

**See also:** ʿĀD; ĀDAM, UPON HIM PEACE; ANGEL; BELIEVER(S); CALLING TO ALLAH; CANONICAL READINGS; CHILDREN OF ISRĀʿĪL; COMMANDING GOOD AND FORBIDDING WRONG; COVENANT; DISBELIEVER(S); FAREWELL PILGRIMAGE; HEREAFTER; HŪD, UPON HIM PEACE; IBRĀHĪM, UPON HIM PEACE; IDOLS AND IDOLATRY; ʿĪSĀ, UPON HIM PEACE; JĀHILIYYA; JIBRĪL; MESSENGERSHIP; MUḤAMMAD, UPON HIM BLESSINGS AND PEACE; MŪSĀ, UPON HIM PEACE; NŪH, UPON HIM PEACE; PROPHEHOOD; RAIN; RESURRECTION; REVELATION; ŠĀLIH, UPON HIM PEACE; THAMŪD; WINDS.

### MUZAFFAR IQBAL

## COPPER

### AL-QIṬR, NUḤĀS

Copper is mentioned four times in the Qurʾān: twice as *qīṭr* (Q 18:96; 34:12), glossed by most exegetes as “molten copper”; once its genitive form (*ism manṣūb*)—*qaṭīrān*—is used (Q 14:50), which Ibn ʿAbbās (3BH-68/619-688), Allah be well-pleased with him and his father, understood to be a reference to copper, and once as *nuḥās* (Q 55:36), which according to the most common reading is copper, although its variant readings are understood as “smoke without flame” (see below).

Copper was used by Dhūl-Qarnayn (*q.v.*) to build an impregnable wall between two mountains to curtail Yaʿjūj and Maʿjūj (*q.v.*), the corrupters on the earth (Q 18:94), at the request of the local residents of the mountainous region of Azerbaijan and Armenia (as per Ṭabarī; Ibn ʿAṭīyya; Qurṭubī; Ibn Kathīr)—who said to him, “We shall pay you tribute on condition that you set a barrier between us and them.” He said, “What my Lord has granted me is far better, but help me with [bodily] strength, and I shall set between you and them a rampart. Bring to me sheets of iron, till, when he had leveled up [the gap] between the cliffs, he said, “Blow!” till they became fire, then he said, “Bring me molten copper to pour thereon.” And thus [the rampart was built, and] their enemies were unable to scale it, nor were they able to pierce it. He said, “This is a mercy from my Sustainer! Yet when the time appointed by my Sustainer shall come, He will make this [rampart] level with the ground: and my Sustainer’s promise always comes true!” (Q 18:83-98).

The Andalusian exegete Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1273) graphically describes the use of molten copper to construct the wall:

They would put two sheets of iron, one upon another, and heat them by blowing fire onto them, until they became like fire—this is the meaning of the words of the Most High, *ḥattā idhā jaʿalahu nāran*—then he said, bring *qīṭr* to me so that I can pour it over [the sheets]. *Al-qīṭr* is molten copper according to most exegetes; it is from *al-qāṭr* (“what falls drop by drop”) because when it is melted, its drops fall like drops of water; although some have identified it as molten iron and others, including Ibn al-Anbārī, as molten lead. It is derived from *qaṭara*, *yaqṭur*, *qaṭran*, and it is also used in Q 34:12, *We caused the fount of copper to gush forth for him.*

Al-Qurṭubī says the wall was between two mountains. “Qatāda [b. Diʿāma al-Sadūsī (d. 117/735)] said it was like a Yemeni *chodar*, with black and red streaks. Once a man came to the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, and said, ‘O Messenger of Allah, I have seen the wall of Yaʿjūj and Maʿjūj.’ The Prophet asked him, ‘How was it?’ He said, ‘Like a Yemeni striped *chodar*.’ The Prophet said, ‘You did see it.’” (Qurṭubī; for the ḥadīth, see, Bukharī, Aḥādīth al-Anbiyāʾ, *qiṣṣa Yaʿjūj wa Maʿjūj*).

Copper was granted to prophet Sulaymān, upon him peace (*q.v.*) as a fount, which *gushed forth for him* (Q 34:12). This was in Ṣanʿāʾ (Yemen), where the font would flow for three days every month (Ṭabarī; Samarqandī; Qurṭubī). This flowing copper was used by jinn, who were subservient to him, and who made for him *whatever he willed; arches and statues and basins like reservoirs, and firmly anchored cauldrons* (Q 34:12).

The third mention of copper is in Q 14:50—Their shirts will be made of *qaṭīrān* and their faces will be covered by the Fire—where the genitive noun *qaṭīrān* is glossed as molten copper by Ibn ʿAbbās (*Tafsīr*s of Ibn Abī Ḥātim, al-Ṭabarī, Māturīdī, al-Qurṭubī), although it has also been understood as tar which is applied to the camels suffering from skin disease (Ṭabarī; Ibn Abī Ḥātim; Qurṭubī; Rāzī; Ibn ʿĀdil; Qummī). There are four readings of *qaṭīrān* (see READINGS OF THE QURʾĀN), the most common being *qaṭīrān*, which is the reading of Ḥijāz; *qaṭrān* (read by ʿĪsā b. ʿUmar); *qīṭrān*; and *min qaṭrīn-ān*, a compound word made of *qaṭr* and *ān*, that is, “copper that is extremely hot” (Ibn Abī Ḥātim; Ṭabarī; Zajjāj; Thaʿlabī; Ibn ʿĀdil).

The fourth mention of copper is in Q 55:36, where it is one of the meanings of *nuḥās* (Rāzī, Qurṭubī); its other meanings include smoke (*al-dukhān*) and molten brass (*yudhāb al-ṣufī*) (as per Ibn ʿAbbās in