

# Taraveeh: Thirteenth Night

## Surah Maryam

In the name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful.

Name

It takes its name from v. 16.

Period of Revelation

It was revealed before the Migration to Habash. We learn from authentic Traditions that Hadrat Ja'afar recited vv. 1-40 of this Surah in the court of Negus when he called the migrants to his court.

Historical Background

We have already briefly referred to the conditions of that period in the introduction to Surah Al-Kahf. Here we shall give rather fuller details of the same conditions, which will be helpful in grasping the meaning of this Surah and the other Surahs of the period. When the chiefs of the Quraish

felt that they had failed to suppress the Islamic movement by ridicule, sarcasm, and by holding out promises and threats and by making false accusations, they resorted to persecution, beating and economic pressure. They would catch hold of the new Muslims of their clans and persecute them, starve them and would even inflict physical torture on them in order to coerce them to give up Islam. The most pitiful victims of their persecution were the poor people and the slaves and the protégés of the Quraish. They were beaten black and blue, were imprisoned and kept thirsty and hungry and were dragged on the burning sands of Makkah. The people would get work from the professional laborers but would not pay them their wages. As an instance we give below the story of Hadrat Khabbab bin Arat, which is given in Bukhari and Muslim:

"I used to work as a blacksmith in Makkah. Once I did some work for As bin Wa'il. When I went to ask for my wages, he said, 'I will not pay your wages unless you disown Muhammad'."

In the same connection Hadrat Khabbab says, "One day the Holy Prophet was sitting in the shadow of the Ka'abah. I went to him and said, 'O Messenger of Allah, now persecution has gone to its extreme; why do you not pray to Allah (for relief)?' At this the Holy Prophet was greatly moved. He said, 'The believers before you were persecuted much more than you. Their bones were scraped with combs of iron and their heads were cut with saws, but still they did not give up their Faith. I assure you that Allah will fulfill this Mission, and there will come a period of such peace that one would travel from Sanna to Hadramaut, and he will have no fear from anyone, save Allah. But you people have already become impatient'." (Bukhari)

When the conditions became unbearable, the Holy Prophet, in the month of Rajab of the fifth year of Prophethood, gave advice to his Companions to this effect: "You may well migrate to Habash, for there is a king, who does not allow any kind of injustice to anyone, and there is good in his land. You

should remain there till the time that Allah provides a remedy for your affliction".

Accordingly, at first, eleven men and four women left for Habash. The Quraish pursued them up to the coast but fortunately they got a timely boat for Habash at the sea-port of Shu'aibah, and they escaped attest. Then after a few months, other people migrated to Habash and their number rose to eighty-three men and eleven women of the Quraish and seven non-Quraish. After this, only forty persons were left with the Holy Prophet at Makkah.

There was a great hue and cry in Makkah after this Migration, for every family of the Quraish was adversely affected by this. There was hardly a family of the Quraish which did not lose a son, a son-in-law, a daughter, a brother or a sister. For instance, there were among the Migrants the near relatives of Abu Jahl, Abu Sufyan and other chief of the Quraish who were notorious for their persecution of the Muslims. As a result of this, some of them became even more bitter in their enmity of Islam, while there were others who were so moved by this that they embraced Islam. For instance, this Migration left a deep mark on Hadrat Umar. One of his relatives, Laila, daughter of Hathmah, says, "I was packing my luggage for Migration, while my husband, Amr bin Rabi'y'ah, had gone out. In the meantime Umar came there and began to watch me, while I was engaged in preparation for the journey. Then he said, 'Are you also going to migrate?' I answered, 'Yes by God, you people have persecuted us much. But the wide earth of Allah is open for us. Now we are going to a place where Allah will grant us peace'. At this, I noticed such signs of emotion on the face of Umar as I had never seen before. He simply said, 'May God be with you' and went away."

After the migration, the Quraish held consultations, and decided to send Abdullah bin Abi Rabi'y'ah, half brother of Abu Jahl, and Amr bin As to Habash with precious gifts so as to persuade Negus to send the migrants back to Makkah. Hadrat Umm Salmah (a wife of the Holy Prophet), who



was among the migrants, has related this part of the story in detail. She says, "When these two clever statesmen of the Quraish reached Habash, they distributed the gifts among the courtiers of the King and persuaded them to recommend strongly to him to send the migrants back. Then they saw Negus himself and, presenting rich gifts to him, said, "Some headstrong brats of our city have come to your land and our chiefs have sent us to you with the request that you may kindly send them back. These brats have forsaken our faith and have not embraced your faith either, but have invented a new faith". As soon as they had finished their speech, all the courtiers recommended their case, saying, "We should send such people back to their city for their people know them better. It is not proper for us to keep them here". At this the King was annoyed and said, "I am not going to give them back without proper enquiry. As these people have put their trust in my country rather than in any other country and have come here to take shelter, I will not betray them. At first I will send for them and investigate into the allegations these people have made against them. Then I will make my final decision". Accordingly, the King sent for the Companions of the Holy Prophet and asked them to come to his court.

When the migrants received the message of the King, they assembled and held consultations as to what they should say to the King. At last they came to this unanimous decision: "We will present before the King the teachings of the Holy Prophet without adding anything to or withholding anything from them and leave it to him whether he lets us remain here or turns us out of his country". When they came to the court, the King put this problem abruptly before them: "I understand that you have given up the faith of your own people and have neither embraced my faith nor any other existing faith. I would like to know what your new faith is." At this, Jafar bin Abi Talib, on behalf of the migrants, made an extempore speech to this effect: "O King! We were sunk deep in ignorance and had become very corrupt; then Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) came to us as a Messenger of God, and did his best to reform us. But the Quraish began to persecute

his followers, so we have come to your country in the hope that here we will be free from persecution". After his speech, the King said, "Please recite a piece of the Revelation which has been sent down by God to your Prophet". In response, Hadrat Jafar recited that portion of Surah Maryam which relates the story of Prophets John and Jesus (Allah's peace be upon them). The King listened to it and wept, so much so that his beard became wet with tears. When Hadrat Jafar finished the recital, he said: "Most surely this Revelation and the Message of Jesus have come from the same source. By God I will not give you up into the hands of these people".

Next day `Amr bin `As went to Negus and said, "Please send for them again and ask them concerning the creed they hold about Jesus, the son of Mary, for they say a horrible thing about him". The King again sent for the migrants, who had already learnt about the scheme of Amr. They again sat together and held consultations in regard to the answer they should give to the King, if he asked about the belief they held about Prophet Jesus. Though this was a very critical situation and all of them were uneasy about it, they decided that they would say the same thing that Allah and His Messenger had taught them. Accordingly, when they went to the court, the King put them the question that had been suggested by Amr bin As. So Jafar bin Abi Talib stood up and answered without the least hesitation: "He was a Servant of Allah and His Messenger. He was a Spirit and a Word of Allah which had been sent to virgin Mary." At this the King picked up a straw from the ground and said, 'Bye God, Jesus was not worth this straw more than what you have said about him." After this the King returned the gifts sent by the Quraish, saying, "I do not take any bribe". Then he said to the migrants, "You are allowed to stay here in perfect peace."

### Theme and Subject

Keeping in view this historical background, it becomes quite obvious that this Surah was sent down to serve the migrants as a "provision "for their journey to Habash, as if to say, "Though you are leaving your country as

persecuted emigrants to a Christian country, you should not in the least hide anything from the teachings you have received. Therefore you should plainly say to the Christians that Prophet Jesus was not the son of God."

After relating the story of Prophets John and Jesus in vv. 1-40, the story of Prophet Abraham has been related (vv. 41-50) also for the benefit of the Migrants for he also had been forced like them to leave his country by the persecution of his father, his family and his countrymen. On the one hand, this meant to console the Emigrants that they were following the footsteps of Prophet Abraham and would attain the same good end as that Prophet did. On the other hand, it meant to warn the disbeliever, of Makkah that they should note it well that they were in the position of the cruel people who had persecuted their forefather and leader, Abraham, while the Muslim Emigrants were in the position of Prophet Abraham himself.

Then the mention of the other Prophets has been made in vv.51-65 with a view to impress that Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) had brought the same way of Life that had been brought by the former Prophets but their followers had become corrupt and adopted wrong ways.

In the concluding passage (vv. 66-98), a strong criticism has been made of the evil ways of the disbelievers of Makkah, while the Believers have been given the good news that they would come out successful and become the beloved of the people, in spite of the worst efforts of the enemies of the Truth.

## Surah Ta-ha

In the name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful.



## Name

This Surah takes its name from its "first word "Ta Ha". This name, like the names of many other Surahs, is merely symbolic.

## Period of Revelation

The period of its revelation is the same as of Surah Maryam. It is just possible that it was sent down during the Migration to Habash or just after it. Anyhow, it is certain that this Surah was revealed before Hadrat Umar embraced Islam.

According to a well known and authentic tradition when Hadrat Umar set out to kill the Holy Prophet, he met a certain person, who said, "Before you do anything else, you should know that your own sister and brother-in-law have embraced Islam "Hearing this, he directly went to the house of his sister. There he found his sister, Fatimah, and his brother-in-law, Said bin Zaid, learning the contents of a scroll from Khabbab bin Art. When Fatimah saw him coming she hid the scroll at once, but Hadrat Umar had heard the recital, so he began to interrogate them about it. Then he began to thrash his brother-in-law, and wounded his sister, who tried to protect him. At last both of them confessed, "We have become Muslims; you may do whatever you like." As Hadrat Umar was moved to see blood running down from her head, he said, "Show me the thing you were reading." The sister asked him to promise on oath that he would not tear it, and added, "You cannot touch it unless you have a bath."Accordingly, Hadrat Umar took his bath and when he began to read the scroll, which contained this Surah, he spontaneously spoke out, "What an excellent thing!" At this Hadrat Khabbab, who had hidden himself at the sound of his footsteps, came out of his hiding and said, "By God, I have high expectations that Allah will get great service from you to propagate the Message of His Prophet, for just yesterday I heard the Holy Prophet praying to Allah, 'My Lord, make Abul Hakam bin Hisham(Abu Jahl) or Umar bin Khattab a supporter of Islam. So

O Umar, turn to Allah, turn to Allah." These words proved to be so persuasive that he at once accompanied Hadrat Khabbab and went to the Holy Prophet to embrace Islam. This happened a short time after the Migration to Habash.

### Theme and Topics of Discussion

This Surah begins with the enunciation of the object of the Revelation of the Qur'an to this effect: "O Muhammad, this Quran has not been sent down to you to put you unnecessarily to some great affliction. It does not demand from you to perform the impossible task of imbuing the hearts of the obdurate disbelievers with Faith. It is merely an admonition meant to guide on to the Right Path those who fear God and want to save themselves from His punishment. This Quran is the Word of the Master of the earth and the heavens and God-head belongs to Him alone: These two facts are eternal whether one believes them or not."

After this introduction, the Surah abruptly moves on to relate the story of Prophet Moses without any apparent relevancy and without even hinting at its applicability to the events of the period. However, if we read between the lines, we realize that the discourse is addressed very relevantly to the people of Makkah. But before we explain the hidden meaning of the discourse, we must keep in view the fact that the Arabs in general acknowledged Moses as a Prophet of God. This was so because they had "been influenced by the large number of the Jews around them and by" the neighboring Christian kingdoms. Now let us state those things which are hidden between the lines of the story:

1. Allah does not appoint a Prophet by the beat of drums or by celebrating the occasion in a regular and formal ceremony, as if to say, "We are appointing such and such a person as Our Prophet from today." On the contrary, He bestows Prophethood in a confidential manner just as He did in the case of Prophet Moses. Therefore you should not consider it strange if Hadrat Muhammad has been



appointed as a Prophet all of a sudden and without any public proclamation.

2. The fundamental principles presented by Prophet Muhammad : Tauhid and the Hereafter -- are just the same as were taught to Prophet Moses at the time of his appointment.
3. Prophet Muhammad has been made the standard bearer of the Message of the Truth among the people of the Quraish all by himself without material provisions, just as Prophet Moses was entrusted with the Mission to go to a tyrant king like Pharaoh and ask him to give up his attitude of rebellion. These are the mysterious ways of Allah. He catches hold of a way farer of Midian on his way to Egypt and says, "Go and fight with the greatest tyrant of the time." He did not provide him with armies and provisions for this Mission. The only thing He did was to appoint his brother as his assistant at his request.
4. You, O People of Makkah, should note it well that Pharaoh employed the same devices against Prophet Moses as you are employing against Prophet Muhammad -- frivolous objections, accusations, and cruel persecutions. You should know that Allah's Prophet came out victorious over Pharaoh, who possessed large armies and war equipments. Incidentally, the Muslims have been consoled and comforted, though not in so many words, that they should not be afraid of fighting with the Quraish against fearful odds, for the mission which is supported by Allah comes out victorious in the end. At the same time, the Muslims have been exhorted to follow the excellent example of the magicians of Egypt, who remained steadfast in their Faith, though Pharaoh threatened them with horrible vengeance.
5. An incident from the story of the Israelites has been cited to show in what ridiculous manner the idolization of false gods and goddesses starts and that the Prophets of God do not tolerate even the slightest tinge of this preposterous practice. Likewise, Prophet Muhammad is following the former Prophets in opposing shirk and idol worship today.

Thus, the story of Moses has been used to throw light on all those matters which were connected with the conflict between the Holy Prophet and the

Quraish. Then at the end of the story, the Quraish have been briefly admonished, as if to say, "The Quran has been sent down in your tongue for your own good. If you listen to it and follow its admonition, you will be doing so for your own good but if you reject it, you will yourselves meet with an evil end."

After this the story of Prophet Adam has been related, as if to tell the Quraish, "The way you are following is the way of Satan, whereas the right way for a man is to follow his father Adam. He was beguiled by Satan, but when he realized his error, he plainly confessed it and repented and again turned back to the service of Allah and won His favor. On the other hand, if a person follows Satan and sticks to his error obdurately in spite of admonition, he does harm to himself alone like Satan."

In the end, the Holy Prophet and the Muslims have been advised not to be impatient in regard to the punishment to the disbelievers, as if to say, "Allah has His Own scheme concerning them. He does not seize them at once but gives them sufficient respite. Therefore you should not grow impatient but bear the persecutions with fortitude and go on conveying the Message."

In this connection, great emphasis has been laid on Salat so that it may create in the believers the virtues of patience, forbearance, contentment, resignation to the will of God and self analysis for these are greatly needed in the service of the Message of the Truth.

## Surah Al-Anbiyaa

In the name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful.

## Name

The name of this Surah has not been taken from any verse but it has been called Al-Anbiyaa because it contains a continuous account of many Anbiyaa (Prophets). Nevertheless, it is a symbolic name and not a title.

## Period of Revelation

Both the subject matter and the style of the Surah indicate that it was sent down in the third stage of the life of the Holy Prophet at Makkah. (See Introduction to Chapter VI).

## Subject and Topics

This Surah discusses the conflict between the Holy Prophet and the chiefs of Makkah, which was rampant at the time of its Revelation and answers those objections and doubts which were being put forward concerning his Prophethood and the Doctrines of Tauhid and the Hereafter. The chiefs of Makkah have also been rebuked for their machinations against the Holy Prophet and warned of the evil consequences of their wicked activities. They have been admonished to give up their indifference and heedlessness that they were showing about the Message. At the end of the Surah, they have been told that the person whom they considered to be a "distress and affliction" had in reality come to them as a blessing.

## Main Themes

In vv. 1-47, the following themes have been discussed in particular:

1. The objection of the disbelievers that a human being could not be a Messenger and therefore they could not accept Muhammad (peace be upon him) as a Prophet, has been refuted.



2. They have been taken to task for raising multifarious and contradictory objections against the Holy Prophet and the Qur'an.
3. Their wrong conception of life has been proved to be false because it was responsible for their indifferent and heedless attitude towards the Message of the Holy Prophet. They believed that life was merely a sport and pastime and had no purpose behind or before it and there was no accountability or reward or punishment.
4. The main cause of the conflict between the disbelievers and the Holy Prophet was their insistence on the doctrine of shirk and antagonism to the Doctrine of Tauhid. So the doctrine of shirk has been refuted and the Doctrine of Tauhid reinforced by weighty and impressive though brief arguments.
5. Arguments and admonitions have been used to remove another misunderstanding of theirs. They presumed that Muhammad (peace be upon him) was a false prophet and his warnings of a scourge from God were empty threats, just because no scourge was visiting them in spite of their persistent rejection of the Prophet.

In vv. 48-91, instances have been cited from the important events of the life stories of the Prophets to show that all the Prophets, who were sent by God, were human beings and had all the characteristics of a man except those which were exclusive to Prophethood. They had no share in Godhead and they had to implore Allah to fulfill each and every necessity of theirs.

Along with these two other things have also been mentioned:

1. All the Prophets had to pass through distress and affliction; their opponents did their worst to thwart their mission, but in spite of it they came out successful by the extraordinary succor from Allah.
2. All the Prophets had one and the same "way of life", the same as was being presented by Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him), and that was the only Right Way of Life and all other ways invented and introduced by mischievous people were utterly wrong.

In vv. 92-106, it has been declared that only those who follow the Right Way, will come out successful in the final judgment of God and those who discard it shall meet with the worst consequences.

In vv. 107-112, the people have been told that it is a great favor of Allah that He has sent His Messenger to inform them beforehand of this Reality and that those, who consider his coming to be an affliction instead of a blessing, are foolish people.

