

Understand Quran in Taraveeh

Moulana Maududi's Commentry (Tafseer) Serialized for Ramadan



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

Note

Taraveeh is one of the most important non-obligatory prayers performed during the holy month of Ramadan. A part of Quran is recited each night during the Taraveeh and the whole Quran is completed in a pre-specified duration.

Listening to Quran even without understanding is a religious duty and an act of piety blessed by Allah. But understanding the contents and concepts of the verses and context in which they were revealed, elevates a human being to a higher spiritual plain.

A large part of Quran is a guide on how to conduct your day to day affairs: Caring for your parents, giving charity, being fair in personal and professional dealings etc. For a Muslim each Ramadan and every Taraveeh is an opportunity to re-evaluate life in the light of Quran.

Quran is divided into thirty parts. About one and a quarter of this division are recited in the first fifteen nights during Taraveeh in Ramadan. About one part is read until the 26th night of Ramadan. On the 27th night Quran recitation is completed by reading the last half of the thirtieth part as it contains several suras. The commentary of Quran is organized in a similar pattern here, so that the each night's recitation is reviewed on the preceding day.

Taraveeh: First Night

Surah Al-Fathiha:

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

Name

This Surah is named Al Fatihah because of its subject-matter. Fatihah is that which opens a subject or a book or any other thing. In other words, Al-Fatihah is a sort of preface.

Period of Revelation

It is one of the very earliest Revelations to the Holy Prophet. As a matter of fact, we learn from authentic Traditions that it was the first complete Surah which was revealed to Muhammed (Allah's peace be upon him). Before this, only a few miscellaneous verses were revealed which form parts of Alaq, Muzzammil, Muddathir, etc.

Theme

This Surah is in fact a prayer which Allah has taught to all those who want to make a study of His book. It has been placed at the very beginning of the book to teach this lesson to the reader: if you sincerely want to benefit from the Quran, you should offer this prayer to the Lord of the Universe.

This preface is meant to create a strong desire in the heart of the reader to seek guidance from the Lord of the Universe, Who alone can grant it. Thus Al Fatihah indirectly teaches that the best thing for a man is to pray for guidance to the straight path, to study the Quran with the mental attitude of a seeker- after-truth and to recognize the fact that the Lord of the Universe is the source of all knowledge. He should, therefore, begin the study of the Quran with a prayer to him for guidance.

From this theme, it becomes clear that the real relation between Al Fatihah and the Quran is not that of an introduction to a book but that of a prayer and its answer. Al Fatihah is the prayer from the servant and the Quran is the answer from the Master to his prayer. The servant prays to Allah to show him guidance and the Master places the whole of the Quran before him in answer to his prayer, as if to say, "This is the Guidance you begged from Me."

Surah Al-Baqara:

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

Name

Why the name Al-Baqarah?

Al-Baqarah (the Cow) has been so named from the story of the Cow occurring in this Surah (vv. 67-73). It has not, however, been used as a title to indicate the subject of the Surah. It will, therefore, be as wrong to

translate the name Al-Baqarah into "The Cow" or "The Heifer" as to translate any English name, say Baker, Rice, Wolf etc., into their equivalents in other languages or vice versa, because this would imply that the Surah dealt with the subject of "The Cow". Many more Surahs of the Quran have been named in the same way because no comprehensive words exist in Arabic (in spite of its' richness) to denote the wide scope of the subject discussed in them. As a matter of fact all human languages suffer from the same limitation.

Sequence

Though it is a Madani Surah, it follows naturally a Makki Surah Al-Fatihah, which ended with the prayer: "Show us the straight way". It begins with the answer to that prayer, "This is the Book (that) . . .is guidance. . ."

The greater part of Al-Baqarah was revealed during the first two years of the Holy Prophet's life at Al-Madinah. The smaller part which was revealed at a later period has been included in this Surah because its contents are closely related to those dealt with in this Surah. For instance, the verses prohibiting interest were revealed during the last period of the Holy prophet's life but have been inserted in this Surah. For the same reason, the last verses (284-286) of this Surah which were revealed at Makkah before the migration of the Holy Prophet to Al-Madinah have also been included in it.

Historical Background

In order to understand the meaning of this Surah, we should know its historical background:

At Makkah the Quran generally addressed the mushrik Quraish who were ignorant of Islam, but at Al- Madinah it was also concerned with the Jews who were acquainted with the creed of the Unity of Allah, Prophet-hood, Revelation, the Hereafter and angels. They also professed to believe in the

law which was revealed by Allah to their Prophet Moses (Allah's peace be upon him), and in principle, their way was the same (Islam) that was being taught by Prophet Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him). But they had strayed away from it during the centuries of degeneration and had adopted many un-Islamic creeds, rites and customs of which there was no mention and for which there was no sanction in the Torah. Not only this : they had tampered with the Torah by inserting their own explanations and interpretations into its text. They had distorted even that part of the Word of God which had remained intact in their Scriptures and taken out of it the real spirit of true religion and were now clinging to a lifeless frame of rituals. Consequently their beliefs, their morals and their conduct had gone to the lowest depths of degeneration. The pity is that they were not only satisfied with their condition but loved to cling to it. Besides this, they had no intention or inclination to accept any kind of reform. So they became bitter enemies of those who came to teach them the Right Way and did their worst to defeat every such effort. Though they were originally Muslims, they had swerved from the real Islam and made innovations and alterations in it and had fallen victims to hair splitting and sectarianism. They had forgotten and forsaken Allah and begun to serve mammon. So much so that they had even given up their original name "Muslim" and adopted the name "Jew" instead, and made religion the sole monopoly of the children of Israel.

This was their religious condition when the Holy Prophet went to Al-Madinah and invited the Jews to the true religion. That is why more than one third of this Surah has been addressed to the children of Israel. A critical review of their history, their moral degeneration and their religious perversions has been made; side by side with this the high standard of morality and the fundamental principles of the pure religion have been put forward in order to bring out clearly the nature of the degeneration of the community of a prophet when it goes astray and to draw clear lines of demarcation between real piety and formalism, and the essentials and non-essentials of the true religion.

At Makkah Islam was mainly concerned with the propagation of its fundamental principles and the moral training of its followers. But after the

migration of the Holy Prophet to Al-Madinah, where Muslims had come to settle from all over Arabia and where a tiny Islamic State had been set up with the help of the Ansar (local supporters), naturally the Quran had to turn its attention to the social, cultural, economic, political and legal problems as well. This accounts for the difference between the themes of the surahs revealed at Makkah and those at Al-Madinah. Accordingly about half of this Surah deals with those principles and regulations which are essential for the integration and solidarity of a community and for the solution of its problems.

After the migration to Al-Madinah, the struggle between Islam and un-Islam had also entered a new phase. Before this the Believers, who propagated Islam among their own clans and tribes, had to face its opponents at their own risk. But the conditions had changed at Al-Madinah, where Muslims from all parts of Arabia had come and settled as one community, and had established an independent city state. Here it became a struggle for the survival of the Community itself, for the whole of non- Muslim Arabia was bent upon and united in crushing it totally. Hence the following instructions, upon which depended not only its success but it's very survival, were revealed in this Surah:

1. The Community should work with the utmost zeal to propagate its ideology and win over to its side the greatest possible number of people.
2. It should so expose its opponents as to leave no room for doubt in the mind of any sensible person that they were adhering to an absolutely wrong position.
3. It should infuse in its members (the majority of whom were homeless and indigent and surrounded on all sides by enemies) that courage and fortitude which is so indispensable to their very existence in the adverse circumstances in which they were struggling and to prepare them to face these boldly.
4. It should also keep them ready and prepared to meet any armed menace, which might come from any side to suppress and crush their ideology, and to oppose it tooth and nail without minding the overwhelming numerical strength and the material resources of its enemies

5. It should also create in them that courage which is needed for the eradication of evil ways and for the establishment of the Islamic Way instead.

That is why Allah has revealed in this Surah such instructions as may help achieve all the above mentioned objects.

During this period, a new type of "Muslims," munafiqin (hypocrites), had begun to appear. Though signs of duplicity had been noticed during the last days at Makkah, they took a different shape at Al-Madinah. At Makkah there were some people who professed Islam to be true but were not prepared to abide by the consequences of this profession and to sacrifice their worldly interests and relations and bear the afflictions which inevitably follow the acceptance of this creed. But at Al-Madinah different kinds of munafiqin (hypocrites) began to appear. There were some who had entered the Islamic fold merely to harm it from within. There were others who were surrounded by Muslims and, therefore, had become "Muslims" to safeguard their worldly interests. They, therefore, continued to have relations with the enemies so that if the latter became successful, their interests should remain secure. There were still others who had no strong conviction of the truth of Islam but had embraced it along with their clans. Lastly, there were those who were intellectually convinced of the truth of Islam but did not have enough moral courage to give up their former traditions, superstitions and personal ambitions and live up to the Islamic moral standards and make sacrifice in its way.

At the time of the revelation of Al-Baqarah, all sorts of hypocrites had begun to appear. Allah has, therefore, briefly pointed out their characteristics here. Afterwards when their evil characteristics and mischievous deeds became manifest, Allah sent detailed instructions about them.

Theme: Guidance

This Surah is an invitation to the Divine Guidance and all the stories, incidents etc., revolve round this central theme. As this Surah has

particularly been addressed to the Jews, many historical events have been cited from their own traditions to admonish and advise them that their own good lies in accepting the Guidance revealed to the Holy Prophet. They should, therefore, be the first to accept it because it was basically the same that was revealed to Prophet Moses (Allah's peace be upon him).

Topics and their Interconnection

These introductory verses declare the Quran to be the Book of Guidance: enunciate the articles of the Faith -- belief in Allah, Prophethood and Life-after-death; divide mankind into three main groups with regard to its acceptance or rejection -- Believers, disbelievers and hypocrites. **1 - 20**

Allah invites mankind to accept the Guidance voluntarily and to submit to Him, the Lord and the Creator of the Universe and to believe in the Quran, His Guidance, and in the Life-after-death. **21 - 29**

The story of the appointment of Adam as Allah's Vicegerent on Earth, of his life in the Garden, of his falling a prey to the temptations of Satan, of his repentance and its acceptance, has been related to show to mankind (Adam's offspring), that the only right thing for them is to accept and follow the Guidance. This story also shows that the Guidance of Islam is the same that was given to Adam and that it is the original religion of mankind. **30 - 39**

In this portion invitation to the Guidance has particularly been extended to the children of Israel and their past and present attitude has been criticized to show that the cause of their degradation was their deviation from the Guidance. **40 - 120**

The Jews have been exhorted to follow Prophet Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) who had come with the same Guidance and who was a descendant and follower of Prophet Abraham whom they highly honored as their ancestor, and professed to follow as a prophet. The story of the

building of the Ka`abah by him has been mentioned because it was going to be made the qiblah of the Muslim Community. **121 - 141**

In this portion, the declaration of the change of qiblah from the Temple (Jerusalem) to the Ka`abah (Makkah) has been made as a symbol of the change of leadership from the children of Israel to the Muslim Community, which has also been fore-warned to guard against those transgressions against the Guidance that had led to the deposition of the Jews. **142 - 152**

In this portion practical measures have been prescribed to enable the Muslims to discharge the heavy responsibilities of the leadership that had been entrusted to them for the promulgation of Guidance. Salat, Fast, Zakat, Haj and Jihad have been prescribed for the moral training of the Ummat. The Believers have been exhorted to obey authority, to be just, to fulfill pledges, to observe treaties, to spend wealth etc., in the way of Allah. Laws, rules and regulations have been laid down for their organization, cohesion and conduct of day-to-day life and for the solution of social, economic, political and international problems; on the other hand, drinking, gambling, lending money on interest etc., have been prohibited to keep the Ummat safe from disintegration. In between these, the basic articles of the Faith have been reiterated at suitable places, for these alone can enable and support one to stick to the Guidance. **153 – 251**



Taraveeh: Second Night

Surah Al-Baqara Continues:

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

These verses serve as an introduction to the prohibition of lending money on interest. The true conception of Allah, Revelation and Life-after-death has been emphasized to keep alive the sense of accountability. The stories of Prophet Abraham (Allah's peace be upon him) and of the one who woke up after a sleep of hundred years have been related to show that Allah is All-Powerful and is able to raise the dead and call them to account. The Believers, therefore, should keep this fact in view and refrain from taking interest on money. **252 - 260**

The theme of **153 - 251** has been resumed and the Believers have been exhorted to spend in the way of Allah in order to please Him alone. In contrast to this, they have been warned against the evils of lending money on interest. Instructions have also been given for the honest conduct of day-to-day business transactions. **261 - 283**

Surah Al-i'Imran:

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

Name

This Surah takes its name from v. 33. Al-i-Imran, like the names of many other surahs, is merely a name to distinguish it from other surahs and does not imply that the family of Imran has been discussed in it.

The Period of Revelation

This Surah consists of four discourses:

- The first discourse (vv. 1-32) was probably revealed soon after the Battle of Badr.
- The second discourse (vv. 33-63) was revealed in 9 A. H. on the occasion of the visit of the deputation from the Christians of Najran.
- The third discourse (vv. 64-120) appears to have been revealed immediately after the first one.
- The fourth discourse (vv. 121-200) was revealed after the Battle of Uhud.

Subject

Though these discourses were revealed at different periods and on different occasions, they are so inter-linked and so inter-connected with regard to their aim, object and central theme that they make together one continuous whole. This Surah has been especially addressed to two groups: the people of the Book (the Jews and the Christians) and the followers of Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him).

The message has been extended to the Jews and the Christians in continuation of the invitation in Al-Baqarah, in which they have been admonished for their erroneous beliefs and evil morals and advised to accept, as a remedy, the Truth of the Quran. They have been told here that Muhammad (Allah's peace be, upon him) taught the same right way of life that had been preached by their own Prophets; that it alone was the Right Way, the way of Allah; hence any deviation from it will be wrong even according to their own Scriptures.

The second group, the Muslims, who had been declared to be the best Community in Al-Baqarah and appointed torch-bearers of the Truth and entrusted with the responsibility of reforming the world, have been given additional instructions in continuation of those given in the preceding Surah. The Muslims have been warned to learn a lesson from the religious and moral degeneration of the former communities and to refrain from treading in their footsteps. Instructions have also been given about their formative work they had to perform. Besides this, they have been taught how to deal with the people of the Book and the hypocrites who were putting different kinds of hindrances in the way of Allah. Above all, they have been warned to guard against those weaknesses which had come to the surface in the Battle Uhud.

Background

The following is the background of the Surah:

1. The Believers had met with all sorts of trials and hardships about which they had been forewarned in Al- Baqarah. Though they had come out victorious in the Battle of Badr, they were not out of danger yet. Their victory had aroused the enmity of all those powers in Arabia which were opposed to the Islamic Movement. Signs of threatening storms had begun to appear on all sides and the Muslims were in a perpetual state of fear and anxiety. It looked as if the whole Arabian world around the tiny state of Al- Madinah -- which was no more than a village state at

that time -- was bent upon blotting out its very existence. This state of war was also adversely affecting its economy, which had already been badly disturbed by the influx of the Muslim refugees from Makkah.

2. Then there was the disturbing problem of the Jewish clans who lived in the suburbs of Al-Madinah. They were discarding the treaties of alliance they had made with the Holy Prophet after his migration from Makkah. So much so that on the occasion of the Battle of Badr, these people of the Book sympathized with the evil aims of the idolaters, in spite of the fact that their fundamental articles of the Faith -- Oneness of Allah, Prophet hood , Life-after- death -- were the same as those of the Muslims. After the Battle of Badr, they openly began to incite the Quraish and other Arab clans to wreak their vengeance on the Muslims. Thus those Jewish clans set aside their centuries-old friendly and neighborly relations with the people of Al-Madinah. At last when their mischievous actions and breaches of treaties became unbearable, the Holy Prophet attacked the Bani- Qainu-qa'a, the most mischievous of all the other Jewish clans who had conspired with the hypocrites of Al-Madinah and the idolatrous Arab clans to encircle the Believers on all sides. The magnitude of the peril might be judged from the fact that even the life of the Holy Prophet himself was always in danger. Therefore his Companions slept in their armors during that period and kept watch at night to guard against any sudden attack, and whenever the Holy Prophet happened to be out of sight even for a short while, they would at once set out in search of him.
3. This incitement by the Jews added fuel to the fire which was burning in the hearts of the Quraish and they began to make preparations to avenge the defeat they had suffered at Badr. A year after this an army of 3,000 strong marched out of Makkah to invade Al-Madinah and a battle took place at the foot of Mount Uhud. The Holy Prophet came out of Al-Madinah with one thousand men to meet the enemy. While they were

marching to the battle-field, three hundred hypocrites deserted the army and returned to Al- Madinah, but there still remained a small band of hypocrites among the seven hundred who accompanied the Holy Prophet. They played their part and did their worst to create mischief and chaos in the ranks of the Believers during the Battle. This was the first clear indication of the fact that within the fold of the Muslim Community there was quite a large number of saboteurs who were always ready to conspire with the external enemies to harm their own brethren.

4. Though the devices of the hypocrites had played a great part in the setback at Uhud, the weaknesses of the Muslims themselves contributed no less to it. And it was but natural that the Muslims should show signs of moral weakness for they were a new community which had only recently been formed on a new ideology and had not as yet got a thorough moral training. Naturally in this second hard test of their physical and moral strength, some weaknesses came to the surface. That is why a detailed review of the Battle of Uhud was needed to warn the Muslims of their shortcomings and to issue instructions for their reform. It should also be noted that this review of the Battle is quite different from the reviews that are usually made by generals on similar occasions.

Subject: Guidance

This Surah is the sequel to, Al-Baqarah and the invitation therein is continued to the people of the Book. In Al- Baqarah the Jews were pointedly invited to accept the Guidance and in this Surah the Christians have particularly been admonished to give up their erroneous beliefs and accept the Guidance of the Quran. At the same time, the Muslims have

been instructed to nourish the virtues that may enable them to carry out their obligations and spread the Divine Guidance.

Topics and their Interconnection

In these introductory verses, the fundamental truths about Allah, Revelation and Life-after-death have been reiterated to serve as fitting preliminaries, leading to the main topics discussed in the Surah. **1 – 32**



Taraveeh: Third Night

Surah Al-i'Imran Continues:

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

This discourse is particularly addressed to the Christians and invites them to accept Islam. It clears Jesus and his mother not only from the stigma maliciously set upon them by the Jews, but also refutes the erroneous Christian creed of the Divinity of Jesus which had been formulated because of his miraculous birth. For this purpose the instances of John the Baptist to a barren woman and an extremely aged man and that of Adam without father and mother have been cited to show that there is nothing in the birth of Jesus without a father to entitle him to Divinity. **33 - 65**

In these verses the people of the Book, the Jews, have been invited to give up their sinister ways and accept the divine Guidance. At the same time the Muslims have been warned to be on their guard against their malicious intentions, erroneous ways and absurd objections. **66 - 101**

The Muslims have been instructed to learn lessons from the history of the people of the Book and also to guard themselves against their machinations, and to prepare and train themselves to establish virtue and eradicate evil. **102 - 120**

In this portion, a review of the Battle of Uhud has been made to teach and reassure the Muslims that the machinations of their enemies could do them no harm, if they would practice restraint and fortitude and have fear of Allah. It has been pointed out that the set-back they had suffered was due to the lack of some moral qualities and the existence of some evils. Since the main cause of the defeat was the greed of the archers, guarding the pass, the taking of interest has been prohibited to eradicate this evil. **121 - 175**

The main theme of the verses **109 - 120** has been resumed to reassure and encourage the Muslims against the dangerous plots of their enemies. **175 - 189**

This is the conclusion of the Surah and is not directly connected with the verses immediately preceding it but with the theme of the Surah as a whole. **190 - 200**



Taraveeh: Fourth Night

Surah An-Nisaa:

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

Period of Revelation

This Surah comprises several discourses which were revealed on different occasions during the period ranging probably between the end of A. H. 3 and the end of A. H. 4 or the beginning of A. H. 5. Although it is difficult to determine the exact dates of their revelations, yet it is possible to assign to them a fairly correct period with the help of the Commandments and the events mentioned therein and the Traditions concerning them. A few instances are given below by way of illustration:

1. We know that the instructions about the division of inheritance of the martyrs and for the safeguard of the rights of the orphans were sent down after the Battle of Uhud in which 70 Muslims were killed. Then naturally the question of the division of the inheritance of the martyrs

and the safeguard of the rights of their orphans arose in many families at Al-Madinah. From this we conclude that vv. 1 -28 were revealed on that occasion.

2. We learn from the Traditions that the Commandment about salat during wartime was given on the occasion of Zat-ur-Riq'a, an expedition which took place in A. H. 4. From this we conclude that the discourse containing v. 102 was revealed on that occasion.
3. The last warning (v. 47) to the Jews was given before the Banu Nadir were exiled from Al-Madinah in Rabi'-ulAwwal, A. H. 4. From this it may safely be concluded that the discourse containing v. 47 must have been revealed some time before that date.
4. The permission about tayammum (the performance of ablutions with pure dust, in case no water be available) was given during the Bani-al-Mustaliq expedition, which took place in A. H. 5.. Therefore the probable period of the revelation of the discourse containing v. 43 was A. H. 5.

Topics and Their Background

Let us now consider the social and historical considerations of the period in order to understand the Surah. All the discourses in this Surah deal with three main problems which confronted the Holy Prophet at the time. First of all, he was engaged in bringing about an all round development of the Islamic Community that had been formed at the time of his migration to Al-Madinah. For this purpose he was introducing new moral, cultural, social, economic and political ways in place of the old ones of the pre-Islamic period. The second thing that occupied his attention and efforts was the bitter struggle that was going on with the mushrik Arabs, the Jewish clans and the hypocrites who were opposing tooth and nail his mission of reform. Above all he had to propagate Islam in the face of the bitter opposition of these powers of evil with a view to capturing more and more minds and hearts.

Accordingly, detailed instructions have been given for the consolidation and strengthening of the Islamic Community in continuation of those given in Al-Baqarah. Principles for the smooth running of family life have been laid down and ways of settling family disputes have been taught. Rules have been prescribed for marriage and rights of wife and husband have been apportioned fairly and equitably. The status of women in the society has been determined and the declaration of the rights of orphans has been made laws and regulations have been laid down for the division of inheritance, and instructions have been given to reform economic affairs. The foundation of the penal code has been laid down drinking has been prohibited, and instructions have been given for cleanliness and purity. The Muslims have been taught the kind of relations good men should have with their Allah and fellow men. Instructions have been given for the maintenance of discipline in the Muslim Community.

The moral and religious condition of the people of the Book has been reviewed to teach lessons to the Muslims and to forewarn them to refrain from following in their footsteps. The conduct of the hypocrites has been criticized and the distinctive features of hypocrisy and true faith have been clearly marked off to enable the Muslims to distinguish between the two.

In order to cope with the aftermath of the Battle of Uhud, Inspiring discourses were sent down to urge the Muslims to face the enemy bravely, for the defeat in the Battle had so emboldened the mushrik Arab clans and the neighboring Jews and the hypocrites at home that they were threatening the Muslims on all sides. At this critical juncture, Allah filled the Muslims with courage and gave them such instructions as were needed during that period of war clouds. In order to counteract the fearful rumors that were being spread by the hypocrites and the Muslims of weak faith, they were asked to make a thorough enquiry into them and to inform the responsible people about them. Then they were experiencing some difficulties in offering their salat during the expeditions to some places where no water was available for performing their ablutions etc. In such

cases they were allowed to cleanse themselves with pure earth and to shorten the salat or to offer the "Salat of Fear", when they were faced with danger. Instructions were also given for the solution of the puzzling problem of those Muslims who were scattered among the unbelieving Arab clans and were often involved in war. They were asked to migrate to Al-Madinah, the abode of Islam.

This Surah also deals with the case of Bani Nadir who were showing a hostile and menacing attitude, in spite of the peace treaties they had made with the Muslims. They were openly siding with the enemies of Islam and hatching plots against the Holy Prophet and the Muslim Community even at Al-Madinah itself. They were taken to task for their inimical behavior and given a final warning to change their attitude, and were at last exiled from Al-Madinah on account of their misconduct.

The problem of the hypocrites, who had become very troublesome at that time, was involving the Believers in difficulties. Therefore they were divided into different categories to enable the Muslims to deal with them appropriately.

Clear instructions were also given regarding the attitude they should adopt towards the non-belligerent clans. The most important thing needed at that time was to prepare the Muslims for the bitter struggle with the opponents of Islam. For this purpose greatest importance was attached to their character building, for it was obvious that the small Muslim Community could only come out successful, nay, survive, if the Muslims possessed high moral character. They were, therefore, enjoined to adopt the highest moral qualities and were severely criticized whenever any moral weakness was detected in them.

Though this Surah mainly deals with the moral and social reforms, yet due attention has been paid to propagation of Islam. On the one hand, the superiority of the Islamic morality and culture has been established over

that of the Jews, Christians and mushriks; on the other hand, their wrong religious conceptions, their wrong morality and their evil acts have been criticized to prepare the ground for inviting them to the way of the Truth.

Subject: Consolidation of the Islamic Community

The main object of this Surah is to teach the Muslims the ways that unite a people and make them firm and strong. Introductions for the stability of family, which is the nucleus of community have been given. Then they have been urged to prepare themselves for defense. Side by side with these, they have been taught the importance of the propagation of Islam. Above all, the importance of the highest moral character in the scheme of consolidation of the Community has been impressed.

Topics and their Interconnection

Just, fair and equitable laws and regulations for the smooth running of family life have been laid down for the husband and wife. Detailed instructions have been given for the division of inheritance and due regard has been paid to the rights of orphans. **1 - 35**

In order to inculcate the right spirit for the observance of rules and regulations, the Muslims have been enjoined to show generosity to all around them and to be free from meanness, selfishness, stinginess of mind, because this is essential for the consolidation of the Communities and helpful for the propagation of Islam. **36 - 42**

The ways of the purification of mind and body for the offering of Salat have been taught because it plays the most important part in every scheme of moral and social reform. **43**

After moral preparation, instructions for defence have been given. First of all, the Muslims have been warned to be on their guard against the cunning machinations and vile practices of the local Jews who were hostile to the

New Movement. This caution was necessary for removing some possible misunderstanding that might have arisen on account of the pre-Islamic alliance between the people of Al-Madinah and the Jews. **44 - 57**

Then they have been enjoined to place their trusts and offices of trust in the custody of honest and qualified persons, and to do what is just and right, and to obey Allah and His Messenger and those among themselves entrusted with the conduct of their affairs and to turn to Allah and His Messenger for the settlement of their disputes. As such an attitude and behavior alone can ensure consolidation; they have been strongly warned that any deviation from this path will lead to their disintegration. **58 - 72**

After this pre-requisite, they have been exhorted to make preparation for defense and to fight bravely for the cause of Islam, without showing any kind of cowardice or weakness. They have also been warned to be on their guard against hypocrites. A line of demarcation has been drawn to distinguish the intentional shirkers from the helpless devotees. **73 - 100**

Here again instructions have been given for the offering of Salat during military campaigns and actual fighting. This is to impress the importance of Salat even at the time of fear and danger. **101 - 103**

Before proceeding on to the next topic, the Muslims have been exhorted to persevere in their fight without showing any kind of weakness. **104**

In order to make the Islamic Community firm and strong for defense, the Muslims have been enjoined to observe the highest standard of justice. The Muslims are required to deal out strict justice even in case of the enemy, with whom they might be involved in war. They should also settle disputes between husband and wife with justice. In order to ensure this, they should keep their beliefs and deeds absolutely free from every kind of impurity and should become the standard bearers of justice. **105 - 135**

Resuming the theme of defense, the Muslims have been warned to be on their guard against their enemies. They have been admonished to take necessary precautions against the machinations of the hypocrites and the unbelievers and the people of the Book. As belief in Allah, and Revelation and Life-after-death is the only safeguard against every kind of enemy, they should sincerely believe in and follow His Messenger, Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him). **136 - 175**



Taraveeh: Fifth Night

Surah An-Nisaa:

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

Though this verse also deals with the family laws contained in verses **1 - 35**, it has been added as a supplement at the end of this Surah because it was revealed long after An-Nisa was being recited as a complete Surah. **176**

Surah Al-Maida:

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

Name

This Surah takes its' name from verse 112 in which the word mai'dah occurs. Like the names of many other surahs, this name has no special

relation to the subject of the Surah but has been used merely as a symbol to distinguish it from other surahs.

Period of Revelation

The theme of this Surah indicates, and traditions support it, that it was revealed after the treaty of Hudaibiyah at the end of 6 A. H. or in the beginning of 7 A. H. That is why it deals with those problems that arose from this treaty.

The Holy Prophet with 1400 Muslims went to Makkah in Zil-Qaadah 6 A. H. to perform Úmrah. but the Quraish spurred by their enmity, prevented him from its performance, though it was utterly against all the ancient religious traditions of Arabia. After a good deal of hard and harsh negotiations, a treaty was concluded at Hudaibiyah according to which it was agreed that he could perform Úmrah the following year. That was a very appropriate occasion for teaching the Muslims the right way of performing a pilgrimage to Makkah with the true Islamic dignity, and enjoining that they should not prevent the disbelievers from performing pilgrimage to Makkah as retaliation for their misbehavior. This was not difficult at all as many disbelievers had to pass through Muslim territory on their way to Makkah. This is why the introductory verses deal with the things connected with pilgrimage to Makkah and the same theme has been resumed in vv. 101-104. The other topics of this Surah also appear to belong to the same period.

The continuity of the subject shows that most probably the whole of the surah was revealed as a single discourse at one and the same time. It is also possible that some of its verses were revealed at a later period and inserted in this Surah at different places where they fitted in. But there appears to be not the least gap anywhere in the surah to show that it might have comprised two or more discourses.

Occasion of Revelation

This Surah was revealed to suit the requirements of the changed conditions which were now different from those prevailing at the time of the revelation of Al-i-'Imran and An-Nisa. Then the shock of the set-back at Uhud had made the very surroundings of Al-Madinah dangerous for the Muslims, but now Islam had become an invulnerable power and the Islamic State had extended to Najd on the east, to the Red Sea on the west, to Syria on the north and to Makkah on the south. This set-back which the Muslims had suffered at Uhud had not broken their determination. It had rather spurred them to action. As a result of their continuous struggle and unparalleled sacrifices, the power of the surrounding clans, within a radius of 200 miles or so, had been broken. The Jewish menace which was always threatening Al-Madinah had been totally removed and the Jews in the other parts of Hijaz had become tributaries of the State of Al-Madinah. The last effort of the Quraish to suppress Islam had been thwarted in the Battle of the Ditch. After this, it had become quite obvious to the Arabs that no power could suppress the Islamic movement. Now Islam was not merely a creed which ruled over the minds and hearts of the people but had also become a State which dominated over every aspect of the life of the people who lived within its boundaries. This had enabled the Muslims to live their lives without let or hindrance, in accordance with their beliefs.

Another development had also taken place during this period. The Muslim civilization had developed in accordance with the principles of Islam and the Islamic viewpoint. This civilization was quite distinct from all other civilizations in all its details, and distinguished the Muslims clearly from the non Muslims in their moral, social and cultural behavior. Mosques had been built in all territories, prayer had been established and Imam (leader) for every habitation and clan had been appointed. The Islamic civil and criminal laws had been formulated in detail and were being enforced through the Islamic courts. New and reformed ways of trade and commerce

had taken the place of the old ones. The Islamic laws of marriage and divorce, of the segregation of the sexes, of the punishment for adultery and calumny and the like had cast the social life of the Muslims in a special mould. Their social behavior, their conversation, their dress, their very mode of living, their culture etc., had taken a definite shape of its own. As a result of all these changes, the non-Muslims could not expect that the Muslims would ever return to their former fold.

Before the treaty of Hudaibiyah, the Muslims were so engaged in their struggle with the non-Muslim Quraish that they got no time to propagate their message. This hindrance was removed by what was apparently a defeat but in reality a victory at Hudaibiyah. This gave the Muslims not only peace in their own territory but also respite to spread their message in the surrounding territories. Accordingly the Holy Prophet addressed letters to the rulers of Iran, Egypt and the Roman Empire and the chiefs of Arabia, inviting them to Islam. At the same time the missionaries of Islam spread among the clans and tribes and invited them to accept the Divine Way of Allah. These were the circumstances at the time when Al-Ma'idah was revealed.

Topics

It deals with the following three main topics:

1. Commandments and instructions about the religious, cultural and political life of the Muslims.

In this connection, a code of ceremonial rules concerning the journey for Haj has been prescribed; the observance of strict respect for the emblems of Allah has been enjoined; and any kind of obstruction or interference with the pilgrims to the Kaabah has been prohibited. Definite rules and regulations have been laid down for what is lawful and unlawful in the matter of food, and self-imposed foolish restrictions of the pre-Islamic age have been abolished. Permission has been given to take food with the

people of the Book and to marry their women. Rules and regulations for the performance of Wudu (ablutions) and bath and purification and Tayammum (ablutions with dust) have been prescribed. Punishment for rebellion, disturbance of peace and theft have been specified. Drinking and gambling have absolutely been made unlawful. Expiation for the breaking of oath has been laid down and a few more things have been added to the law of evidence.

2. Admonition to the Muslims.

Now that the Muslims had become a ruling body, it was feared that power might corrupt them. At this period of great trial, Allah had admonished them over and over again to stick to justice and to guard against the wrong behavior of their predecessors, the people of the Book. They have been enjoined to remain steadfast to the Covenant of obedience to Allah and His Messenger, and to observe strictly their commands and prohibitions in order to save themselves from the evil consequences which befell the Jews and the Christians who had violated them. They have been instructed to observe the dictates of the Holy Quran in the conduct of all their affairs and warned against the attitude of hypocrisy.

3. Admonition to the Jews and the Christians.

As the power of the Jews had been totally weakened and almost all their habitations in north Arabia had come under the rule of the Muslims, they have been warned again about their wrong attitude and invited to follow the Right Way. At the same time a detailed invitation has also been extended to the Christians. The errors of their creeds have been clearly pointed out and they have been admonished to accept the guidance of the Holy Prophet. . Incidentally, it may be noted that no direct invitation has been made to the Majusis and idolaters living in the adjoining countries, because there was no need for a separate address for them as their condition had already been covered by the addresses to the mushrik Arabs.

Subject: Consolidation of the Islamic Community

In continuation of the instructions about the consolidation of the Islamic Community given in Surah AN-NISA, the Muslims have been directed to observe and fulfill all their obligations: further regulations have been prescribed to train the Muslims for that purpose.

They have also been particularly warned as rulers to guard against the corruption, of power and directed to observe the Covenant of the Quran. They have also been exhorted to learn lessons from the failings of their predecessors, the Jews and the Christians, who in their turn have been admonished to give up their wrong attitudes towards the Right Way and accept the guidance taught by Prophet Muhammad (God's peace be upon him).

Topics and their Interconnection

The Believers have been exhorted to fulfill scrupulously all of their obligations and follow the regulations prescribed by the Divine Law about food, sex, Salat, justice, etc. **1 - 10**

The Muslims have been warned to guard against the errors of their predecessors; they should follow the Right Path and avoid the bad example of the Jews and the Christians, who broke their Covenants and went astray into evil ways. They, in their turn, have been admonished to give up their wrong ways and accept Islam. **11 - 26**

The story of the two sons of Adam has been related to reproach the Jews for their plot to kill the Holy Prophet and his Companions. (v. 11 & E.N. 30). The story has also been used to emphasize the sanctity of human life. **27 - 32**

To achieve this object, punishments have been prescribed for those who create chaos in the Islamic State, and the Believers have been urged to

exert their utmost to establish the Right Way; the sanctity of property has also been emphasized. **33 - 40**

The Holy Prophet (and through him the Muslims) has been reassured that he should not mind the enmity, the evil designs and the machinations of the Jews, but continue exerting his utmost to establish the Right Way in accordance with the Guidance of the Quran; for nothing better could be expected from those who had forsaken their own Torah. He should deal with the Christians likewise, for they, too, had forsaken their Gospel. **41 - 50**

In view of the degenerate moral condition of the Jews and the Christians, the Believers have been warned not to make them their friends and confidants. Likewise they should be on their guard against the evil designs of the hypocrites, the disbelievers and the like and should rely on the true Believers alone. The people of the Book have, in their turn been exhorted to give up their enmity and adopt the right attitude, for they cannot get salvation without this. **51 - 69**

The theme of the corruptions of the Jews and Christians has been resumed. The Christians especially have been reproved for their errors in regard to the doctrine of Tauhid. At the same time they have been preferred to the hard hearted Jews, for there are among them some who are more inclined towards the Truth. **70 - 86**

In this portion of the Surah, further regulations about the lawful and the unlawful, in addition to those contained in vv. 1 - 10, have been given. **87 - 108**

At the end of the Surah, the mention of the conversation that will take place between Allah and His Prophets on the Day of Judgment, has been made for the benefit of the erring people to serve as a corrective to their creeds. The conversation with Prophet Christ has been cited as a specimen to warn particularly the Christians, who profess to believe in him, and

generally all those people who put false hopes in their Prophets, etc. **109 - 119**

Conclusion: "O man-kind! The Sovereignty of the heavens and the earth belongs to Allah: therefore you should become His true servants and fear Him, for He has full powers over everything." **120**



Taraveeh: Sixth Night

Surah Al-An'am:

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

Name

This Surah takes its name from vv. 136, 138 and 139 in which some superstitious beliefs of the idolatrous Arabs concerning the lawfulness of some cattle (an'am) and the unlawfulness of some others have been refuted.

Period of Revelation

According to a tradition of Ibn Abbas, the whole of the Surah was revealed at one sitting at Makkah. Asma, a daughter of Yazid and a first cousin of

Hadrat Mu'az-bin Jabl, says, "During the revelation of this Surah, the Holy Prophet was riding on a she-camel and I was holding her nose-string. The she-camel began to feel the weight so heavily that it seemed as if her bones would break under it." We also learn from other traditions that the Holy Prophet dictated the whole of the Surah the same night that it was revealed.

Its subject-matter clearly shows that it must have been revealed during the last year of the Holy Prophet's life at Makkah. The tradition of Asma, daughter of Yazid, also confirms this. As she belonged to the Ansar and embraced Islam after the migration of the Holy Prophet to Yathrab, her visit to the Holy Prophet at Makkah must have taken place during the last year of his life there. For before this, his relations with those people were not so intimate that a woman from there might have come to visit him at Makkah.

Occasion of Revelation

After determining the period of its revelation, it is easier to visualize the background of the Surah. Twelve years had passed since the Holy Prophet had been inviting the people to Islam. The antagonism and persecution by the Quraish had become most savage and brutal, and the majority of the Muslims had to leave their homes and migrate to Habash (Abyssinia). Above all, the two great supporters of the Holy Prophet, Abu Talib and Hadrat Khadijah, were no more to help and give strength to him. Thus he was deprived of all the worldly support. But in spite of this, he carried on his mission in the teeth of opposition. As a result of this, on the one hand, all the good people of Makkah and the surrounding clans gradually began to accept Islam ; on the other hand, the community as a whole, was bent upon obduracy and rejection. Therefore, if anyone showed any inclination towards Islam, he was subjected to taunts and derision, physical violence and social boycott. It was in these dark circumstances that a ray of hope gleamed from Yathrab, where Islam began to spread freely by the efforts of some influential people of Aus and Khazraj, who had embraced Islam at

Makkah. This was a humble beginning in the march of Islam towards success and none could foresee at that time the great potentialities that lay hidden in it. For, to a casual observer, it appeared at that time as if Islam was merely a weak movement it had no material backing except the meager support of the Prophet's own family and of the few poor adherents of the Movement. Obviously the latter could not give much help because they themselves had been cast out by their own people who had become their enemies and were persecuting them.

Topics

These were the conditions, when this discourse was revealed. The main topics dealt with in this discourse may be divided under seven headings:

1. Refutation of shirk and invitation to the creed of Tauhid.
2. Enunciation of the doctrine of the "Life-after- death. "and refutation of the wrong notion that there was nothing beyond this worldly life.
3. Refutation of the prevalent superstitions.
4. Enunciation of the fundamental moral principles for the building up of the Islamic Society.
5. Answers to the objections raised against the person of the Holy Prophet and his mission.
6. Comfort and encouragement to the Holy Prophet and his followers who were at, that time in a state of anxiety and despondency because of the apparent failure of the mission.
7. Admonition, warning and threats to the disbelievers and opponents to give up their apathy and haughtiness. It must, however, be noted that the above topics have not been dealt with one by one under separate headings, but the discourse goes on as a continuous whole and these topics come under discussion over and over again in new and different ways.

The Background of Makki Surahs

As this is the first long Makki Surah in the order of the compilation of the Quran, it will be useful to explain the historical background of Makki Surahs in general, so that the reader may easily understand the Makki Surahs and our references to its different stages in connection with our commentary on them.

First of all, it should be noted that comparatively very little material is available in regard to the background of the revelation of Makki Surahs whereas the period of the revelation of all the Madani Surahs is known or can be determined with a little effort. There are authentic traditions even in regard to the occasions of the revelation of the majority of the verses. On the other hand, we do not have such detailed information regarding the Makki Surahs. There are only a few Surahs and verses which have authentic traditions concerning the time and occasion of their revelation. This is because the history of the Makki period had not been compiled in such detail as that of the Madani period. Therefore we have to depend on the internal evidence of these Surahs for determining the period of their revelation: for example, the topics they discuss, their subject matter, their style and the direct or indirect references to the events and the occasions of their revelation. Thus it is obvious that with the help of such evidence as this, we cannot say with precision that such and such Surah or verse was revealed on such and such an occasion. The most we can do is to compare the internal evidence of a Surah with the events of the life of the Holy Prophet at Makkah, and then come to a more or less correct conclusion as to what particular stage a certain Surah belongs to.

If we keep the above things in view, the history of the mission of the Holy Prophet at Makkah can be divided into four stages.

The first stage began with his appointment as a Messenger and ended with the proclamation of Prophet-hood three years later. During this period the Message was given secretly to some selected persons only, but the common people of Makkah were not aware of it.

The second stage lasted for two years after the proclamation of his Prophet-hood. It began with opposition by individuals: then by and by, it took the shape of antagonism, ridicule, derision,, accusation, abuse, and false propaganda then gangs were formed to persecute those Muslims who were comparatively poor, weak' and helpless.

The third stage lasted for about six years from the beginning of the persecution to the death of Abu Talib and Hadrat Khadijah in the tenth year of Prophet-hood. During this period, the persecution of the Muslims became' so savage and brutal that many of them were forced to migrate to Habash. Social and economic boycott was applied against the Holy Prophet and the members of his family, and those Muslims who continued to stay in Makkah were forced to take refuge in Shi'b-i-A'bi Talib which was besieged.

The fourth stage lasted for about three years from the tenth to the thirteenth year of Prophet-hood. This was a period of hard trials and grievous sufferings for the Holy Prophet and his followers. Life had become unendurable at Makkah and there appeared to be no place of refuge even outside it. So much so that when the Holy Prophet went to Ta'if, it offered no shelter or protection. Besides this, on the occasion of Haj, he would appeal to each and every Arab clan to accept his invitation to Islam but met with blank refusal from every quarter. At the same time, the people of Makkah were holding counsels 'to get rid of him by killing or imprisoning or banishing him from their city. It was at that most critical time that Allah opened for Islam the hearts of the Ansar of Yathrab where he migrated at their invitation.

Now that we have divided the life of the Holy Prophet at Makkah into four stages, it has become easier for us to tell, as far as possible, the particular stage in which a certain Makki Surah was revealed. This is because the Surahs belonging to a particular stage can be distinguished from those of the other stages with the help of their subject matter and style. Besides this, they also contain such references as throw light on the circumstances and events that form the background of their revelation. In the succeeding Makki Surahs, we will determine on the basis of the distinctive features of each stage, and point out in the Preface, the particular stage in which a certain Makki Surah was revealed.

Subject: Islamic Creed.

This Surah mainly discusses the different aspects of the major articles of the Islamic Creed: Tauhid, Life-after- death, Prophet-hood an' their practical application to human life. Side by side with this, it refutes the erroneous beliefs of the "opponents and answers their objections, warns and admonishes them and comforts the Holy Prophet and his followers, who were then suffering from persecution.

Of course, these themes have not been dealt with under separate heads but have been blended in an excellent manner.

Topics and their Interconnection

These verses are of introductory and admonitory nature. The disbelievers have been warned that if they do not accept the Islamic Creed and follow the 'Light' shown by the Revelation from the All-Knowing and All-Powerful Allah, they would go to the same doom as the former disbelievers did. Their arguments for rejecting the Prophet and the Revelation sent down to him have been refuted and a warning has been given to them that they should not be deluded by the respite that is being granted to them. **1 - 12**

These verses inculcate Tauhid, and refute shirk which is the greatest obstacle in the way of its acceptance. **13 - 24**

In these verses, a graphic scene of the life in the Hereafter has been depicted in order to warn the disbelievers of the consequences of the rejection of the Articles of Faith. **25 - 32**

Prophet-hood is the main theme which has been discussed from the point of view of the Holy Prophet, his Mission, the limitations of his powers, the attitude towards his followers and also from the point of view of the disbelievers. **33 - 73**

In continuation of the same theme, the story of Prophet Abraham has been related to bring home to the pagan Arabs that the Mission of Prophet Muhammad, which they were opposing, was the same as that of Prophet Abraham (Allah's peace be upon them). This line of argument was adopted because they considered themselves to be his followers, especially the Quraish who were proud of being his descendants as well. **74 - 90**

Another proof of his Prophet-hood is the Book, which has been sent down to him by Allah, for its teachings show the right guidance in regard to creed and practice. **91 - 108**

Divine restrictions have been contrasted with the superstitious restrictions of the pagan Arabs in order to show the striking differences between the two and thus prove the Quran to be a Revealed Book. **109 - 154**

The Jews, who were criticized in vv. 144 - 147 along with the pagan Arabs, have been urged to compare the teachings of the Quran with those of the Torah so that they might recognize their similarity and give up their lame excuses against it, and adopt its Guidance to escape the retribution on the Day of Resurrection. **155 - 160**

This is the conclusion of the discourse: the Holy Prophet has been instructed in a beautiful and forceful manner to proclaim fearlessly the articles of the Islamic Creed and their implications. **161 – 165**



Taraveeh: Seventh Night

Surah Al-A'raf:

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

Name

This Surah takes its name from vv. 46-47 in which mention of A'araf occurs.

Period of Revelation

A study of its contents clearly shows that the period of its revelation is about the same as that of Al-Anám, i. e., the last year of the Holy Prophet's life at Makkah, but it cannot be asserted with certainty which of these two was sent down earlier. Anyhow the manner of its admonition clearly indicates that it belongs to the same period. As both have the same

historical background the reader should keep in view the preface to Al-Anám.

Topics of Discussion

The principal subject of this surah is "invitation to the Divine Message sent down to Muhammad" (Allah's peace be upon him), which is couched in a warning. This is because the Messenger had spent a longtime in admonishing the people of Makkah without any tangible effect on them. Nay, they had turned a deaf ear to his message and become so obdurate and antagonistic that, in accordance with the Divine Design, the Messenger was going to be commanded to leave them and turn to other people,. That is why they are being admonished to accept the Message but, at the same time, they are being warned in strong terms of the consequences that followed the wrong attitude of the former people towards their Messengers. (Now that the Holy Prophet was going to" migrate from Makkah the concluding portion of the address has been directed towards the people of the Book with whom he was going to come into contact. This meant that the time of migration was coming near and the "invitation" was going to be extended to mankind in general, and was not to be confined to his own people in particular as before.

During the course of the address to the Jews, the consequences of their hypocritical conduct towards Prophethood have also been pointed out clearly, for they professed to believe in Prophet Moses but in practice opposed his teachings, disobeyed him and worshiped falsehood and consequently were afflicted with ignominy and disgrace.

At the end of the Surah, some instructions have been given to the Holy Prophet and his followers for carrying out the work of the propagation of Islam with wisdom. The most important of these is that they should show patience and exercise restraint in answer to the provocations of their opponents. Above all, they have been advised that under stress of the

excitement of feeling, they should not take any wrong step that might harm their cause.

Subject: Invitation to the Divine Message

Topics and their Interconnection

In this passage, the people have been invited to follow the Message sent down to them through Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) and warned of the consequences of its rejection. **1 - 10**

The story of Adam has been related with a view to warning his descendants against the evil devices of Satan who is ever ready to mislead them as he did in the case of Adam and Eve. **11 - 25**

This passage contains some Divine instructions, and contrasts these with Satan's instructions, and depicts a graphic picture of the results and the consequences of the two. **26 - 53**

As the Message has been sent down by Allah (Who is the Creator of the heavens and the earth and everything in them), it should be followed, for it is like the rain He sends down to give life to the dead earth. **54 - 58**

Events from the lives of some well-known Prophets -- Noah, Hud, Salih, Lot, Shu'aib, Moses (Allah's peace be upon them all) -- have been related to show the consequences of the rejection of the Message, and the addressees of Prophet Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) have been admonished to accept and follow the Message in order to escape perdition. **59 - 171**

As the Covenant with the Israelites was mentioned at the end of the preceding passage, the whole mankind has been reminded very appropriately of the Covenant that was made at the time of the appointment of Adam as the Vicegerent of Allah so that all of his descendants should

remember it and accept and follow the Message that was delivered by the Holy Prophet. **172 - 174**

The example of the one who had the knowledge of the Message but discarded it, has been cited as a warning to those who were treating the Message as false; they have been exhorted to use their faculties to recognize the Message; otherwise Hell would be there abode. **175 - 179**

In this concluding portion of the Surah, some deviations of those who do not use their faculties properly to understand the Message have been dealt with and they have been admonished, reproved and warned of the serious consequences of their antagonistic attitude towards the Message of the Holy Prophet. **180 - 198**

In conclusion, instructions have been given to the Holy Prophet and through him to his followers, about the attitude they should adopt towards those who reject the Message and deviate from it. **199 – 206**



Taraveeh: Eighth Night

Surah Al-Anfal:

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

Name

The Surah takes its name AL-ANFAL (The Bounties) from the first verse.

The Period of Revelation

It was revealed in 2 A. H. after the Battle of Badr, the first battle between Islam and kufr. As it contains a detailed and comprehensive review of the Battle, it appears that most probably it was revealed at once and the same time. But it is also possible that some of the verses concerning the problems arising as a result of this Battle might have been revealed later and incorporated at the proper places to make it a continuous whole. At any rate, in the whole Surah there is nothing that might show that it is a collection of a couple of discourses that have been patched up together.

Historical Background

Before reviewing the Surah, it is worthwhile to consider the events that led to the Battle of Badr.

During the first decade or so of the Prophet-hood at Makkah, the Message had proved its firmness, and stability. This was the result of two things. First, the Messenger, who possessed the highest qualities of character, was performing his Mission with wisdom, foresight and magnanimity. He had shown by his conduct that he had made up his mind to carry the movement to a successful end and, therefore, was ready to face all sorts of dangers and obstacles in the way. Secondly, the Message was so charming that it attracted the minds and hearts of the people irresistibly towards itself. So much so that all obstacles of ignorance, superstition and petty prejudices failed to check, its advance. That is why the Arab upholders of the ways of 'ignorance,' who looked down upon it in its initial stages, had begun to reckon it as a serious menace during the last period of the stay of the Holy Prophet at Makkah, and were bent on crushing it with all the force at their command. But in spite of the above-mentioned strength, the movement still lacked certain things to lead it to victory:-

First, it had not yet been fully proved that it had gathered round it a sufficient number of such followers who not only believed in its truth, but also had such an intense devotion to its principles that they were ready to expend all their energies and all that they possessed in the struggle for its success and establishment. So much so that they were ready to sacrifice their lives in the fight against the whole world itself even though they should be their own nearest relative. It is true that the followers of Islam had endured the severest persecutions at the hands of the Quraish of Makkah and had given a good proof of the firmness of their faith and their strong relation with Islam, yet further trials were required to show that Islam had

succeeded in acquiring such a band of followers which considered nothing dearer than its ideal and was ready to sacrifice life for it.

Secondly, though the voice of Islam had reached every part of the country, its effects were yet scattered and its acquired strength was spread here and there: it had not yet gathered sufficient force essential for a decisive conflict with the old established order of "ignorance".

Thirdly, Islam had yet no home of its own and had not established itself firmly anywhere in the land where it could consolidate its power and make it a base for further action. For the Muslims were scattered all over the country and were living among the unbelievers as aliens whom their bloodthirsty enemies wanted to uproot from their own homes.

Fourthly, the Muslims had not yet had an opportunity to demonstrate practically the blessings of the system of life based on Islam. There was neither any Islamic culture, nor any social, economic or political system; nor were there any established principles of war and peace for their guidance. Therefore the Muslims had no opportunity for demonstrating those moral principles on which they intended to build their entire system of life; nor had it been proved on the touchstone of trial that the Muslims as a community were sincere in their proclamation of the Message.

Allah created opportunities for making up these deficiencies.

During the last four years or so of the Prophet's stay at Makkah, the voice of Islam had been proving effective at Yathrab and the people for various reasons had been accepting the message more readily than other clans of Arabia. So much so that in the twelfth year of Prophet-hood on the occasion of Haj a deputation of 75 people met the Holy Prophet in the darkness of night. These people not only accepted Islam, but also offered to give him and his followers a home. As this was a most epoch making opportunity provided by Allah, the Holy Prophet took advantage of it.

The significance of this offer was quite clear to the people of Yathrab, and they fully realized that this was not an invitation to a mere fugitive, but to the Messenger of Allah so that he should become their leader and ruler. Likewise they knew that they were not inviting the Muslim refugees to give them shelter from persecution but to assemble them from all over the country for their integration with themselves to form an organized community. Thus the offer of the people of Yathrab was to make Yathrab the "City of Islam." Accordingly the Holy Prophet accepted their invitation and made it the first "City of Islam" in Arabia.

And the people of Yathrab were fully aware of the implications of this offer. It was indeed a declaration of war against the whole of Arabia, and an invitation to their own social and economic boycott as well. And when the Ansar from Yathrab declared their allegiance to the Holy Prophet at Aqabah, they knew fully well its consequences. During the course of the formal declaration of allegiance, Asad-bin- Zurarah, the youngest of all the delegates from Yathrab, stood up and said, "O people of Yathrab! Just listen to me and consider the matter carefully in all its aspects. Though we have come to him, regarding him only as a Messenger of Allah, we should know that we shall be inviting the enmity of the whole of Arabia. For when we take him away to Yathrab, we shall be attacked and our children may be put to the sword. Therefore if you have the courage in your hearts to face it, then and then only, you should declare your allegiance to him and Allah will give you its reward. But if you love your lives more than him and his Message, then leave this matter and frankly excuse yourselves, for at this time Allah may accept your excuses."

Abbas bin Ubadah bin Naalah, another member of the delegation, reiterated the same thing, saying,

Do you understand the implication of the declaration of your allegiance to this person?"(Voices, "Yes, we know it.") "You are challenging the whole world to war by your declaration of allegiance to him. There is every

likelihood of a serious menace to your lives and properties. Therefore consider it well. If you have any idea lurking in your minds that you will then hand him over to his enemies, it is much better to leave him alone now, because that conduct shall bring shame and disgrace to you in this world and the next. On the other hand, if you have sincerely resolved that you will endure all kinds of consequences that will follow as a result of this invitation, then it would be the best thing to take the oath of allegiance to him because, by God, this will surely bring good to you in this world as well as in the next world."

At this all the members of the delegation cried with one voice, "We are ready and prepared to risk all our wealth and our noble kith and kin for his sake."

It was then that the famous oath of allegiance, which is known as the "Second Oath of Allegiance at Aqabah" was taken.

On the other side, the people of Makkah also understood fully well the implications of this matter from their own point of view. They realized that Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him), who, they knew well, had a great personality and possessed extraordinary abilities, was going to gain a strong footing, by this allegiance. For this would help integrate his followers, whose constancy, determination, and unwavering fidelity to the Messenger had been tried, into a disciplined community under his wise leadership and guidance. And they knew that this would spell death for their old ways of life. They also realized the strategic importance of Al-Madinah to their trade, which was their chief means of livelihood.

Its geographical position was such that the Muslims could strike with advantage at the caravans traveling on the trade route between Yaman and Syria, and thus strike at the root of their economy and that of other pagan clans very effectively. The value of the trade done by the people of

Makkah alone on this route, not to count that of Raif and other places, amounted to about two hundred thousand dinars annually.

As the Quraish were fully aware of the implications of the oath of allegiance at Aqabah, they were greatly perturbed when they got wind of it the same night. At first they tried to win over the people of Al-Madinah to their side. But when they saw that the Muslims were migrating to Al-Madinah in small groups, they realized that the Holy Prophet was also going to emigrate soon from there. Then they decided to adopt an extreme measure to prevent this danger.

A few days before his migration, the Quraish held a council to consider the matter. After a good deal of argument; they decided that one person should be taken from each of the families of Quraish other than that of Banu Hashim to put an end to the life of the Holy Prophet. This was to make it difficult for the family of the Holy Prophet to fight alone with all the other families of the Quraish and thus to force them to accept blood-money for his murder instead of taking revenge from them, but by the grace of Allah their plot against the life of the Holy Prophet failed because of his admirable foresight and full trust in Allah, and he reached Al-Madinah safe and sound. When they could not prevent his emigration, it occurred to them to exploit Abdullah bin Ubayy who had begun to cherish a grievance against the Holy Prophet since his arrival at Al-Madinah. He was an influential chief of Al-Madinah and the people had agreed to make him their king. But when the majority of Aus and Khazraj clan became Muslims and acknowledged the Holy Prophet as their leader, guide and ruler, all his hopes of becoming a king came to an end. Therefore the Quraish wrote to him, "As you have given shelter to our enemy, we tell you plainly that you should either fight with him yourself or exile him from your city otherwise we swear by God that we will invade your city, kill your males and make your females our slave girls." This letter added fuel to the flames of his jealousy and he was inclined to do some mischief, but the Holy Prophet took timely precautions and defeated his evil designs.

The Quraish got another opportunity to hold out a threat. When Sa'ad bin Mu'az, another chief of Al-Madinah, went to Makkah to perform Umrah, Abu Jahl interrupted him at the very door of the Kabah, saying, "Do you think we will let you perform Umrah in peace while you give shelter and help to renegades from us? Had you not been a guest of Ummayyah bin Khalf, you would not have gone alive from here." Sa'ad replied, "By Allah, if you prevent me from this, I will retaliate in a worse manner and block your route near Al-Madinah." This incident virtually led to a declaration from the people of Makkah that they would prevent the Muslims from a pilgrimage to the Kabah, and from the people of Al-Madinah that as a retaliation they would block their trade route to Syria against the opponents of Islam. As a matter of fact there was no other alternative for the Muslims than to keep a strong hold on this route so as to force the Quraish, and the other clans, whose interests were vitally bound with this route, to reconsider their inimical and antagonistic attitude towards them. That is why the Holy Prophet attached the greatest importance to this problem. As soon as he was free from making the preliminary arrangements for organizing the newly formed Muslim Community and settling peace terms with the neighboring Jewish habitations, he adopted two measures in this connection:-

First, he entered into negotiations with those clans who lived between the Red Sea and this route so as to make alliances with them or at least to persuade them to make treaties of neutrality with the Muslims. He was successful in this, and he entered into a treaty of non-alignment with Juhainah, which was a very important clan of the hilly tract near the sea coast. Then, at the end of the first year of Hijrah, he made a treaty of defensive alliance with Bani Damrah, who lived near Yanb'u and Zawal Ushairah. In 2 A. H. Bani Mudlij also joined the alliance, as they were the neighbors and allies of Bani Damrah. Then it so happened that quite a large number of these people were converted to Islam as a result of the missionary work done by the Muslims.

Secondly, he successively sent small bands of his men on this route to serve as a warning to the Quraish, and himself accompanied some of them. In the first year of Hijrah, four expeditions were sent there, that is, the expedition under Hamzah, the expedition under Ubaidah bin Harith, the expedition under Sa'ad bin Abi Waqqas and the Al-Abwa' expedition under the Holy Prophet himself. In the first month of the second year two more incursions were made on the same route. These are known as Buwat Expedition and Zawal Ushairah Expedition. Two things about all these expeditions are noteworthy. First, no blood was shed and no caravans were plundered in any of these expeditions. This proves that the real object of these expeditions was to show to the Quraish which way the wind was blowing. Secondly, not a single man from the people of Al-Madinah was sent by the Holy. Prophet on any of these incursions. All the bands consisted purely of the immigrants from Makkah so that the conflict should remain between the people of the Quraish themselves and should not further spread by the involvement of other clans. On the other side, the Quraish of Makkah tried to involve others also in the conflict. When they sent bands towards Al-Madinah, they did not hesitate to plunder the people. For instance, an expedition under the leadership of Kurz bin Jabir al-Fihri plundered the cattle of the people of Al-Madinah from the very vicinity of the city to show what their real intentions were.

This was the state of affairs when, in Sha'aban, 2 A. H. (February or March, 623 A. D.) a big trade caravan of the Quraish, carrying goods worth \$50,000 or so, with only a guard of thirty to forty men, on its way back from Syria to Makkah, reached the territory from where it could be easily attacked from Al-Madinah. As the caravan was carrying trade goods worth thousands of pounds, and was scantily guarded, naturally Abu Sufyan, who was in charge of it, from his Past experience feared an attack from the Muslims. Accordingly, as soon as he entered the dangerous territory, he dispatched a camel rider to Makkah with a frantic appeal for help. When the rider reached Makkah, he, following an old custom of Arabia, tore open the

ears of his camel, cut open his nose and overturned the saddle. Then rending his shirt from front and behind, he began to cry aloud at the top of his voice, "O people of Quraish dispatch help to protect your caravan from Syria under the charge of Abu Sufyan, for Muhammad with his followers is in pursuit of it; otherwise I don't think you will ever get your goods. Run, run for help." This caused great excitement and anger in the whole of Makkah and all the big chiefs of the Quraish got ready for war. An army, consisting of 600 armored soldiers and cavalry of 100 riders with great pomp and show marched out for a fight. They intended not only to rescue the caravan but also to put to an end, once for all, the new menace from the Muslims who had consolidated themselves at Al-Madinah. They wanted to crush that rising power and overawe the clans surrounding the route so as to make it absolutely secure for future trade.

Now the Holy Prophet, who always kept himself well informed of the state of affairs, felt that the decisive hour has come and that was the right time when he must take a bold step; otherwise the Islamic Movement would become lifeless forever and no chance would be left for it to rise again. For if the Quraish invaded Al-Madinah, the odds would be against the Muslims. The condition of the Muslim Community was still very shaky because the immigrants (Muhajirun) had not been able to stabilize their economy during the short period (less than two years) of their stay at Al-Madinah; their helpers, (the Ansar) had not yet been tried; and the neighboring Jewish clans were antagonistic. Then there was a strong group of hypocrites and metrics in Al- Madinah itself; above all, the surrounding clans lived in awe of the Quraish and had all their religious sympathies with them. The Holy Prophet, therefore, felt that the consequences of this possible invasion would not be favorable to the Muslims.

The second possibility was that they would not invade Al-Madinah but try only to escort their caravan safely and securely by a mere show of force. In that case, too, if the Muslim remained inactive, it would affect their reputation adversely. Obviously, this weak stand in the conflict would

embolden the other Arabs also and make the position of the Muslims very insecure in the country and the surrounding clans would, at the instance of the Quraish, start hostilities against them, and the Jews, the hypocrites and the mushriks of Al- Madinah would openly rise against them and not only endanger their security of life, property and honor but make it difficult for them even to live there.

The Muslims would not be able to inspire the enemy with awe so as to keep safe from them their life, property and honor. A careful study of the situation led the Holy Prophet to make up his mind to take a decisive step and go into the battle with whatever little strength he could muster, for thus and thus only could he show whether the Muslim Community had the right to survive or was doomed to perish.

When he arrived at this momentous decision, he called the Muhajirin and the Ansar together and placed the whole position before them, without any reservation. He said, "Allah has promised that you will confront one of the two, the trade caravan coming from the north or the army of the Quraish marching from the south. Now tell me which of the two you want to attack!" A large majority of the people replied that they wanted to attack the caravan. But the Holy Prophet who had something else before him, repeated the same question. At this Miqdad bin 'Amr, a Muhajir, stood up and said, "O Messenger of Allah! Please march to the side to which your Lord commands you; we will accompany you wherever you go. We will not say like the Israelites, 'Go and let you and your Lord fight we will wait'. In contrast to them we say, 'Let you and your Lord fight; we will fight by your side to our last breath'." Even then he did not announce any decision but waited for a reply from the Ansar who had not yet taken any part in any battle of Islam. As this was the first opportunity for them to prove that they were ready to fulfill their promise of fighting for the cause of Islam, he repeated the question without directly addressing them. At this, Sa'ad bin Mu'az, an Ansar, stood up and said, "Sir, it appears that you are putting the question to us." When the Holy Prophet said, "Yes", the Ansar replied, "We

have believed in you and confirmed that what you have brought is the Truth, and have made a solemn pledge with you that we will listen to you and obey you. Therefore, O Messenger of Allah, do whatever you intend to do. We swear by Allah Who has sent you with the Truth that we are ready to accompany you to the sea shore and if you enter it, we will plunge into it. We assure you that not a single one of us will remain behind or forsake you, for we will not hesitate at all to go to fight, even if you should lead us to the battlefield tomorrow. We will remain steadfast in the battle and sacrifice our lives in the fight. We do hope that by the grace of Allah our behavior will gladden your heart. So, trusting in Allah's blessing, take us to the battlefield."

After these speeches it was decided that they should march towards the army of the Quraish and not towards the trade caravan. But it should be noted that the decision was of an ordinary nature. For the number of people, who came forward to go to the battlefield, was only a little more than three hundred (86 Mohajir, 62 from Aus and 170 from Khazraj). Then the little army was ill-armed and hardly equipped for battle. Only a couple of them had horses to ride and the others had to take their turn in threes and fours on the back of a camel, out of the 70 they had in all. Above all, they had not got enough weapons for the battle; only 60 of them had armors. It is, therefore, no wonder that with the exception of those who were prepared to sacrifice their lives for the cause of Islam, the majority of those who had joined the expedition, were so filled with fear that they felt as if they were knowingly going into the jaws of death. Then there were people who always looked at things from a selfish point of view. Though they had embraced Islam, they did not realize that their faith would demand the sacrifice of their lives and properties from them; they were of the opinion that it was a mad expedition prompted by irrational enthusiasm for religion. But the Holy Prophet and the true Believers had realized the urgency of that critical hour which required the risk of life: therefore they marched straight to the southwest, where from the army of the Quraish was coming. This is a clear proof

of the fact that from the very beginning they had gone out to fight with the army and not to plunder the caravan. For if they had aimed at plundering the caravan they would have taken the north- westerly direction and not the south-westerly one.

The two parties met in combat at Badr on the seventeenth of Ramadan. When the two armies confronted each other and the Holy Prophet noticed that the Quraish army outnumbered the Muslims by three to one and was much better equipped, he raised his hands up in supplication and made this earnest prayer with great humility: "O Allah! Here are the Quraish proud of their war material: they have come to prove that Thy Messenger is false. O Allah! now send that success that Thou hast promised to give me. O Allah! If this little army of Thy servants is destroyed, then there will be left none in the land to worship Thee."

In this combat the emigrants from Makkah were put to the hardest test for they had to fight against their own near and dear relatives and put to the sword their fathers, their sons, their paternal and maternal uncles and their brothers. It is obvious that only such people could have come out successful in this hardest of tests as had accepted the Truth sincerely and cut off all relations with falsehood. And in another way the test to which the Ansar were put was not less hard. So far they had only alienated the powerful Quraish and their allies by giving shelter to the Muslims against their wishes but now, for the first time, they were going to give fight to them and to sow the seeds of a long and bitter war with them. This was indeed a very hard test for it meant that a small town with a population of a few thousand inhabitants was going to wage a war with the whole of Arabia. It is obvious that only such people could take this bold step who believed in the Truth of Islam so firmly that they were ready to sacrifice every personal interest for its sake.

So Allah accepted the self-sacrifices of the Muhajirin and the Ansar because of their true faith, and rewarded them with His success. The

proud, well-armed Quraish were routed by these ill-equipped devotees of Islam. Seventy men of their army were killed and seventy captured as prisoners and their arms and equipment came into the hands of the Muslims as spoils of war. All their big chiefs, who were their best soldiers and who had led the opposition to Islam, were killed in this Battle. No wonder that this decisive victory made Islam a power to be reckoned with. A Western research scholar says that before the Battle of Badr, Islam was merely a religion and a state but after the Battle it became the state religion, nay, the state itself.

Topics of Discussion

It is this great Battle that has been reviewed in this Surah. But let it be noted that in some respects this review is quite different from the reviews that are usually made by the worldly commanders after a great victory.

1. Instead of gloating over the victory, the moral weaknesses that had come to the surface in that expedition have been pointed out so that the Muslims should try their best to reform themselves.
2. It has been impressed upon them that the victory was due to the success of Allah rather -than to their own valor and bravery so that the Muslims should learn to rely on Him and obey Allah and His Messenger alone.
3. The moral lesson of the conflict between the Truth and falsehood has been enunciated and the qualities which lead to success in a conflict have been explained.
4. Then the Surah addresses the mushriks, the hypocrites, the Jews and the prisoners of this war in a very impressive manner that should teach them a good lesson.
5. It also gives instructions in regard to the spoils of war. The Muslims have been told not to regard these as their right but as a bounty from Allah. Therefore they should accept with gratitude the share that is granted to them out of it and willingly accede to the share which Allah sets apart for His cause and for the help of the needy.

6. Then it also gives normal instructions concerning the laws of peace and war for these were urgently needed to be explained at the stage which the Islamic Movement had entered. It enjoined that the Muslims should refrain from ways of "ignorance" in peace and war and thus should establish their moral superiority in the world. It also meant, to demonstrate to the world in actual practical life the morality which it had been preaching to the world from the very beginning of Islam and had been enjoining that practical life should be based on the same.
7. It also states some articles of the Islamic Constitution which help differentiate the status of the Muslims living within the limits of Dar-ul-Islam (the Abode of Islam) from that of the Muslims living beyond its limits.

Subject: Problems of Jihad

This surah enunciates general principles of war (one aspect of Jihad) and peace while reviewing the Battle of Badr and uses them for the moral training of the Muslims.

Topics and their Interconnection

This portion deals with the problems of the "Spoils of War". The Quran says that these are not the spoils of war but the "Bounties of Allah" and proves this by showing that the victory at Badr (and in all other battles, too,) was won by His succor and not by the efforts of the Muslims. It also declares (in v. 40) that the war aim of the Muslims should be to eliminate all unfavorable conditions for the establishment of Islam and not to gain spoils. Moreover, the spoils, being the bounties of God, belong to Allah and His Messenger and they alone are entitled to allocate them. Then after conditioning the Muslims to accept these things, the different shares have been allocated in v. 41. **1 - 41**

The Battle of Badr was ordained by Allah so that Islam should triumph over "ignorance". The lesson from this is that the Muslims should trust in God

and prepare themselves for war and should not be beguiled by Satan as the disbelievers were. **42 - 54**

Sanctity of treaties has been enjoined and the Muslims commanded to observe them as long as the other party does not break them. **55 - 59**

The Muslims should always be prepared for war on every front, but should be ready to make peace if the other party is inclined towards it. **60 - 66**

In these verses, instructions about prisoners of war have been given. **67 - 71**

In order to keep the Muslims joined together against their enemies, they have been taught to have cordial relations with one another. **72 - 75**

Surah At-Tauba:

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

Name

This Surah is known by two names: At-Taubah and Al Bara'at. It is called At-Taubah because it enunciates the nature of taubah (repentance) and mentions the conditions of its acceptance.(vv. 102. 118). The second name Bara'at (Release) is taken from the first word of the Surah.

Omission of Bismillah

This is the only Surah of the Quran to which Bismillah is not prefixed. Though the commentators have given different reasons for this, the correct one that which has been given by Imam Razi: namely, this is

because the Holy Prophet himself did not dictate it at the beginning of the Surah. Therefore the Companions did not prefix it and their successors followed them. This is a further proof of the fact that utmost care has been taken to keep the Quran intact so that it should remain in its complete and original form.

Discourses and Periods of Revelation

This Surah comprises three discourses:-

The first discourse (vv. 1-37), was revealed in Zil-Qa'adah A. H. 9 or thereabout. As the importance of the subject of the discourse required its declaration on the occasion of Haj the Holy Prophet dispatched Hadrat Ali to follow Hadrat Abu Bakr, who had already left for Makkah as leader of the Pilgrims to the Ka'abah. He instructed Hadrat Ali to deliver the discourse before the representatives of the different clans of Arabia so as to inform them of the new policy towards the mushriks.

The second discourse (vv., 38-72) was sent down in Rajab A. H. 9 or a little before this, when the Holy Prophet was engaged in making preparations for the Campaign, of Tabuk. In this discourse, the Believers were urged to take active part in Jihad, and the shirkers were severely rebuked for holding back their wealth and for hesitation to sacrifice their lives in the way of Allah because of their hypocrisy, weak faith or negligence.

The third discourse (vv. 73-129) was revealed on his return from the Campaign of Tabuk. There are some pieces in this discourse that were sent down on different occasions during the same period and were afterwards consolidated by the Holy Prophet into the Surah in accordance with inspiration from Allah. But this caused no interruption in its continuity because they dealt with the same subject and formed part of the same series of events. This discourse warns the hypocrites of their evil deeds and rebukes those Believers who had stayed behind in the Campaign of

Tabuk. Then after taking them to task, Allah pardons those true Believers who had not taken part in the Jihad in the Way of Allah for one reason or the other.

Chronologically, the first discourse should have come last; but being the most important of the three in regard to its subject-matter, it was placed first in the order of compilation.

Historical Background

Now let us consider the historical background of the Surah. The series of events that have been discussed in this Surah took place after the Peace Treaty of Hudaibiyah. By that time, one-third of Arabia had come under the sway of Islam which had established itself as a powerful, well organized and civilized Islamic State. This Treaty afforded further opportunities to Islam to spread its influence in the comparatively peaceful atmosphere created by it. After this Treaty, two events took place, which led to very important results:

Conquest of Arabia

The first was the Conquest of Arabia. The Holy Prophet was able to send missions among different clans for the propagation of Islam. The result was that during the short period of two years, it became such a great power that it made the old order of ignorance feel helpless before it. So much so that the zealous elements from among the Quraish were so exasperated that they broke the Treaty in order to encounter Islam in a decisive combat. But the Holy Prophet took prompt action after the breach so as not to allow them any opportunity to gather enough force for this. He made a sudden invasion on Makkah in the month of Ramadan in A. H. 8 and conquered it. Though this conquest broke the backbone of the order of ignorance, it made still another attack on Islam in the battle-field of Hunain, which proved to be its death-knell. The clans of Hawazin Thaqif, Naur, Jushm and

others gathered their entire forces in the battle field in order to crush their formative Revolution, but they utterly failed in their evil designs. The defeat of 'ignorance' at Hunain paved the way for making the whole of Arabia the 'Abode of Islam' (Dar-ul-Islam). The result was that hardly a year had passed after the Battle of Hunain, when the major portion of Arabia came within the fold of Islam and only a few upholders of the old order remained scattered over some corners of the country.

The second event that contributed towards making Islam a formidable power was the Campaign of Tabuk, which was necessitated by the provocative activities of the Christians living within or near the boundaries of the Roman Empire to the north of Arabia. Accordingly, the Holy Prophet, with an army of thirty thousand marched boldly towards the Roman Empire but the Romans evaded the encounter. The result was that the power of the Holy Prophet and Islam increased manifold and deputations from all corners of Arabia began to wait upon him on his return from Tabuk in order to offer their allegiance to Islam and obedience to him. The Holy Quran has described this triumph in Surah AN-NASR: "When the succor of Allah came and victory was attained and you saw people entering the fold of Islam in large numbers...

Campaign to Tabuk

The Campaign to Tabuk was the result of conflict with the Roman Empire that had started even before the conquest of Makkah. One of the missions sent after the Treaty of Hudaibiyah to different parts of Arabia visited the clans which lived in the northern areas adjacent to Syria. The majority of these people were Christians, who were under the influence of the Roman Empire. Contrary to all the principles of the commonly accepted international law, they killed fifteen members of the delegation near a place known as Zat-u-Talah (or Zat-i-Itlah). Only Ka'ab bin Umair Ghifari, the head of the delegation, succeeded in escaping and reporting the sad incident. Besides this, Shurahbil bin Amr, the Christian governor of Busra, who was

directly under the Roman Caesar, had also put to death Haritli bin Umair, the ambassador of the Holy Prophet, who had been sent to him on a similar mission.

These events convinced the Holy Prophet that a strong action should be taken in order to make the territory adjacent to the Roman Empire safe and secure for the Muslims. Accordingly, in the month of Jamadi-ul-Ula A.H. 8, he sent an army of three thousand towards the Syrian border. When this army reached near Ma'an, the Muslims learnt that Shurahbil was marching with an army of one hundred thousand to fight with them and that the Caesar, who himself was at Hims, had sent another army consisting of one hundred thousand soldiers under his brother Theodore. But in spite of such fearful news, the brave small band of the Muslims marched on fearlessly and encountered the big army of Shurahbil at M'utah. And the result of the encounter in which the Muslims were fighting against fearful odds (the ratio of the two armies was 1:33), as very favorable, for the enemy utterly failed to defeat them. This proved very helpful for the propagation of Islam. As a result, those Arabs who were living in a state of semi. independence in Syria and near Syria and the clans of Najd near Iraq, who were under the influence of the Iranian Empire, turned towards Islam and embraced it in thousands. For example, the people of Bani Sulaim (whose chief was Abbas bin Mirdas Sulaimi), Ashja'a, Ghatafan, Zubyan, Fazarah, etc., came into the fold of Islam at the same time. Above all, Farvah bin'Amral Juzami, who was the commander of the Arab armies of the Roman Empire, embraced Islam during that time, and underwent the trial of his Faith in a way that filled the whole territory with wonder. When the Caesar came to know that Farvah had embraced Islam, he ordered that he should be arrested and brought to his court. Then the Caesar said to him, "You will have to choose one of the two things. Either give up your Islam and win your liberty and your former rank, or remain a Muslim and face death." He calmly chose Islam and sacrificed his life in the way of the Truth.

No wonder that such events as these made the Caesar realize the nature of the danger that was threatening his Empire from Arabia. Accordingly, in 9 A. H. he began to make military preparations to avenge the insult he had suffered at M'utah. The Ghassanid and other Arab chiefs also began to muster armies under him. When the Holy Prophet, who always kept himself well-informed even of the minutest things that could affect the Islamic Movement favorably or adversely, came to know of these preparations, he at once understood their meaning. Therefore, without the least hesitation he decided to fight against the great power of the Caesar. He knew that the show of the slightest weakness would result in the utter failure of the Movement which was facing three great dangers at that time. First the dying power of 'ignorance' that had almost been crushed in the battle-field of Hunain might revive again. Secondly, the Hypocrites of Al: Madinah, who were always on the look-out for such an opportunity, might make full use of this to do the greatest possible harm to it. For they had already made preparations for this and had, through a monk called Abu Amir, sent secret messages of their evil designs to the Christian king of Ghassan and the Caesar himself. Besides this, they had also built a mosque near Al-Madinah for holding secret meetings for this purpose. The third danger was of an attack by the Caesar himself, who had already defeated Iran, the other great power of that period, and filled with awe the adjacent territories.

It is obvious that if all these three elements had been given an opportunity of taking a concerted action against the Muslims, Islam would have lost the fight it had almost won. That is why in this case the Holy Prophet made an open declaration for making preparations for the Campaign against the Roman Empire, which was one of the two greatest empires of the world of that period. The declaration was made though all the apparent circumstances were against such a decision: for there was famine in the country and the long awaited crops were about to ripen: the burning heat of the scorching summer season of Arabia was at its height and there was not enough money for preparations in general, and for equipment and

conveyance in particular. But in spite of these handicaps, when the Messenger of Allah realized the urgency of the occasion, he took this step which was to decide whether the Mission of the Truth was - - going to survive or perish. The very fact that he made an open declaration for making preparations for such a campaign to Syria against the Roman Empire showed how important it was, for this was contrary to his previous practice. Usually he took every precaution not to reveal beforehand the direction to which he was going nor the name of the enemy whom he was going to attack; nay, he did not move out of Al-Madinah even in the direction of the campaign.

All the parties in Arabia fully realized the grave consequences of this critical decision. The remnants of the lovers of the old order of 'ignorance' were anxiously waiting for the result of the Campaign, for they had pinned all their hopes on the defeat of Islam by the Romans. The 'hypocrites' also considered it to be their last chance of crushing the power of Islam by internal rebellion, if the Muslims suffered a defeat in Syria. They had, therefore, made full use of the Mosque built by them for hatching plots and had employed all their devices to render the Campaign a failure. On the other side, the true Believers also realized fully that the fate of the Movement for which they had been exerting their utmost for the last 22 years was now hanging in the balance. If they showed courage on that critical occasion, the doors of the whole outer world would be thrown open for the Movement to spread. But if they showed weakness or cowardice, then all the work they had done in Arabia would -end in smoke.

That is why these lovers of Islam began to make enthusiastic preparations for the Campaign. Everyone of them tried to surpass the other in making contributions for the provision of equipment for it. Hadrat Uthman and Hadrat Abdur Rehman bin Auf presented large sums of money for this purpose. Hadrat Umar contributed half of the earnings of his life and Hadrat Abu Bakr the entire earnings of his life. The indigent Companions did not lag behind and presented whatever they could earn by the sweat of their

labor and the women parted with their ornaments. Thousands of volunteers, who were filled with the desire of sacrificing their lives for Islam, came to the Holy Prophet and requested that arrangements for weapons and conveyance be made for them so that they should join the expedition. Those who could not be provided with these shed tears of sorrow; the scene was so pathetic that it made the Holy Prophet sad because of his inability to arm them. In short, the occasion became the touchstone for discriminating a true believer from a hypocrite. For, to lag behind in the Campaign meant that the very relationship of a person to Islam was doubtful. Accordingly, whenever a person lagged behind during the journey to Tabuk, the Holy Prophet, on being informed, would spontaneously say, "Leave him alone. If there be any good in him, Allah will again join him with you, and if there be no good in him, then thank Allah that He relieved you of his evil company".

In short, the Holy Prophet marched out towards Syria in Rajab A. H. 9, with thirty thousand fighters for the cause of Islam. The conditions in which the expedition was undertaken may be judged from the fact that the number of camels with them was so small that many of them were obliged to walk on foot and to wait for their turns for several had to ride at a time on each camel. To add to this, there was the burning heat of the desert and the acute shortage of water. But they were richly rewarded for their firm resolve and sincere adherence to the cause and for their perseverance in the face of those great difficulties and obstacles.

When they arrived at Tabuk, they learnt that the Caesar and his allies had withdrawn their troops from the frontier and there was no enemy to fight with. Thus they won amoral victory that increased their prestige manifold and, that too, without shedding a drop of blood.

In this connection, it is pertinent to point out that the general impression given by the historians of the campaigns of the Holy Prophet about the Campaign of Tabuk is not correct. They relate the event in a way as if the

news of the mustering of the Roman armies near the Arabian frontier was itself false. The fact is that the Caesar had begun to muster his armies, but the Holy Prophet forestalled him and arrived on the scene before he could make full preparations for the invasion. Therefore, believing that "discretion is the better part of valor," he withdrew his armies from the frontier. For he had not forgotten that the three thousand fighters for the cause of Islam had rendered helpless his army one hundred thousand strong at M'utah. He could not, therefore, even with an army of two hundred thousand, dare to fight against an army of thirty thousand, and that, too, under the leadership of the Holy Prophet himself.

When the Holy Prophet found that the Caesar had withdrawn his forces from the frontier, he considered the question whether it would be worthwhile to march into the Syrian territory or to halt at Tabuk and turn his moral victory to political and strategical advantage. He decided on the latter course and made a halt for twenty days at Tabuk. During this time, he brought pressure on the small states that lay between the Roman Empire and the Islamic State and were at that time under the influence of the Romans, and subdued and made them the tributaries of the Islamic State. For instance, some Christian chiefs Ukaidir bin Abdul Malik Kindi of Dumatul Jaiidal, Yuhanna bin D'obah of Allah, and the chiefs of Maqna, Jarba' and Azruh also submitted and agreed to pay Jizyah to the Islamic State of Al-Madinah. As a result of this, the boundaries of the Islamic State were extended right up to the Roman Empire, and the majority of the Arab clans, who were being used by the Caesar against Arabia, became the allies of the Muslims against the Romans.

Above all, this moral victory of Tabuk afforded a golden opportunity to the Muslims to strengthen their hold on Arabia before entering into a long conflict with the Romans. For it broke the back of those who had still been expecting that the old order of 'ignorance' might revive in the near future, whether they were the open upholders of shirk or the hypocrites who were hiding their shirk under the garb of Islam. The majority of such people were

compelled by the force of circumstances to enter into the fold of Islam and, at least, make it possible for their descendants to become true Muslims. After this a mere impotent minority of the upholders of the old order was left in the field, but it could not stand in the way of the Islamic Revolution for the perfection of which Allah had sent His Messenger.

Problems of the Period

If we keep in view the preceding background, we can easily find out the problems that were confronting the Community at that time. They were:

- to make the whole of Arabia a perfect Dar-ul-Islam,
- to extend the influence of Islam to the adjoining countries,
- to crush the mischief's of the hypocrites, and
- to prepare the Muslims for Jihad against the non-Muslim world.

Now that the administration of the whole of Arabia had come in the hands of the Believers, and all the opposing powers had become helpless, it was necessary to make a clear declaration of that policy which was to be adopted to make her a perfect Dar-ul-Islam. Therefore the following measures were adopted:

A clear declaration was made that all the treaties with the mushriks were abolished and the Muslims would be released from the treaty obligations with them after a respite of four months (vv. 1-3). This declaration was necessary for uprooting completely the system of life based on shirk and to make Arabia exclusively the center of Islam so that it should not in any way interfere with the spirit of Islam nor become an internal danger for it.

A decree was issued that the guardianship of the Ka'abah, which held central position in all the affairs of Arabia, should be wrested from the mushriks and placed permanently in the hands of the Believers, (vv. 12-18) that all the customs and practices of the shirk of the era of 'ignorance' should be forcibly abolished: that the mushriks should not be allowed even to come near the "House" (v. 28). This was to eradicate

every trace of shirk from the "House" that was dedicated exclusively to the worship of Allah.

The evil practice of Nasi, by which they used to tamper with the sacred months in the days of 'ignorance', was forbidden as an act of Kufr (v. 37). This was also to serve as an example to the Muslims for eradicating every vestige of the customs of ignorance from the life of Arabia (and afterwards from the lives of the Muslims everywhere).

In order to enable the Muslims to extend the influence of Islam outside Arabia, they were enjoined to crush with sword the non-Muslim powers and to force them to accept the sovereignty of the Islamic State. As the great Roman and Iranian Empires were the biggest hindrances in the way, a conflict with them was inevitable. The object of Jihad was not to coerce them to accept Islam they were free to accept or not to accept it-but to prevent them from thrusting forcibly their deviations upon others and the coming generations. The Muslims were enjoined to tolerate their misguidance only to the extent that they might have the freedom to remain misguided, if they chose to be so, provided that they paid Jizyah (v. 29) as a sign of their subjugation to the Islamic State.

The third important problem was to crush the mischiefs of the hypocrites, who had hitherto been tolerated in spite of their flagrant crimes. Now that there was practically no pressure upon them from outside, the Muslims were enjoined to treat them openly as disbelievers (v. 73). Accordingly, the Holy Prophet set on fire the house of Swailim, where the hypocrites used to gather for consultations in order to dissuade the people from joining the expedition to Tabuk. Likewise on his return from Tabuk, he ordered to pull down and burn the 'Mosque' that had been built to serve as a cover for the hypocrites for hatching plots against the true Believers.

In order to prepare the Muslims for Jihad against the whole non-Muslim world, it was necessary to cure them even of that slight weakness of faith from which they were still suffering. For there could be no greater internal danger to the Islamic Community than the weakness of faith,

especially where it was going to engage itself single-handed in a' conflict with the whole non-Muslim world. That is why those people who had lagged behind in the Campaign to Tabuk or had shown the least negligence were severely taken to task, and were considered as hypocrites if they had no plausible excuse for not fulfilling that obligation. Moreover, a clear declaration was made that in future the sole criterion of a Muslim's faith shall be the exertions he makes for the uplift of the Word of Allah and the role he plays in the conflict between Islam and kufr. Therefore, if anyone will show any hesitation in sacrificing his life, money, time and energies, his faith shall not be regarded as genuine. (vv. 81-96).

If the above-mentioned important points are kept in view during the study of this Surah, it will facilitate the understanding of its contents.

Subject: Problems of Peace and War

In continuation of Surah AL-ANFAL, this Surah also deals with the problems of peace and war and bases the theme on the Tabuk Expedition.

Topics and their Interconnection

This portion deals with the sanctity of treaties and lays down principles, rules and regulations which must be kept in view before breaking them, in case the other party does not observe them sincerely. **1 - 12**

In this portion the Muslims have been urged to fight in the Way of Allah with the mushrik Arabs, the Jews and the Christians, who were duly warned of the consequences of their mischievous and inimical behavior. **13 - 37**

In this discourse, the Muslims have been told clearly and explicitly that they will inherit the rewards promised by Allah only if they take active part in the conflict with kufr, for that is the criterion which distinguishes true Muslims from hypocrites. Therefore true Muslims should take active part in Jihad,

without minding dangers, obstacles, difficulties, temptations and the like. **38 - 72**

This portion deals with the problems of hypocrites and lays down rules and regulations governing the treatment that should be meted out to them and points out their distinctive marks from true Muslims. **73 - 90**

This portion deals with the case of those who remained behind and did not accompany the Holy Prophet for Jihad, to Tabuk. For this purpose they have been separated in different categories, that is, the disabled, the sick, the indigent, the hypocrites, the believers who realized their guilt and punished themselves before the return of the Holy Prophet from Tabuk and those who confessed their error. Their cases have been dealt with in accordance with the nature and extent of their offence. **91 - 110**



Taraveeh: Ninth Night

Surah At-Tauba continues:

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

In order to make their noble qualities look all the more conspicuous and dignified by contrast, the characteristics of the Believers have been mentioned, and they have been reassured that Allah, the Sovereign of the Universe, is their helper and guardian. Accordingly, because of their sincerity, He has forgiven the Three Believers who did not take part in the expedition. **111 - 118**

In the concluding portion, general instructions have been given to the Believers for their guidance. **119 - 127**

This is the conclusion: "Follow the Messenger who is gentle and compassionate and your greatest well-wisher, and trust in Allah, the Lord of the Universe". **128 - 129**

Surah Yunus:

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

Name

The Surah takes its name from V. 98, in which there is a reference to Prophet Yunus (Jonah). The name, as usual, is symbolical and does not indicate that the Surah deals with the story of Prophet Jonah.

Period of Revelation

We learn from traditions, and this is supported by the contents of the Surah itself, that the whole of this Surah was revealed at Makkah. But there are some people who are of the opinion, that some of its verses were revealed at Al-Madinah. This is, however, a superficial view. The continuity of the theme clearly shows that this does not comprise isolated verses or discourses that were revealed at different times and on different occasions. On the contrary, it is, from the beginning to the end, a closely connected discourse which must have been revealed at one sitting. Besides this, the nature of its theme is itself a clear proof that the Surah belongs to the Makkan period.

Time of Revelation

We have no tradition in regard to the time of its revelation, but its subject matter gives clear indication that it must have been revealed during the last stage of the Holy Prophet's residence at Makkah. For the mode of the

discourse suggests that at the time of its revelation, the antagonism of the opponents of the Message had become so intense that they could not tolerate even the presence of the Holy Prophet and his followers among themselves, and that things had come to such a pass as to leave no hope that they would ever understand and accept the Message of the Prophet. This indicates that the last stage of the Prophet's life among the people had come, and the final warning like the one in this Surah had to be given. These characteristics of the discourse are clear proof that it was revealed during the last stage of the Movement at Makkah.

Another thing that determines more specifically the order of the Surahs of the last stage at Makkah is the mention (or absence) of some open or covert hint about Hijrat (Emigration) from Makkah. As this Surah does not contain any hint whatsoever about this, it is a proof that it preceded those surahs which contain it.

Now that we have specified the time of its revelation, there is no need of repeating its historical background because that has already been stated in Surahs VI and VII.

Subject

This discourse deals with the invitation to the Message, admonition and warning. In the very introductory verses, the invitation has been extended like this:-

"The people consider it a strange thing that this Message is being conveyed by a human being and charge him with sorcery, whereas there is nothing strange in it nor has it any connection with sorcery or sooth saying. It simply informs you of two realities. First, Allah, Who has created the universe and manages it, is, in fact, your Master and Lord, and He alone is entitled to your worship. The second reality is that after the life in this world,

there will be another life in the Next World, where you shall have to render full account of the life of this world and be rewarded or punished according to whether you adopted the righteous attitude as required by Him after acknowledging Him as your Masters or acted against His will. Both of these realities, which the Messenger is presenting before you, are "realities" in themselves whether you acknowledge them as such or not. He is inviting you to accept these and regulate your lives in accordance with them; if you accept these, you will have a very blessed end; otherwise join shall meet with evil consequences."

Topics

After the introduction, the following topics have been dealt with in an appropriate order:

- Proofs of the doctrines of Tauhid, Providence and Life-after-death have been given by such arguments as may satisfy the minds and hearts of those who listen to the Message without prejudice and bigotry with the sole intention of safeguarding themselves against deviation and its evil results and not for the sake of seeking opportunities for useless discussions.
- Those misunderstandings which were (and always are) hindering people from accepting the doctrines of Tauhid and the Hereafter, have been removed and they have been warned to guard against those negligences that stand in their way.
- Those doubts have been removed and answers to those objections given which were being raised about the Prophet-hood of Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) and the Message brought by him.
- Graphic descriptions of the life in the Hereafter have been presented in order to warn the people beforehand so that they should mend their ways here and be not sorry afterwards for their conduct in this world.

- They have been admonished and warned that the life in this world is really a test and a trial, and that the time allowed for it is only up to the last moment of the earthly life, and that this is the only opportunity that shall be given to them for accepting the Message and achieving success in the test. Therefore, they should make the best use of the opportunity that has been provided for them by the appointment of Prophet Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) for their guidance and obtain the true knowledge of the Reality from the Quran that is being sent down to him. Otherwise, they shall be remorseful forever and ever.
- Their attention has been drawn to some of their acts of manifest ignorance and deviation which were the direct result of discarding Divine Guidance from their lives.

In this connection, the story of Prophet Noah has been related in brief and that of Prophet Moses in detail in order to impress four things on the minds:

First, "As your behavior towards Prophet Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) is like that of the peoples of Prophet Noah and Prophet Moses towards them, you should know it for certain that you also shall meet with the same consequences which they met with." Secondly, "You should not be deluded into believing by the helpless and weak condition of the Prophet and his followers, you are witnessing today, that it will always remain like this. You should know that the same All-Powerful Allah Who supported Prophets Moses and Aaron, is supporting them and that He changes the circumstances in such a sudden and thorough manner that none can foresee it." Thirdly, "If you do not make use of the term that has been granted to you by Allah and mend your ways now, and postpone this to the last moment like followers of the Holy Prophet have been reassured that they should not lose heart because of the severity of the circumstances created by their opponents, especially at the time when they themselves were in an utterly helpless condition. They have also been given instructions as to how they should carry on their Mission under those harsh conditions. Moreover, they have been warned to be on their guard against

the kind of behavior which was adopted by the Israelites, when they were rescued by Allah from the tyranny of the People of Pharaoh.

At the end of the Surah, the Holy Prophet has been commanded to make a declaration to this effect: "This is the Creed and this is the rule of conduct that has been prescribed for me by Allah: no change can be made at all in this: whoso will accept this will do so for his own good and whoso will reject this will do so at his own peril."

Surah Hud

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

Name

This Surah has been named after Prophet Hud whose story has been related in vv. 50-60.

Period of Revelation

If we consider its theme deeply, we come to the conclusion that it was revealed during the same period as Surah Yunus and most probably followed it immediately.

Subject

The Surah deals with the same subject as Surah Yunus, that is, invitation to the Message, admonition and warning, with this difference that the warning is sterner. This is also supported by a Tradition:

It is related that after its revelation, once Hadrat Abu Bakr said to the Holy Prophet, "Of late I have been noticing that you are growing older and older. What is the cause of it?" The Holy Prophet replied, "Surah Hud and the like Surahs have made me old." This shows that it was a very hard time for the Holy Prophet and these stern warnings added greatly to his anxieties that were caused by the persecution from the Quraish, who were doing their worst to crush down the Message of Islam. For it was obvious to the Holy Prophet that the last limit of the respite given by Allah was approaching nearer and nearer and he was afraid lest the term of the respite should expire and his people be seized by the torment.

The invitation is this: Obey the Messenger of Allah; discard shirk, and worship Allah and Allah alone: establish the entire system of your life on the belief that you shall be called to account in the Hereafter.

The admonition is this: Remember that those people who put their faith in the outward appearance of this worldly life and rejected the Message of the Prophets met with dire consequences. Therefore you should consider it seriously whether you should follow the same way that history has proved to be the path to ruin.

The warning is this: You should not be deluded by the delay in the coming of the punishment: it is because of the respite that Allah has granted you by His grace so that you might mend your ways: if you do not make use of this opportunity, you shall be inflicted with an inevitable punishment that will destroy you all except the Believers.

Instead of addressing the people directly, the Quran has used the stories of the people of Noah, Hud, Salih, Lot, Shu'aib and Moses to achieve the above mentioned objects. What is most prominent in their stories is that when Allah passes His judgment on the people, He does not spare anyone whatsoever, even if he be the nearest relative of the Prophet of the time. Only that one is rescued who had believed in the Prophet, and none else,

not even his own son or wife. More than that: the Faith demands from each and every Believer that he should totally forget his relationships when that judgment comes and remember only the relationship of the Faith. For it is against the spirit of Islam to show any regard whatsoever for the relationships of blood and race. And the Muslims demonstrated these teachings practically in the Battle of Badr, four years after the revelation of this Surah.



Taraveeh: Tenth Night

Surah Yusuf:

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

When and Why Revealed?

The subject matter of this Surah indicates that it was revealed during the last stage of the Holy Prophet's residence at Makkah, when the Quraish were considering the question of killing or exiling or imprisoning him. At that time some of the unbelievers put this question (probably at the instigation of the Jews) to test him : "Why did the Israelites go to Egypt?" This question was asked because they knew that their story was not known to the Arabs for there was no mention of it whatever in their traditions and the Holy Prophet had never even referred to it before. Therefore they expected that he would not be able to give any satisfactory answer to this question or would first evade it, and afterwards try to enquire about it from some Jew, and thus he would be totally exposed. But, contrary to their expectations,

the tables were turned on them, for Allah revealed the whole story of Prophet Joseph then and there, and the Holy Prophet recited it on the spot. This put the Quraish in a very awkward position because it not only foiled their scheme but also administered a warning to them by aptly applying it to their case, as if to say, "As you are behaving towards this Prophet, exactly in the same way the brothers of Prophet Joseph behaved towards him; so you shall meet with the same end."

Objects of Revelation

From the above it is clear that this Surah was sent down for two objects:

The first object was to give the proof of the Prophet-hood of Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him), and that too, the one demanded by the opponents themselves so as to prove conclusively that his knowledge was not based on mere hearsay, but was gained through Revelation. This aspect has been stated explicitly in its introductory verses and explained plainly in its concluding portion.

The second object was to apply it to the Quraish and warn them that ultimately the conflict between them and the Holy Prophet would end in his victory over them. As they were then persecuting their brother, the Holy Prophet, in the same way the brothers of Prophet Joseph had treated him. The Quraish were told indirectly that they would also fail in their evil designs just as the brothers of Prophet Joseph had failed in his case, even after casting him into the well. This is because none has the power to defeat the Divine will. And just as the brothers of Prophet Joseph had to humble themselves before him, so one day the Quraish shall have to beg forgiveness from their brother whom they were then trying to crush down. This, too, has been made quite plain in v. 7: "Indeed there are signs in this story of Joseph and his brothers for these inquirers from among the Quraish."

The fact is that by applying this story to the conflict, the Quran had made a bold and clear prophecy, which was fulfilled literally by the events that happened in the succeeding ten years. Hardly two years had passed after its revelation, when the Quraish conspired to kill the Holy Prophet like the brothers of Prophet Joseph, and he had to emigrate from Makkah to Al-Madinah, where he gained the same kind of power as Prophet Joseph had gained in Egypt. Again, in the end the Quraish had to humble themselves before him just like the brothers of Prophet Joseph, when they humbly requested, "Show mercy to us for Allah rewards richly those who show mercy" (V. 88), and Prophet Joseph generously forgave them, (though he had complete power to wreak vengeance on them,) saying, "today no penalty shall be inflicted on you. May Allah forgive you: He is the greatest of all those who forgive" (V. 92). The same story of mercy was repeated, when after the conquest of Makkah, the crest fallen Quraish stood meekly before the Holy Prophet, who had full power to wreak his vengeance on them for each and every cruelty committed by them. But instead, he merely asked them, "What treatment do you expect from me now?" They replied, "You are a generous brother and the son of a generous brother." At this, he very generously forgave them, saying, "I will give the same answer to your request that Joseph gave to his brothers: ' . . . today, no penalty shall be inflicted on you: you are forgiven.'"

Topics of Discussion

Moreover, the Quran does not relate this story as a mere narrative but uses it, as usual, for the propagation of the Message in the following ways:-

Throughout the narrative the Quran has made it clear that the Faith of Prophets Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph (Allah's peace be upon them all) was the same as that of Prophet Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) and they invited the people to the same Message to which Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) was inviting them.

Then it places the characters of Prophet Jacob and Prophet Joseph side by side with the characters of the brothers of Joseph, the members of the trade caravan, the court dignitary; Al Aziz of Egypt and his wife, the "ladies" of Egypt and the rulers of Egypt and poses a silent question to the reader, as if to say, "Contrast the former characters molded by Islam on the bedrock of the worship of Allah and accountability in the Hereafter with the latter molded by kufr and "ignorance" on the worship of the world and disregard of Allah and the Hereafter, and decide for yourselves which of these two patterns you would choose."

The Quran has used this story to bring forth another truth: whatever Allah wills, He fulfills it anyhow, and man can never defeat His plan with his counter plans nor prevent it from happening nor change it in any way whatever. Nay, it often so happens that man adopts some measure to fulfill his own design and believes that he has done that very thing which would fulfill his design, but in the end he finds to his dismay that he had done something which was against his own and conducive to the Divine purpose. When the brothers of Prophet Joseph cast him into the well, they believed that they had once for all got rid of the obstacle in their way but in fact, they had paved the way for the Divine purpose of making him the ruler of Egypt, before whom they would have to humble themselves in the end. Likewise, the wife of Aziz had sent Prophet Joseph to the prison, floating over the thought that she had wreaked her vengeance on him, but, in fact, she had provided for him the opportunity for becoming the ruler of Egypt and for putting herself to the shame of confessing her own sin publicly.

And these are not the solitary instances which prove the truth that even if the whole world united to bring about the down fall of the one whom Allah willed to raise high, it could not succeed. Nay, the very "sure and effective" measures that were adopted by the brothers to degrade Joseph were used by Allah for the success of Joseph and for the humiliation and disgrace of his brothers. On the other hand, if Allah willed the fall of one, no measure,

howsoever effective, could raise him high : nay, it helped to bring about his fall and the disgrace of those who adopted them.

Moreover, the story contains other lessons for those who intend to follow the way of Allah. The first lesson it teaches is that one should remain within the limits, prescribed by the Divine Law, in one's aims and objects and measures, for success and failure are entirely in the hands of Allah.

Therefore if one adopts pure aims and lawful measures but fails, at least one will escape ignominy and disgrace. On the other hand, the one who adopts an impure aim and unlawful measures to achieve it, shall not only inevitably meet with ignominy and disgrace in the Hereafter, but also runs the risk of ignominy and disgrace in this world.

The second lesson it teaches is that those who exert for the cause of truth and righteousness and put their trust in Allah and entrust all their affairs to Him, get consolation and comfort from Him, for this helps them face their opponents with confidence and courage and they do not lose heart, when they encounter the apparently terrifying measures of the powerful enemies. They will persevere in their task without fear and leave the results to Allah.

But the greatest lesson this story teaches is that if the Believer possesses true Islamic character and is endowed with wisdom, he can conquer a whole country with the strength of his character alone. The marvelous example of Prophet Joseph teaches us that a man of high and pure character comes out successful even under the most adverse circumstances. When Prophet Joseph went to Egypt, he was only a lad of seventeen years, a foreigner, all alone and without any provisions; nay, he had been sold there as a slave. And the horrible condition of the slaves during that period is known to every student of history. Then he was charged with a heinous moral Crime and sent to prison for an indefinite term. But throughout this period of affliction, he evinced the highest moral qualities which raised him to the highest rank in the country.

Historical and Geographical Background

The following historical and geographical details will help understand the story:-

Prophet Joseph was a son of Prophet Jacob and a grandson of Prophet Isaac and a great grandson of Prophet Abraham (Allah's peace be upon them all). The Bible says (and the allusions in the Quran also confirm this) that Prophet Jacob had twelve sons from four wives. Prophet Joseph and his younger brother Benjamin were from one wife and the other ten from the other wives. Prophet Jacob had settled at Hebron (Palestine) where his father Prophet Isaac and before him Prophet Abraham lived and owned a piece of land at Shechem as well.

According to the research scholars of the Bible, Prophet Joseph was born in or about 906 B. C. and the incident with which this story begins happened in or about 890 B. C. He was seventeen when he saw the dream and was thrown into the well. This well was near Do than to the north of Shechem according to Biblical and Talmudic traditions, and the caravan, which took him out of the well, was coming from Gilead(Trans-Jordan), and was on its way to Egypt.

At that time Fifteenth Dynasty ruled over Egypt, whose rulers are known in history as the Hyksos kings. They belonged to the Arab race, but had migrated from Palestine and Syria to Egypt in or about 2000 B. C. and taken possession of the country. The Arab historians and the commentators of the Quran have given them the name of Amaliq (the Amalekites), and this has been corroborated by the recent researches made by the Egyptologists. They were foreign invaders who had got the opportunity of establishing their kingdom because of the internal feuds in the country. That is why there was no prejudice in the way of Prophet Joseph's ascendancy to power and in the subsequent settlement of the Children of Israel in the most fertile region of Egypt. They could gain that

power and influence which they did, because they belonged to the same race as the foreign rulers of Egypt.

The Hyksos ruled over Egypt up to the end of the fifteenth century B. C., and practically all the powers remained in the hands of the Israelites. The Quran has made a reference to this in v. 20 of Al-Ma'idah: He raised Prophets among you and made you rulers. . . , Then there arose a great nationalist movement which overthrew the power of this dynasty and exiled 250,000 or so of the Amalekites. As a result of this, a very bigoted dynasty of Copts came into power and uprooted everything connected with the Amalekites. Then started that persecution of the Israelites which has been mentioned in connection with the story of Prophet Moses.

We also learn from the history of Egypt that the "Hyksos kings" did not acknowledge the gods of Egypt and, therefore, had imported their own gods from Syria, with a view to spreading their own religion in Egypt. This is the reason why the Quran has not called the king who was the contemporary of Prophet Joseph by the title of "Pharaoh," because this title was associated with the religion of the original people of Egypt and the Hyksos did not believe in it, but the Bible erroneously calls him "Pharaoh". It appears that the editors of the Bible had the misunderstanding that all the kings of Egypt were "Pharaohs."

The modern research scholars who have made a comparative study of the Bible and the Egyptian history are generally of the opinion that Apophis was the Hyksos king, who was the contemporary of Prophet Joseph.

At that time Memphis was the capital of Egypt, whose ruins are still found on the Nile at a distance of 4 miles south of Cairo. When Prophet Joseph was taken there, he was 17 or 18 years old. He remained in the house of Aziz for three years and spent nine years in prison, and then became the ruler of the land at the age of thirty and ruled over Egypt independently for eighty years. In the ninth or tenth year of his rule he sent for his father,

Prophet Jacob, to come from Palestine to Egypt with all the members of his family and, according to the Bible, settled them in the land of Goshen, where they lived up to the time of Prophet Moses. The Bible says that before his death, Prophet Joseph bound his kindred by an oath: "when you return from this country to the house of your forefathers you must take my bones out of this country with you. So he died a hundred and ten years old, and they embalmed him . . ."

Though the story of Prophet Joseph as given in the Quran differs very much in its details from that given in the Bible and the Talmud, the Three generally agree in regard to its component parts. We shall explain the differences, when and where necessary, in our Explanatory Notes.

Surah Ar-Ra'd

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

Name

This Surah takes its name from the word (ar-Ra'ad) (thunder) that occurs in v. 13. It is merely the symbolic name of the Surah and does not in any way mean that the Surah deals with the scientific problems connected with thunder.

Period of Revelation

The internal evidence (vv. 27-31 and vv. 34-48) shows that this Surah was revealed in the last stage of the Mission of the Holy Prophet at Makkah and during the same period in which Surahs Yunus, Hud and Al-A'araf were sent down. The manner of speech indicates that a long time had passed since the Holy Prophet had been conveying the Message. On the one

hand, his opponents had been contriving different devices to defeat him and his Mission, and, on the other, his followers had been expressing a desire that by showing a miracle the disbelievers might be brought to the Right Way. In answer, Allah impressed on the Believers that it is not His way to convert people by this method and that they should not lose heart, if He is giving the enemies of the Truth a rope long enough to hang themselves. Otherwise, He is able to show such signs as may bring the dead out of their graves and make them speak (v. 31), but even then these obdurate people will invent an excuse to explain this away. All this decisive evidence clearly proves that this Surah was revealed during the last stage of the Prophet's Mission at Makkah.

Central Theme

The first verse enunciates the main theme of this Surah, that is, "The Message of Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) is the very Truth, but it is the fault of the people that they are rejecting it." This is the pivot on which the whole Surah turns. This is why it has been shown over and over again in different ways that the basic components of the Message - Tauhid, Resurrection and Prophethood - are a reality: therefore they should believe sincerely in these for their own moral and spiritual good. They have been warned that they shall incur their own ruin if they reject them, for kufr by itself is sheer folly and ignorance. Moreover, the aim of the Surah is not merely to satisfy the minds but also to appeal to the hearts to accept the Faith. Therefore it does not merely put forward logical arguments in support of the truth of the Message and against the people's wrong notions, but at appropriate intervals it makes frequent use of sympathetic and earnest appeals to win over their hearts by warning them of the consequences of kufr and by holding out the happy rewards of Faith so that the foolish people should give up their obduracy.

Besides this, the objections of the opponents have been answered without any mention of them, and those doubts which are proving a hindrance in

the way of the Message or were being created by the opponents have been removed. At the same time, the Believers; who had been passing through long and hard ordeal and were feeling tired and waiting anxiously for Allah's succor, have been comforted and filled with hope and courage.

