

Taraveeh: Fifteenth Night

Surah Al-Furqan

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

Name

The Surah takes its name "Al-Furqan" from the first verse. Though it is symbolic like the names of many other Surahs, it has a close relation to its subject matter.

Period of Revelation

It appears from its style and subject matter that, like Surah Al-Mu'minun, it was also revealed during the third stage of Prophethood at Makkah. Ibn Jarir and Imam Razi have cited a tradition of Dahhakbin Muzahim that this Surah was revealed eight years before Surah An Nisa. This also confirms our opinion as to its period of revelation. (Ibn Jarir. Vol. XIX, pp. 28-30, and Tafsir Kabir, Vol. VI, p. 358).

Subject Matter and Topics

The Surah deals with the doubts and objections that were being raised against the Qur'an, the Prophet hood of Muhammad (Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) and his teachings by the disbelievers of Makkah. Appropriate answers to each and every objection have been given and the people have been warned of the consequences of rejecting the Truth. At the end of the Surah, a clear picture of the moral superiority of the Believers has been depicted as in the beginning of Surah Al-Mu'minun, as if to say, 'Here is the criterion for distinguishing the genuine from the counterfeit. This is the noble character of those people who have believed in and followed the teachings of the Holy Prophet and this is the kind of people that he is trying to train. You may yourselves compare and contrast this type of people with those Arabs, who have not as yet accepted the Message, and who are upholding "ignorance" and exerting their utmost to defeat the Truth. Now you may judge for yourselves as to which you would like to choose.' Though this question was not posed in so many words, it was placed before every one in Arabia in a tangible shape. It may be noted that during the next few years, the practical answer given to this question by the whole nation, with the exception of a small minority, was that they chose Islam.

Surah Ash-Shu'araa

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

Name

The Surah takes its name from verse 224 in which the word Ash-Shu'araa' occurs.

Period of Revelation

The subject matter and the style show, and the traditions confirm, that it was revealed during the middle Makkan period. According to Ibn Abbas, Surah Ta Ha was revealed first, then Surah Al Waqiah, and then Surah Ash-Shu'araa. (Ruh-ul-Ma'ani, Vol. xx, p. 64). About Surah Ta Ha it is well known that it had been revealed before Hadrat Umar embraced Islam.

Subject Matter and Topics

The background of the Surah is that the disbelievers of Makkah were persistently refusing, on one pretext or the other, to accept the message of Islam given by the Holy Prophet. Sometimes they would say that he did not show them any sign to convince them of his Prophet hood; sometimes they would brand him as a poet or a sorcerer and mock his message; and sometimes they would ridicule his Mission, saying that his followers were either a few foolish youth, or the poor people and slaves -- whereas, they argued, if his Mission had really some value for the people, the nobles and the elders would have accepted it first. Thus, while on the one hand, the Holy Prophet was becoming wearied by his efforts to show them rationally the errors of their creeds and prove the truth of the Doctrines of Tauhid and the Hereafter, the disbelievers, on the other, were never tired of adopting one kind of obduracy after the other. This state of affairs was causing great anguish and grief to the Holy Prophet.

Such were the conditions when this Surah was revealed. It begins with words of consolation to the Holy Prophet, implying, "Why do you fret for their sake? If these people have not believed in you, it is not because they have not seen any Sign, but because they are obdurate. They will not listen to reason they want to see a Sign which makes them bow their heads in humility. When this Sign is shown in due course of time, they will themselves realize that what was being presented to them was the Truth."

After this introduction, till verse 191, one and the same theme has been presented continuously, and it is said: "The whole earth abounds in such Signs as can guide a seeker after truth to Reality, but the stubborn and misguided people have never believed even after seeing the Signs, whether these were the Signs of the natural phenomena or the miracles of the Prophets. These wretched people have stubbornly adhered to their erroneous creeds till the Divine scourge actually overtook them." It is to illustrate this that the history of seven of the ancient tribes has been told, who persisted in disbelief just like the disbelievers of Makkah. In this connection, the following points have been stressed:

1. The Signs are of two kinds:(a) Those which are scattered all over the earth, and by seeing which an intelligent person can judge for himself whether what the Prophet is presenting is the Truth or not and (b) those which were seen by Pharaoh and his people, Noah's people, the Ad and the Thamud, Lot's people and the people of Aiykah. Now it is for the disbelievers to decide which kind of the Signs they are eager to see.
2. The mentality of the disbeliever has been the same throughout the ages; their arguments and their objections, and their excuses and subterfuges for not believing have been similar and ultimately the fates that they met have also been the same. Likewise, the Prophets in every age presented the same teachings, their personal character and their reasoning and arguments against their opponents were the same, and they were all similarly blessed with mercy by Allah Almighty. Both these patterns of behavior and conduct are found in history, and the disbelievers could themselves see as to which respective patterns they and the Holy Prophet belonged.
3. Allah is All Mighty, All Powerful and All Merciful at the same time. History contains instances of His Wrath as well as of His Mercy. Now, therefore, it is for the people to decide whether they would like to deserve Allah's Mercy or His Wrath.
4. Lastly, the discussion has been summed up, saying "O disbelievers, if at all you want to see the Signs, why should you insist on seeing those horrible Signs that visited the doomed communities of the past?"

Why don't you see the Qur'an which is being presented in your own language? Why don't you see Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and mercy) and his Companions? Can the revelations of the Qur'an be the work of a Satan or jinn? Does the recipient of the Qur'an appear to be a sorcerer? Are Muhammad and his Companions no different from a poet and his admirers? Why don't you give up disbelief and search your hearts for their judgment? When in the heart of your hearts you yourselves believe that the Revelations of the Qur'an have nothing in common with sorcery and poetry, then you should know that you are being cruel and unjust, and will certainly meet the doom meant for the cruel and unjust."

