

DAYS OF ALLAH

AYYĀM ALLĀH

The phrase *ayyām Allāh* (“days of Allah”) occurs twice in the Qurʾān: once in the Makkan Sūrat Ibrāhīm (Q 14:5) and once in the Madīnan Sūrat al-Jāthiya (Q 45:14). The attribution of “days” (*ayyām*, sing. *yawm*; see DAY) to the Sublime Name “Allah” (*q.v.*) is a rhetorical device indicating their special momentousness (*tashrifli-amrihā*) (Rāghib; Māturīdī; Rāzī; Ibn ʿAshūr; al-Qāsimī). While the singular *yawm* most often refers to the time (*q.v.*) from sunrise to sunset or according to astronomers, from sunrise to sunrise or sunset to sunset (*Zabīdī*), it can also denote any period of time regardless of the length, or simply time in general, as in the hadith, “Those shall be the days of disorder” (*tilka ayyām al-harj*) (Rāghib; Wāḥidī, *Asbāb al-nuzūl*). In its plural form, *ayyām*—originally *aywām*, the conjunction of the letters *yāʾ* and *wāw* preceded by a *sukūn* causing their assimilation, hence the prevailing use of the former (Rāzī)—may refer to significant events that occurred during the referenced period of time. Events are metonymically described as “days” rather than “nights” because most battles take place in daytime (Bayḍāwī; *Zabīdī*). *Ayyām* can also refer to punishment and retribution, as when it is said, “Today is your day” (*Zabīdī*), for instance, in Q 6:130, *had the messengers not come to you, from among yourselves, who used to recite My verses to you, and used to warn you of the encounter of this your day?* (see also Q 7:51, 21:103, 32:14).

Days of Allah in Q 14:5

Q 14:5 is a Divine directive to Prophet Mūsā, upon him peace (*q.v.*): *We indeed sent Mūsā with Our signs, “Bring your people out of darkness into light, and remind them of the days of Allah.* Exegetes gloss the phrase “days of Allah” in this verse as:

- i. Favors of Allah Most High to the Children of Isrāʾīl (*q.v.*), specifically His deliverance (*q.v.*) of the Israelites from the tyranny of Firʿawn (*q.v.*), the splitting of the sea, and the granting of manna and *salwā* (quails), among other favors as per reports from the Companions Ibn ʿAbbās (3BH-68/619-688) and Ubayy b. Kaʿb (d. 30/650), and the Successors Mujāhid b. Jabr (21-104/642-722), Saʿīd b. Jubayr (46-95/665-714), and Qatāda b. Dīʿāma al-Sadūsī (61-118/680-736) (Mujāhid; Ṭabarī; Māturīdī; Thaʿlabī; Ibn al-Jawzī; Samarqandī; Abū Ḥayyān; Ibn Kathīr). Ubayy b. Kaʿb, Allah be well-pleased with him,

relates this interpretation through the Messenger of Allah, upon him blessings and peace: “One day Mūsā stood among his people and reminded them of the days of Allah, the days of Allah being His favors (*naʿmāʾuh*)” (al-Nasāʾī, *Tafsīr*);

- ii. Allah’s retribution of previous nations, such as ʿĀd (*q.v.*) and Thamūd (*q.v.*) (Q 69:7), an opinion attributed to Ibn Zayd, Ibn al-Sāʾib, Muqātil, Rabīʿ, and Ibn ʿAbbās, Allah be well pleased with them (Thaʿlabī; Rāzī; Qurṭubī; Māwardī; Ibn al-Jawzī; Ālūsī);
- iii. The general history of previous nations, including both Divine favors and punishments (see REWARD AND PUNISHMENT), an interpretation supported by Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. al-Sirrī al-Zajjāj (241-311/855-923) and Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (224-310/839-923) (Zajjāj; Ṭabarī; Rāzī; Māturīdī; Māwardī; Ibn al-Jawzī; Abū Ḥayyān). Jār Allāh Abū-l-Qāsim Maḥmūd b. ʿUmar al-Zamakhsharī (467-538/ca.1074-1143) notes that a similar expression, *ayyām al-ʿarab* (“days of the Arabs”), is used to refer to the long history of Arab tribal wars such as the “Day (of the Battle) of Dhū Qār” and the “Day (of the Battle) of al-Fijār” (*Kashshāf*). This interpretation, Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī (d. 333/ca.945) points out, expands the scope of the term to include both Allah’s favors to those who believe in Him and His wrath upon those who deny Him, encompassing interpretations (i) and (ii) above (*Taʾwīlāt*). Qāḍī Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Ḥaq b. Ghālib Ibn ʿAṭīyya (481-541/1088-1147) also says that the term *ayyām* here encompasses both favors and punishments, since the intent of *remind them* is achieved by both meanings together (*Muḥarrar*).

Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ʿUmar al-Rāzī (543-606/1148-1209) says:

[The word] “days” (*ayyām*) is used to refer to significant events. It is said, for example, ‘so-and-so is a scholar of the days of the Arabs,’ meaning the events [that took place in their history]... Allah says, *We deal out such days among people in turn* (Q 3:140). Once you recognize this, [know that] the meaning [of the verse] is “exhort them with both exhortation (*targhīb*) and admonition (*tarhīb*), with both divine promise (*waʿd*) and threat (*waʿid*).” The exhortation and promise