:

- What verse of Surah al-Buruj mentions the "crushing grip" of Allah (swt)?
 - (verse 12)
- Verse 12 is a verse of _____.
 - (warning)
- In the hadith quoted in this episode, the true Muslim is the one from whom people feel secure from what two things?
 - (the harm of their hand and the harm of their tongue)

Challenge:

- Remember the words of Umar ibn Al-Khattab, "Bring yourselves to account before you are brought to account," be intentional about reviewing yourself regularly. Start by taking time at the end of the day to self-reflect honestly.



IN THE SHADE OF
Ramadan
TRIUMPH IN TRIAL



EPISODE 20

The Originator and The Restorer

Points of Reflection:

- What is the significance of Allah (swt) including that He is the One who Originates and Restores in this surah specifically?
- In what ways have you witnessed Allah (swt)'s Power to Originate and Restore?
- Think about a time in your life when you felt like something was very overwhelming until it passed, and then you realized it was less significant in the grand scheme of things. How is this similar to our experience as humans in this dunya in relation to what Allah (swt) has planned for us?
- How does reflecting on the immensity of Allah (swt)'s creation shape your perspective?
- What meaningful reminders in this episode have inspired you or helped you? How so?

Quiz Questions:

- What are the characteristics of Allah (swt) that are mentioned in verse 13 of Surah al-Buruj?
 - (the One who Originates and Restores/Resurrects)
- What does Al-Mubdi mean?
 - (the Originator)
- How does Allah (swt) remind us that the torch of His Light can never be extinguished on the face of this earth in the stories of Surah al Buruj?
 - (there was one survivor who escaped and continued to call people to Islam)

Challenge:

- When something annoys or inconveniences you this week, try to take a moment to practice putting it into perspective exhibiting grace and patience, instead of reacting immediately.



EPISODE 21

Unique Name Pairings of Allah: Al-Ghafoor and Al-Wadood



IN THE SHADE OF
Ramadan
TRIUMPH IN TRIAL

EPISODE 21

Unique Name
Pairings of Allah:
Al-Ghafoor &
Al-Wadood

Points of Reflection:

- When hearing that Allah (swt) describes Himself as not only the Forgiver, but the One who Forgives repetitively and the One who Forgives big (is the Most Forgiving), what comes to your heart and mind?
- Did you know the difference between these words before? If not, what was the most illuminating distinction you learned?
- Reflect on the pairing of the names al-Ghafoor and al-Wudud?
- How is Allah (swt) encouraging us to make repentance through the selection and pairing of these names?
- What is the significance of Allah (swt) wanting us to love Him when He doesn't need anything?
- Through this, what do you realize Allah (swt) wants from you? What do you realize Allah (swt) wants for you?
- In this episode, we were reminded that there is no sin too great for Allah (swt) to forgive. Think about that for a moment.
- How does this reminder demonstrate Allah (swt)'s Love, Mercy, and Generosity?
- What does this reminder call us to practice more in our lives as servants of Allah (swt)?

Quiz Questions:

- In what verse in Surah al-Buruj does Allah (swt) describe Himself as al-Ghafoor, al-Wadood?
 - (verse 14)
- In the context of Surah al-Buruj, Allah (swt) is al-Ghafoor for whom first of all?
 - (the criminals)
- How is the meaning of al-Wadood expanded upon? "The Loving One Who Wants" what?
 - (for us to love Him back)

Challenge:

- Strive to incorporate attributes you learn from Allah (swt)'s names into your life. For example, forgive someone who has hurt you and take steps to make amends.



IN THE SHADE OF
Ramadan
TRIUMPH IN TRIAL



EPISODE 22

The Door That's Open for Everyone

Points of Reflection:

- Thinking about the story of the ditch, how does it make you feel that within the verse, Allah (swt) mentions that the punishment is for those who do not repent?
- When we think of repentance, are we only happy that we have the option but think that others should not?
- What are the steps to repentance (tawbah)?
- Has there been a time when you have felt hopeless - too far gone - that you do not believe you are worthy of Allah (swt)'s Love and Mercy?
- If someone you cared about felt the same way, what assurances or reminders would you give them?
- How does Allah (swt) remind us of our worth through Him?

Quiz Questions:

- We heard "punishment of al-Hariq" in this episode - what does al-Hariq mean?
 - (the Fire)
- What was the one thing the people who persecuted the Believers in the story of the ditch do that would save them from Allah's Punishment?
 - (tawbah)

Challenge:

- Reflect on how you think about yourself and how you "speak" to yourself. Write out affirmations from Allah (swt) found in the Qur'an to remind yourself you are worthy of Allah's Love, Mercy, and Forgiveness.





EPISODE 23

Description Allah's Throne

IN THE SHADE OF
Ramadan
TRIUMPH IN TRIAL

EPISODE 23

Description of
Allah's Throne



Points of Reflection:

- What do you take away from the descriptions of Allah's Throne mentioned throughout the Qur'an, some of which are relayed in this episode?
- What do you think is the significance of Allah (swt) using this word, al-Arsh (the Throne), to describe His position for human understanding?
- What do you think about Allah's seat (corsi) vs. His throne (arsh)?
- When you hear the hadith, "Verily My Mercy exceeds My Wrath" how does this help you understand your relationship with Allah (swt)? What does this motivate you to do?
- Reflect on power and mercy as displayed in this dunya vs. what we know from Allah (swt) about Him.

Quiz Questions:

- What is the Arabic word used for "the Throne" of Allah (swt)?
 - (al-Arsh)
- What other Surah is explicitly referenced in this episode that mentions the arsh of Allah (swt)?
 - (Surah Ghafir)
- Which was created first - Allah's Throne or Allah's creation?
 - (Allah's Throne)
- What springs from under Allah's Throne?
 - (the water that flows into Jannah)

Challenge:

- Think about something for which you believed you could not repent. Reminding yourself of Allah (swt)'s Mercy, take steps toward making tawbah, knowing the gates of repentance are open to everyone at any time.



EPISODE 24

The Most Glorious and The Most Honorable: Al-Majeed



The Most
Glorious & The
Most Honorable:
Al-Majeed

Points of Reflection:

- How does Allah (swt) using al-Majeed to describe Himself put power and honor in perspective for us humans?
- How do you think this name of Allah (swt) provided assurance to the people of Mecca? Why?
- How does learning more about Allah (swt)'s names deepen our relationship with Him? How did learning more about the name al-Majeed help you? Why?

What is the significance of using al-Majeed to describe the Qur'an in this surah and beyond?

Quiz Questions:

- In which verses of Surah al-Buruj is the name al-Majeed used?
 - (verses 15 and 21)
- What two things is al-Majeed used to describe in Surah al-Buruj?
 - (the Throne, the Qur'an)
- How is al-Majeed usually translated?
 - (the Most Glorious)
- What other descriptions does al-Majeed encompass?
 - (the most Noble, the most Magnificent)

Challenge:

- Choose five other names of Allah (swt) to learn more about between now and the end of Ramadan. Try utilizing these names in your duas when calling upon Allah (swt).





EPISODE 25

The Doer of What He Wills

Points of Reflection:

- What are some benefits of Allah (swt)'s commandments that are more easily recognizable by human understanding?
- What are examples of moments and circumstances in your life or the world at large when it has been harder to understand Allah (swt)'s Wisdom?
- How do you reframe those examples to acknowledge Allah (swt)'s Divine Decree?
- When thinking of challenging times in the past, what growth, protection, and/or opportunity were you able to recognize came out of or as a result of those challenges in retrospect?
- Do you have to be able to recognize the potential wisdom behind a circumstance or situation to accept Allah's Decree?
- Can we ever *know* the wisdom found in different circumstances and situations?
- If we cannot truly *know* Allah (swt)'s Wisdom, is there benefit in understanding that there certainly *is* wisdom in Allah's Decree? How so?
- What is the relationship between choice that Allah (swt) has granted humans and the Divine Decree of Allah (swt)?

Quiz Questions:

- Complete the translated verse found at the end of Surah Yusuf: "Indeed, my Lord achieves His aim in subtle ways, for my Lord is All-Knowing, Most-_____".
 - (wise)
- What are two examples of opportunity and ease that came after Prophet Muhammad (sww) experienced rejection?
 - (Medina, Isra and Miraj)
- If Allah (swt) Willed good for the unrepentant wrong-doers, what would He do for them?
 - (remove their hands from wrong-doing)

Challenge:

- Make a list of three challenging situations that have passed and three challenging situations you are currently experiencing. Take a moment to reflect on the growth, protection, opportunity, or development that you were able to derive from your past experiences. Review these and end with a prayer of gratitude. Then, take a moment to reflect on possible areas of growth, protection, opportunity, or development that may come out of the challenges you are currently facing and turn this into a prayer reaffirming your trust in Allah (swt).





EPISODE 26

The Failure of “The Great Forces”

Points of Reflection:

- If you aren't familiar with either Pharaoh or Thamud, revisit them. Both were examples of power in their time and society – one a powerful tyrant, the other a powerful tribe.
- What is the lesson behind the stories of both Pharaoh and Thamud? What did Pharaoh and the people of Thamud have in common? What happened to them?
- Why would Allah (swt) include these examples in Surah al-Buruj historically (for the people of Mecca when this surah was revealed)?
- Why do you think Allah (swt) would include these examples in Surah al-Buruj contextually (within the context of this Surah)?
- What are the measures and tools of the “powerful” within our society today?
- How are these measures and tools applied and/or utilized in an unbeneficial way? In a destructive way?
- Can these measures and tools be applied and/or utilized in a beneficial way? How so?
- What are the measures and tools of the Believers?
- What are the strongest measures and tools that aid you in remaining steadfast as a Believer? How can those be reinforced and strengthened?

Quiz Questions:

- What stories in Surah al-Buruj are highlighted in this episode?
 - (Pharaoh and Thamud)
- What reminder is Allah (swt) giving us by including the stories of Pharaoh and Thamud in Surah al-Buruj?
 - (That while the Ultimate Victory is promised for the Believers, sometimes victory is granted by Allah in this life.)
- What characteristic ultimately leads Pharaoh and his army to destruction by drowning in the sea, as decreed by Allah (swt)?
 - (arrogance)

Challenge:

- Write down a sincere dua that you would like to make during these final days of Ramadan while reflecting on the fact that Allah (swt) is the All-Powerful, All-Merciful, and All-Knowing One.





EPISODE 27

The All-Encompassing

IN THE SHADE OF
Ramadan
TRIUMPH IN TRIAL

EPISODE 27

The
All-Encompassing:
Al-Muheet



Points of Reflection:

- What does “Indeed Allah encompasses them from all sides” mean?
- How do you accept knowing that Allah (swt) can grant victory in this life, regardless of the circumstances, with injustices you have witnessed personally and/or globally?
- Does knowing Allah (swt) can grant victory in this life, as well as grant the Ultimate Victory in the Hereafter, make you feel hopeful or fearful, grateful or resentful? Why?
- What helps you cultivate, maintain, and apply not only acceptance of, but full trust in, the *Qadr* of Allah (swt) throughout your life?
- Do you think it is easy or difficult to fall into being an unrepentant wrong-doer? Why? How so?
- How does one recognize if they have slipped into being a wrong-doer? What is the measure of knowing when something is wrong?
- What prevents us from recognizing our wrongdoing?
- How can we be cautious and guard ourselves from the traps of *shaytan*?

Quiz Questions:

- What Surah is referenced in this episode that reminds us Allah (swt) is aware of what the oppressors do?
 - (Surah Ibrahim)
- Allah (swt) promised that He would leave the unrepentant wrong-doers to the day when the eyes would stare out in horror. What day does this refer to?
 - (the Day of Judgement)
- What are the two ways in which Allah (swt) handles the unrepentant wrong-doers that are discussed in this episode?
 - (leaving them in their wrong-doing for a greater punishment on the Day of Judgement, admonishing them in this life and making an example out of them before their punishment in the Hereafter)
- What will the oppressed be allowed to demand from their oppressors on the Day of Judgement?
 - (their rights)

Challenge:

- Take a moment to think of something you have been questioning Allah about regarding His Wisdom and Justice. Reflect on the reminders from this episode, reaffirm your trust in Him, and take some time to talk with Allah, handing over what has been weighing on your heart to Him.



IN THE SHADE OF
Ramadan
TRIUMPH IN TRIAL



EPIISODE 28

The Qur'an According to The Qur'an

Points of Reflection:

- Reflect on your relationship with the Qur'an:
 - What are the different ways one can grow in and interact with the Qur'an?
 - How do you interact with the Qur'an daily, weekly, and monthly?
- What are ways one can deepen one's relationship with the Qur'an? What advice would you give to someone seeking to do so? What goals would you set for yourself? Why?
- When you interact with the Qur'an consistently in different ways, what impact does that have on you - your mood and character, your belief and faith, your acts of worship and daily actions, your relationship with yourself, others, and Allah (swt)?
- What is the difference between having knowledge and applying knowledge?
- Is either more important than the other - why or why not?
- What did it mean when Aisha (ra) described Prophet Muhammad (sws) as "the walking Qur'an"?
- Can you think of anybody in your life who is a good example of someone whose relationship with the Qur'an is evident in their character? How so?

Quiz Questions:

- What is written on the "Preserved Tablet"?
 - (Allah's message to humanity)
- Who are the protectors of the "Preserved Tablet"?
 - (Allah and the angels)
- Complete the sentence: On the "Preserved Tablet" nothing can be _____, nothing can be _____, and nothing can be _____?
 - (nothing can be added, nothing can be taken away, nothing can be changed)
- What three people led efforts to compile and preserve the Qur'an in a book?
 - (Abu Bakr, Umar, and Othman)

Challenge:

- Reflect on how you would like to deepen your relationship with the Qur'an and enhance the way that relationship impacts how you show up in the world. Write down goals to work towards during Shawwal (the month following Ramadan).





EPISODE 29

An Extraordinary Lesson on True Victory



Points of Reflection:

- How has studying Surah al-Buruj in detail impacted you this Ramadan?
- What lessons and reminders are you carrying forward?
- Has this overview of Surah al-Buruj comforted you, inspired you, motivated you? How so?
- Was there anything in this series that particularly resonated with you? Why?
- What is something new you learned in this series on Surah al-Buruj?
- What is something you would like to know more about as a result of studying Surah al-Buruj in this series?
- What do you think are the ultimate takeaways from Surah al-Buruj?
- How would you explain the overarching message of Surah al-Buruj in one sentence?

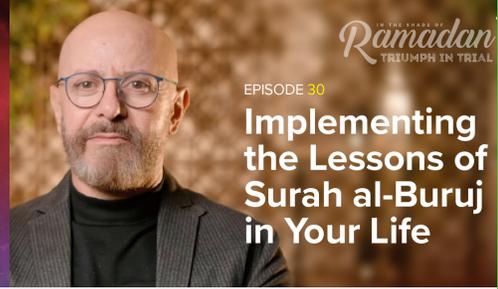
Quiz Questions:

- What two types of victory are explained in Surah al-Buruj?
 - (victory in this life, the Ultimate Victory in the Hereafter)
- What is the core message of Surah al-Buruj?
 - (that the Believers will be victorious and will be given the Ultimate Victory in the Hereafter)
- Which story in Surah al-Buruj is an example of the Believers attaining the Ultimate Victory in the Hereafter, but not in this life?
 - (the story of the boy and the King)

Challenge:

- Take a moment to reflect on this past month - where you were at the beginning of this blessed month and where you are now after this blessed month. Compile the most meaningful notes, reminders, reflections, experiences, etc., you have collected this Ramadan. Then, take some time to form, articulate, and set your intention for the year between this Ramadan and the next closing with a dua to Allah (swt).





EPISODE 30

Implementing the Lessons of Surah al-Buruj in Your Life

Points of Reflection:

- What assurances do we find in Surah al-Buruj?
- Has understanding Surah al-Buruj through this series helped you in any way? If so, how?
- How do the lessons of Surah al-Buruj help strengthen your conviction?
- Has your perspective changed or been reaffirmed? In what way?
- What does the quotation, “the proper attitude toward the Qadr of Allah (swt) is to believe in the wisdom of Allah more than you believe in your own opinion,” mean?
- What examples do we find in the Qur’an of Believers who have been isolated due to hardship, those who have been forced to face hardship head-on, and those who were tasked with treating hardship in some way or another?
- What examples do we have of each in recent times?
- Reflecting on your own life, what examples of each have you experienced? In retrospect, what was each experience like? What did you feel in the time of hardship? What wisdom have you derived from each circumstance or experience in retrospect?

Quiz Questions:

- In what surah, mentioned in this episode, does Allah (swt) remind us that there will be tests for those who believe?
 - (Surah al-Ankabut)
- Three approaches to dealing with injustice are outlined in this episode: isolating, facing, and what?
 - (treating)
- When did Allah (swt) start revealing the surahs with many stories of the earlier prophets?
 - (during the last three years in Mecca)
- Believing in the Last Day includes believing in what?
 - (The Justice of Allah)

Challenge:

Share one of your most meaningful reflections or experiences from engaging with this year’s ISR series and discussion packet on Surah al-Buruj with your MAS family vis-a-vis social media by tagging us in your post or story (Instagram: @muslimamericansociety, Facebook: Muslim American Society) and using the hashtag #ISR2024

