

Taraveeh: Twenty-Second Night

Surah Az-Zukhruf

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

Name

It is derived from the word zukhruf-an which occurs in verse 33 of this Surah.

Period of Revelation

It could not be known from any authentic tradition, but a study of its subject matter shows that this Surah also was sent down in the same period in which the Surahs Al-Mumin, As-Sajdah and Ash-Shura, were sent down. It appears that the revelation of this series of the Surahs began when the disbelievers of Makkah were planning to put an end to the Holy Prophet's life. Day and night they were holding consultations in their assemblies as

how to eliminate him, and even an attack on his life also had been made as has been clearly referred to in vv. 79-80.

Theme and Topics

In this Surah a forceful and severe criticism has been made of the Quraish and the common Arabs creeds and superstitions of ignorance in which they persisted, and their stubbornness has been exposed in a firm and effective way, so that every member of the society, who was reasonable in some degree, should be made to consider the evils in which the community was involved and its tyrannical treatment of the person who was trying to redeem it.

The discourse starts in a way as if to say: "You, by means of your mischiefs, want that the revelation of this Book should be stopped, but Allah has never withheld the appointment of His Prophets and the revelation of His Books because of the mischief of the people, but has destroyed the wicked people, who obstructed the way of His guidance. The same He will do again. A little further in vv. 41-43 and 79-80 the same thing has been reiterated. Though the people who were plotting against his life are meant, the Holy Prophet has been addressed to the effect: "whether you remain alive or not, We will certainly punish the wicked," and the people themselves have been plainly warned to the effect: "If you have decided to take an action against Our Prophet, We too will take a decisive action."

Then, it has been told what is the reality of the religion that the people are following so devotedly and what are the arguments on whose strength they are resisting Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and Blessings).

They themselves admit that the Creator of the earth and heavens and of themselves and their deities is only Allah. They also know and admit that

the blessings they are benefiting from, have been bestowed by Allah; yet they insist on making others associates of Allah in His Godhead.

They regard the servants as the children of Allah, and that too daughters, whom they regard as disgraceful for themselves.

They believe that the angels are goddesses; they have carved their images as females; they adorn them with female dresses and ornaments, and call them daughters of Allah: they worship them and invoke them for the fulfillment of their needs. How did they know that the angels were female?

When they are rebuked for these superstitions, they present the pretense of destiny and say: "Had Allah disapproved of these our practices, we could not have worshiped these images, whereas the means of finding out whether Allah had approved of something or not, are His Books and not those things which are happening in the world according to His Will. For under His Will not only idol worship but crimes like theft and adultery, robbery, murder, etc. also are being committed. Can this argument be used to justify as right and proper this commission of every crime and evil in the world?

When it is asked: Have you any other authority, apart from this wrong argument, for the polytheism of yours? They reply, "The same has been the practice since the time of our forefathers." In other words, this in their opinion is a strong enough argument for a creed's being right and true, whereas the Prophet Abraham, descent from whom is the only basis of their pride and distinction, had rejected the religion of his elders and left his home, and he had discarded every such blind imitation of his forefathers, which did not have the support of any rational argument. Then, if these people had to follow their elders only, for this also they selected their most ignorant elders and abandoned their most illustrious elders like the Prophets Abraham and Ishmael (on whom be peace).

When they are asked: "Has ever a Prophet or a Book sent down by God also given this teaching that others beside Allah too are worthy of worship? they present this practice of the Christians as an argument that they took Jesus son of Mary as son of God and worshiped him; whereas the question was not this whether the community of a Prophet had committed shirk or not, but this whether a Prophet had himself taught shirk. Jesus son of Mary had never said that he was son of God and that the people should worship him. His own was the same teaching which every other Prophet had given "My Lord as well as your Lord is Allah: so worship Him alone."

They were disinclined to believe in the Prophethood of the Holy Prophet because he was neither a rich man nor a person of high worldly position and rank. They said "Had Allah willed to appoint a prophet among us, He would have appointed one of the great men of our two cities (Makkah and Taif). On that very basis, Pharaoh also had looked down upon the Prophet Moses and said: "If Allah, the King of the heavens, had to send a messenger to me, the king of the earth, He would have sent him with bracelets of gold and a company of angels in attendance. Where from has this mendicant appeared I am superior to him, for the kingdom of Egypt belongs to me, and the canals of the River Nile are flowing under my control? What is the status of this man as against me? He has neither wealth nor authority."

Thus, after criticizing each practice of ignorance of the disbelievers and rejecting it with rational arguments, it has been pointed out: "Neither has God any offspring, nor are there separate gods of the earth and heavens, nor is there any intercessor who may be able to protect from His punishment those who adopt deviation knowingly. Allah is far above this that He should have children. He alone is the God of the whole Universe: all others are His servants and not associates in His attributes and powers, and only such men can intercede with Him, who are themselves followers of the Truth and they also can intercede only for those who may have adopted obedience of the Truth in the world."

Surah Ad-Dukhan

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

Name

The Surah takes its name from the word dukhan which occurs in verse 10.

Period of Revelation

Its period of revelation also could not be determined from any authentic tradition, but the internal evidence of the subject matter shows that this Surah too was sent down in the same period in which Surah Zukhruf and a few other earlier Surahs had been revealed. However, this Surah was sent down somewhat later. Its historical background is this: When the disbelievers of Makkah became more and more antagonistic in their attitude and conduct, the Holy Prophet prayed: O God, help me with a famine like the famine of Joseph. He thought that when the people would be afflicted with a calamity, they would remember God, their hearts would soften and they would accept the admonition. Allah granted his prayer, and the whole land was overtaken by such a terrible famine that the people were sorely distressed. At last, some of the Quraish chiefs among whom Hadrat Abdullah bin Masud has particularly mentioned the name of Abu Sufyan came to the Holy Prophet and requested him to pray to Allah to deliver his people from the calamity. On this occasion Allah sent down this Surah.

Subject Matter and Topics

The introduction to the address revealed on this occasion for the admonition and warning of the people of Makkah contained some important points, which are as follows:

1. "You, O People of Makkah, are wrong in thinking that the Quran is being composed by Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace). This Book by itself bears the clear testimony that it is not the composition of a man but of Allah, Lord of the worlds."
2. "You are making a wrong estimate of the worth of this Book. You think it is a calamity that has descended on you, whereas the Hour when Allah, out of sheer mercy, decided to send His Messenger and His Book to you was highly blessed."
3. "You are foolishly involved in the misunderstanding that you will fight this Messenger and this Book and will win, whereas the fact is that the Messenger has been raised and the Book sent down in that particular Hour when Allah decides the destinies, and Allah's decisions are not so weak that they may be changed to a person's liking, nor are they based on ignorance and folly that there may be the likelihood of a mistake or error or weakness in them. They are rather the firm and unalterable decisions of the Ruler of the Universe, Who is All Hearing, All Knowing and All Wise. Therefore, they cannot be treated lightly."
4. "You yourselves acknowledge that Allah alone is the Master and Lord of the earth and heavens and of everything in the Universe and also admit that life and death are only in His power, yet you insist on making others your deities, for which the only argument you offer is that that had been the practice since the time of your forefathers, whereas if a person has the conviction that Allah alone is the Master, Sustainer and Giver of life and death, he can never entertain the doubt that there can be other gods also beside Him, who can be worthy of worship. If your forefathers had committed this folly, there is no reason why you also should continue committing it blindly. As a matter of fact, their Lord too was only One God, Who is your Lord,

and they also should have worshiped only Him, Whom you should worship."

5. "The only demand of Allah's Providence and Mercifulness is not this that He should feed you, but also this that He should arrange guidance for you. For this very guidance He has sent His Messenger and His Book."

After this introduction, the question of the famine that was raging in Makkah has been discussed. As already mentioned, this famine had occurred on the Holy Prophet's prayer, and he had prayed for it so that when the calamity befell it would break the stubbornness of the disbelievers and then they would listen to the rebuke. It looked as if this expectation was being fulfilled to some extent, for some of the most stubborn enemies of the Truth, on account of the severities of the famine, had cried out: "O Lord, avert this torment from us and we will believe." At this, on the one hand, the Holy Prophet has been foretold: "These people will not learn any lesson from such calamities. When they have turned away from the Messenger, whose life, character, works and speech clearly show that he is Allah's true Messenger, how will a mere famine help remove their disbelief?" On the other, the unbelievers have been addressed, so as to say : "You lie when you say that you will believe as soon as the torment is removed from you. We shall just remove it to see how sincere you are in your promise. There is a graver disaster about to fall upon you. You need a much more crushing blow :minor misfortunes cannot set you right."

In this very connection, a reference has been made a little below to Pharaoh and his people, implying that those people also had met with precisely the same trial as the chiefs of the disbelieving Quraish are now afflicted. To them also a similar noble and honorable Messenger had come; they also had seen those express pointers and signs which clearly showed that he had been appointed by Allah; they also had gone on witnessing one sign after the other but they did not give up their stubbornness, till at last they made up their mind to put an end to the Messenger's life, and they

met their doom, which has since become an object lesson for the people for ever.

After this the theme of the Hereafter has been taken up, which the disbelievers of Makkah vehemently denied. They said: "We have never seen anyone rising back to life after death. Raise our forefathers back to life if you are true in your claim about the life hereafter." In response to this, two arguments for the Hereafter have been presented briefly (1) That the denial of this creed has always proved destructive for the morals; and (2) that the universe is not a plaything of a thoughtless deity, but it is a wise system and no work of wisdom is ever vain or useless. Then the disbelievers demand to bring their forefathers back to life has been answered, thus : "This cannot be done every day to meet the demand of the individuals, but Allah has appointed a time when He will resurrect all mankind simultaneously and will subject them to accountability in His Court. If one has to protect oneself there, one should think about it here. For no one will be able to save himself there by his own power, nor by the power of anyone else."

In connection with this Court of Allah, mention has been made of the fate of those who will be declared as culprits and of the rewards of those who will be declared as successful. The discourse has been concluded with this warning: "This Quran has been revealed in simple language in your own tongue so that you may understand it; yet if you do not understand it and insist on seeing your evil end, you may wait; Our Prophet too is waiting. Whatever is to happen, will happen at its own appointed time."

Surah Al-Jathiya

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

Name

It is derived from the sentence wa tart kullu Ummat-in jathiyat-un of verse 28, implying thereby that it is the Surah in which the word jathiyah has occurred.

Period of Revelation

The period of the revelation of this Surah also has not been mentioned in any authentic tradition, but its subject matter clearly shows that it was revealed consecutively after Surah Ad Dukhan. The close resemblance between the contents of the two Surahs makes them look like the twin Surahs.

Subject Matter and Topics

It answers the doubts and objections of the disbelievers of Makkah about Tauhid and the Hereafter and warns them for their attitude that they had adopted against the message of the Qur'an.

The discourse begins with the arguments for Tauhid. In this connection, reference has been made to the count- less Signs that are found in the world, from man's own body to the earth and heavens, and it is pointed out that everywhere around him man finds things which testify to Tauhid which he refuses to acknowledge. If man sees carefully the variety of animals, the day and night, the rainfall and the vegetation thereby, the winds and his own creation, and ponders over them intelligently, without prejudice, he will find these Signs sufficiently convincing of the truth that this universe is not Godless, nor under the control of many gods, but it has been created by One God, and He alone is its Controller and Ruler. However, the case of the person who is determined not to acknowledge and wants to remain involved in doubts and suspicions is different. He cannot be blessed with the faith and conviction from anywhere in the world.

A little below, in the beginning of the second section, it has been reiterated that the things man is exploiting in the world, and the countless forces and agencies that are serving his interests in the universe, did not come into being just accidentally, nor have they been provided by the gods and goddesses, but it is One God alone, Who has supplied and subjected these to him from Himself. If only a person uses his mind properly and rightly, his own intellect will proclaim that God alone is man's real Benefactor and He alone deserves that man should pay obeisance to Him.

After this, the disbelievers of Makkah have been taken to task and reproved for their stubbornness, arrogance, mockery and insistence on disbelief with which they were resisting the invitation of the Qur'an they have been warned that this Qur'an has brought the same blessing which had been granted to the children of Israel before, by virtue of which they became distinguished above all the people of the world. Then, when they failed to recognize the true worth of this blessing and disputed their religion and lost it, this blessing now has been sent to them. This is such a code of guidance which shows the clear highway of Religion to man. The people who would turn it down by their own folly, would only prepare for their own doom, and only such people would become worthy of God's succor and mercy who would adopt obedience to it and lead a life of piety and righteousness.

In this connection, the followers of the Holy Prophet have been instructed that they should forbear and pardon the absurd and foolish behavior towards them of the people fearless of God, for if they showed patience God Himself would deal with their opponents and would reward them for their fortitude.

Then, there is a criticism of the erroneous ideas that the disbelievers hold about the Hereafter. They said that life was only this worldly life there was no life hereafter. Man dies in the course of time just as a watch stops functioning suddenly. The body is not survived by any soul, which might be seized and then breathed again into the human body sometime in the

future. In this regard, they challenged the Holy Prophet, saying: "If you lay a claim to this, then raise our dead forefathers back to life." In answer to this, Allah has given the following arguments:

1. "You do not say this on the basis of any knowledge but are uttering this grave thing on the basis of conjecture. Do you really have the knowledge that there is no other life after death, and the souls are not seized but are annihilated?"
2. "Your claim rests mainly on this that you have not seen any dead person rising back to life and returning to the world. Is this basis strong enough for a person to make a claim that the dead people will never rise to life? When you do not experience and observe a thing, does it mean that you have the knowledge that it does not exist at all?"
3. It is utterly against reason and justice that the good and the bad, the obedient and the disobedient, the oppressor and the oppressed, should be made equal ultimately. Neither a good act should bear a good result nor an evil act an evil result; neither the grievances of the oppressed be redressed nor the oppressor be punished, but everyone should meet with the same fate ultimately. Whoever has formed this view about the universe of God, has formed a patently wrong view. The unjust and wicked people adopt this view because they do not want to face the evil results of their deeds, but this world of God is not a lawless kingdom; it is rather a system based on the Truth, in which there can be no question of the injustice of regarding the good and the bad as equal.
4. That the creed of the denial of the Hereafter is highly destructive of morals. This is adopted only by such people as are the slaves of their lusts, and for the reason that they should have full freedom to serve their lusts. Then, when they have adopted this creed, it goes on making them more and more perverse till at last their moral sense becomes dead and all avenues of guidance are closed against them.

After giving these arguments Allah says most emphatically: "Just as you did not become living of your own accord, but became living by Our power, so you do not die of your own accord, but die when We send death on you."

And a time is certainly coming when you will all be gathered together. If you do not believe in this because of your ignorance and folly today, you may not; when the time arrives, you will see for yourself that you are present before your God and your whole book of conduct is ready accurately, which bears evidence against each of your misdeeds. Then you will come to know how dearly has your denial of the Hereafter and your mockery of it cost you."

Surah Al-Ahqaf

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

Name

It is derived from the sentence idh andhara qauma-hu bil Ahqaf-i of verse 21.

Period of Revelation

It is determined by an historical event that has been mentioned in vv.29-32. This incident of the visit of the jinn and their going back after listening to the Qur'an had occurred, according to agreed traditions of the Hadith and biographical literature, at the time when the Holy Prophet had halted at Makkah during his return journey from Ta'if to Makkah. And according to all authentic historical traditions he had gone to Ta'if three years before the Hijrah: therefore it is determined that this Surah was sent down towards the end of the 10th year or in the early part of the 11th year of the Prophethood.

Historical Background

The 10th year of the Prophethood was a year of extreme persecution and distress in the Holy prophet's life. The Quraish and the other tribes had continued their boycott of the Bani Hashim and the Muslims for three years and the Holy Prophet and the people of his family and Companions lay besieged in Shi'b Abi Talib. The Quraish had blocked up this locality from every side so that no supplies of any kind could reach the besieged people. Only during the Hajj season they were allowed to come out and buy some articles of necessity. But even at that time whenever Abu Lahab noticed any of them approaching the market place or a trading caravan he would call out to the merchants exhorting them to announce forbidding rates of their articles for them, and would pledge that he himself would buy those articles so that they did not suffer any loss. This boycott which continued uninterrupted for three years had broken the back of the Muslims and the Bani Hashim; so much so that at times they were even forced to eat grass and the leaves of trees.

At last, when the siege was lifted this year, Abu Talib, the Holy Prophet's uncle, who had been shielding him for ten long years, died, and hardly a month later his wife, Hadrat Khadijah, who had been a source of peace and consolation for him ever since the beginning of the call, also passed away. Because of these tragic incidents, which closely followed each other, the Holy Prophet used to refer to this year as the year of sorrow and grief.

After the death of Hadrat Khadijah and Abu Talib the disbelievers of Makkah became even bolder against the Holy Prophet. They started treating him even more harshly. So much so that it became difficult for him to step out of his house. Of these days Ibn Hisham has related the incident that a Quraish scoundrel one day threw dust at him openly in the street.

At last, the Holy Prophet left for Ta'if with the intention that he should invite the Bani Thaqif to Islam, for even if they did not accept Islam, they might at

least be persuaded to allow him to work for his mission peacefully. He did not have the facility of any conveyance at that time, and traveled all the way to Ta'if on foot. According to some traditions, he had gone there alone, but according to others, he was accompanied by Zaid bin Harithah. He stayed at Ta'if for a few days, and approached each of the chiefs and nobles of the Bani Thaqif and talked to him about his mission. But not only they refused to listen to him, but plainly gave him the notice that he should leave their city, for they feared that his preaching might "spoil" their younger generation. Thus, he was compelled to leave Ta'if. When he was leaving the city, the chiefs of Thaqif set their slaves and scoundrels behind him, who went on crying at him, abusing him and petting him with stones for a long way from either side of the road till he became broken down with wounds and his shoes were filled with blood. Wearied and exhausted he took shelter in the shade of the wall of a garden outside Ta'if, and prayed:

"O God, to Thee I complain of my weakness, little resource, and lowliness before men. O Most Merciful, Thou art the Lord of the weak, and Thou art my Lord. To whom wilt Thou confide me? To one afar who will misuse me? Or to an enemy to whom Thou hast given power over me? If Thou art not angry with me I care not. Thy favor is more wide for me. I take refuge in the light of Thy countenance by which the darkness is illumined, and the things of this world and the next are rightly ordered, lest Thy anger descend upon me or Thy wrath light upon me. It is for Thee to be satisfied until Thou art well pleased. There is no power and no might save in Thee." (Ibn Hisham: A. Guillaume's Translation, p. 193).

Grieved and heart broken when he returned and reached near Qarn al-Manazil, he felt as though the sky was overcast by clouds. He looked up and saw Gabriel in front of him, who called out: "Allah has heard the way your people have responded. He has, therefore, sent this angel in charge of the mountains. You may command him as you please." Then the angel of the mountains greeted him and submitted: "If you like I would overturn the mountains from either side upon these people." The Holy Prophet

replied: "No, but I expect that Allah will create from their seed those who will worship none but Allah, the One." (Bukhari, Dhikr alMala'ikah; Muslim; Kitab al-Maghazi; Nasa'i ; Al-Bauth).

After this he went to stay for a few days at Makkah, perplexed as to how he would face the people of Makkah, who, he thought, would be still further emboldened against him after hearing what had happened at Ta'if. It was here that one night when he was reciting the Qur'an in the Prayer, a group of the jinn happened to pass by and listened to the Qur'an, believed in it, and returned to their people to preach Islam. Thus, Allah gave His Prophet the good news that if the men were running away from his invitation, there were many of the jinn, who had become its believers, and they were spreading his message among their own kind.

Subject Matter and Topics

Such were the conditions when this Surah was sent down. Anyone who keeps this background in view, on the one hand, and studies this Surah, on the other, will have no doubt left in his mind that this is not at all the composition of Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace), but "a Revelation from the All Mighty, All Wise Allah." For nowhere in this Surah, from the beginning to the end, does one find even a tinge of the human feelings and reactions, which are naturally produced in a man who is passing through such hard conditions. Had it been the word of Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) whom the occurrence of personal griefs one after the other and the countless and the recent bitter experience at Ta'if had caused extreme anguish and distress, it would have reflected in some degree the state of the mind of the man who was the subject of these afflictions and griefs. Consider the prayer that we have cited above: it contains his own language its every word is saturated with the feelings that he had at the time. But this Surah which was sent down precisely in the same period and was recited even by him under the same conditions, is absolutely free from every sign or trace of the time.

The subject matter of the Surah is to warn the disbelievers of the errors in which they were involved, and also resisted arrogantly, and were condemning the man who was trying to redeem them. They regarded the world as a useless and purposeless place where they were not answerable to anyone. They thought that invitation to Tauhid was false and stuck to the belief that their own deities were actually the associates of Allah. They were not inclined to believe that the Qur'an was the Word of the Lord of the worlds. They had a strange erroneous concept of apostleship on the basis of which they were proposing strange criteria of judging the Holy Prophet's claim to it. In their estimation one great proof of Islam's not being based on the truth was that their elders and important chiefs of the tribes and so called leaders of their nation were not accepting it and only a few young men, and some poor folks and some slaves had affirmed faith in it. They thought that Resurrection and life after death and the rewards and punishments of the Hereafter were fabrications whose occurrence was absolutely out of the question.

In this Surah each of these misconceptions has been refuted in a brief but rational way, and the disbelievers have been warned that if they would reject the invitation of the Qur'an and the Prophethood of the Prophet Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) by prejudice and stubbornness instead of trying to understand its truth rationally, they would only be preparing for their own doom.

Surah Muhammad

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

Name

The Surah derives its name from the sentence *wa amanu bi-ma nuzzila ala Muhammad-in* of verse 2, thereby implying that it is the Surah in which the holy name of Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) has occurred. Besides, it has another well known name "al-Qital" also, which is derived from the sentence *wa dhukira fi-hal-qital* of verse 20.

Period of Revelation

The contents of this Surah testify that it was sent down after the hijrah at Madinah at the time when the fighting had been enjoined, though active fighting had not yet been undertaken. Detailed arguments in support of this view have been given in E. N. 8 below.

Historical Background

The conditions at the time when this Surah was sent down were such that the Muslims were being made the target of persecution and tyranny in Makkah in particular and in Arabia in general, and life had become miserable for them. Although the Muslims had emigrated to the haven of Madinah from every side, the disbelieving Quraish were not prepared to leave them alone and let them live in peace even there. Thus, the small settlement of Madinah was hemmed in by the enemy, who was bent upon exterminating it completely. The only alternative left with the Muslims were that either they should surrender to the forces of ignorance, giving up their mission of preaching the true Faith, or even following it in their private lives, or should rise to wage a war at the cost of their lives to settle finally and forever whether Islam would stay in Arabia or the creed of ignorance. On this occasion Allah showed the Muslims the same way of resolution and will, which is the only way for the true believers. He first permitted them to fight in Surah Al Hajj 39 and then enjoined fighting in Al Baqarah 190. But at that time everyone knew fully well what it meant to wage a war in those

conditions. There were only a handful of Muslims in Madinah, who could not muster even a thousand soldiers; yet they were being urged to take up the sword and clash against the pagan forces of the whole of Arabia. Then the kind of the weapons needed to equip its soldiers for war could hardly be afforded by the town in which hundreds of emigrants were still homeless and unsettled even by resort to starving its members at a time when it had been boycotted economically by the Arabs on all sides.

Theme and Subject Matter

Such were the conditions when this Surah was revealed. Its theme is to prepare the believers for war and to give them preliminary instructions in this regard. That is why it has also been entitled al-Qital. It deals with the following topics:

At the outset it is said that of the two groups confronting each other at this time, one has refused to accept the Truth and has become an obstruction for others on the way of Allah, while the other group has accepted the Truth which had been sent down by Allah to His servant, Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings). Now, Allah's final decision is that He has rendered fruitless and vain all the works of the former group and set right the condition and affairs of the latter group.

After this, the Muslims have been given the initial war instructions they have been reassured of Allah's help and guidance: they have been given hope for the best rewards on offering sacrifices in the cause of Allah and they have been assured that their struggle in the cause of the Truth will not go to waste, but they will be abundantly rewarded both in this world and in the Hereafter.

Furthermore, about the disbelievers it has been said that they are deprived of Allah's support and guidance: none of their designs will succeed in their conflict with the believers, and they will meet a most evil fate both in this

world and in the Hereafter. They thought they had achieved a great success by driving the Prophet of Allah out of Makkah, but in fact by this they had hastened their own doom.

After this, the discourse turns to the hypocrites, who were posing to be sincere Muslims before the command to fight was sent down, but were confounded when this command actually came down, and began to conspire with the disbelievers in order to save themselves from the hazards of war. They have been plainly warned to the effect that no act and deed is acceptable to Allah of those who adopt hypocrisy with regard to Him and His Prophet. There, the basic issue against which all those who profess the Faith are being tried is whether one is on the side of the Truth or Falsehood, whether one's sympathies are with Islam and the Muslims or with disbelief and the disbelievers, whether one keeps one's own self and interests dearer or the Truth which one professes to believe in and follow. One who fails in this test is not at all a believer; his Prayer and his Fasting and his discharging of the zakat deserve no reward from Allah.

Then the Muslims have been exhorted not to lose heart for being small in numbers and ill equipped as against the great strength of the disbelievers: they should not show weakness by offering peace to them, which might still further embolden them against Islam and the Muslims, but they should come out with trust in Allah and clash with the mighty forces of disbelief. Allah is with the Muslims: they alone shall triumph; and the might of disbelief will be humbled and vanquished.

In conclusion, the Muslims have been invited to spend their wealth in the cause of Allah. Although at that time they were economically very weak, the problem that they confronted was the very survival of Islam and the Muslims. The importance and delicacy of the problem demanded that the Muslims should not only risk their lives for safeguarding themselves and their Faith from the dominance of disbelief and for exalting Allah's Religion but should also expend their economic resources as far as possible in the

preparations for war. Therefore, they were clearly warned to the effect: Anyone who adopted a niggardly attitude at the time, would not, in fact, harm Allah at all, but would result in his own destruction, for Allah does not stand in need of help from men. If one group of men shirked offering sacrifices in the cause of His Religion, Allah would remove it and bring another group in its place.

Surah Al-Fat-h

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

Name

It is derived from the words inna fatah-na laka fat-han mubina of the very first verse. This is not only a name of the Surah but also its title in view of the subject matter, for it deals with the great victory that Allah granted to the Holy Prophet and the Muslims in the form of the Truce of Hudaibiyah.

Period of Revelation

Traditions concur that it was sent down in Dhill-Qadah, A. H. 6, at a time when the Holy Prophet was on his return journey to Madinah after concluding the Truce of Hudaibiyah with the disbelievers of Makkah.

Historical Background

The events in connection with which this Surah was sent down began like this: One day the Holy Prophet saw in a dream that he had gone to Makkah with his Companions and had performed the umrah there. Obviously, the Prophet's dream could not be a mere dream and fiction for it is a kind of Divine inspiration as Allah Himself has confirmed in verse 27 below and

said that He Himself had shown that dream to His Messenger. Therefore, it was not merely a dream but a Divine inspiration which the Holy Prophet had to obey and follow.

Apparently, there was no possible way of acting on this inspiration. The disbelieving Quraish had debarred the Muslims from proceeding to the Ka'bah for the past six years and no Muslim had been allowed during that period to approach the Kabah for the purpose of performing hajj and umrah. Therefore, it could not be expected that they would allow the Holy Prophet to enter Makkah along with a party of his Companions. If they had proceeded to Makkah in the pilgrim garments with the intention of performing umrah, along with their arms, this would have provoked the enemy to war, and if they had proceeded unarmed, this would have meant endangering his own as well as his Companions' lives. Under conditions such as these nobody could see and suggest how the Divine inspiration could be acted upon.

But the Prophet's position was different. It demanded that he should carry out whatever Command his Lord gave fearlessly and without any apprehension and doubt. Therefore, the Holy Prophet informed his Companions of his dream and began to make preparations for the journey. Among the tribes living in the suburbs also he had the public announcement made that he was proceeding for umrah and the people could join him. Those who could only see the apparent conditions thought that he and his Companions were going into the very jaws of death none of them therefore was inclined to accompany him in the expedition. But those who had true faith in Allah and His Messenger were least bothered about the consequences. For them this information was enough that it was a Divine inspiration and Allah's Prophet had made up his mind to carry it into effect. After this nothing could hinder them from accompanying the Messenger of Allah. Thus, 1,400 of the Companions became ready to follow him on this highly dangerous journey.

This blessed caravan set off from Madinah in the beginning of Dhil Qa'dah, A. H. 6. At Dhul Hulaifah they entered the pilgrims robe with the intention of umrah, took 70 camels with collars round their necks indicating that they were sacrificial animals; kept only a sword each in sheaths, which the pilgrims to the Kabah were allowed to carry according to the recognized custom of Arabia, but no other weapon. Thus, the caravan set out for the Ka'bah, the House of Allah, at Makkah, chanting the prescribed slogan of Labbaik, Allahuma Labbaik.

The nature of the relations between Makkah and Madinah in those days was known too well to every Arab. Just the previous year, in Shawwal A. H. 5, the Quraish mustering the united strength of the Arab tribes had invaded Madinah and the well known Battle of the Trench had taken place. Therefore, when the Holy Prophet along with such a large caravan set off for the home of his blood-thirsty enemy, the whole of Arabia looked up with amazement, and the people also noticed that the caravan was not going with the intention to fight but was proceeding to the House of Allah in a forbidden month in the pilgrims garb carrying sacrificial animals and was absolutely unarmed.

The Quraish were confounded at this bold step taken by the Holy Prophet. Dhil-Qa'dah was one of those forbidden months which had been held as sacred for pilgrimage in Arabia for centuries. Nobody had a right to interfere with a caravan which might be coming for hajj or umrah in the pilgrims garb in this month; so much so that even an enemy tribe could not hinder it from passing through its territory according to the recognized law of the land. The Quraish therefore were caught in a dilemma, for if they attacked this caravan from Madinah and stopped it from entering Makkah, this would arouse a clamor of protest in the whole country, and all the Arab tribes would have the misgiving that the Quraish had monopolized the Ka'bah as exclusively their own, and every tribe would be involved in the mistrust that now it depended on the will of the Quraish to allow or not to allow anyone to perform hajj or umrah in the future and that they would stop any tribe

with which they were angry from visiting the Ka'bah just as they had stopped the Madinese pilgrims. This they thought would be a grave mistake, which would cause the entire Arabia to revolt against them. But, on the other hand, if they allowed Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) and his large caravan to enter their city safely, they would lose their image of power in Arabia and the people would say that they were afraid of Muhammad. At last, after a great deal of confusion, perplexity and hesitation they were overcome by their false sense of honor and for the sake of their prestige they took the decision that they would at no cost allow the caravan to enter the city of Makkah.

The Holy Prophet had dispatched a man of the Bani Ka'b as a secret agent so that he may keep him fully informed of the intentions and movements of the Quraish. When the Holy Prophet reached Usfan, he brought the news that the Quraish had reached Dhi Tuwa with full preparations and they had sent Khalid bin Walid with two hundred cavalry men in advance towards Kura'al-Ghamim to intercept him. The Quraish wanted somehow to provoke the Holy Prophet's Companions into fighting so that they may tell the Arabs that those people had actually come to fight and had put on the pilgrims garments for umrah only to deceive others.

Immediately on receipt of this information the Holy Prophet changed his route and following a very rugged, rocky track reached Hudaibiyah, which was situated right on the boundary of the sacred Makkan territory. Here, he was visited by Budail bin Warqa the chief of the Bani Khuza'ah, along with some men of his tribe. They asked what he had come for. The Holy Prophet replied that he and his Companions had come only for pilgrimage to the House of Allah and for going round it in worship and not for war. The men of Khuza'ah went and told this to the Quraish chiefs and counseled them not to interfere with the pilgrims. But the Quraish were obstinate. They sent Hulays bin Alqamah, the chief of the Ahabish, to the Holy Prophet to persuade him to go back. Their object was that when Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) would not listen to Hulays, he

would come back disappointed and then the entire power of the Ahabish would be on their side. But when Hulays went and saw that the whole caravan had put on the pilgrims garments, had brought sacrificial camels with festive collars round their necks, and had come for doing reverence to the House of Allah and not to fight, he returned to Makkah without having any dialogue with the Holy Prophet and told the Quraish chiefs plainly that those people had no other object but to pay a visit to the Ka'bah; if they debarred them from it, the Ahabish would not join them in that, because they had not become their allies to support them even if they violated the sacred customs and traditions.

Then the Quraish sent `Urwah bin Mas'ud Thaqafi; he had lengthy negotiations with the Holy Prophet in an effort to persuade him to give up his intention to enter Makkah. But the Holy Prophet gave him also the same reply that he had given to the chief of the Khuza'ah, that they had not come to fight but to do honor to the House of Allah and carry out a religious duty. Urwah went back and said to the Quraish: "I have been to the courts of the Caesar and Khosroes, and the Negus also, but by God, never have I seen any people so devoted to a king as are the Companions of Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) to him. If Muhammad makes his ablutions they would not let the water thereof fall on the ground but would rub it on their bodies and clothes. Now you may decide as to what you should do."

In the meantime when the messages were coming and the negotiations were going on, the Quraish tried again and again to quietly launch sudden attacks on the Muslim camp in order to provoke the Companions and somehow incite them to war, but every time they did so the Companions' forbearance and patience and the Holy Prophet's wisdom and sagacity frustrated their designs. On one occasion forty or fifty of their men came at night and attacked the Muslim camp with stones and arrows. The Companions arrested all of them and took them before the Holy Prophet, but he let them go. On another occasion 80 men came from the direction of

Tan'im right at the time of the Fajr Prayer and made a sudden attack. They were also caught, but the Holy Prophet forgave them, too. Thus, the Quraish went on meeting failure after failure in every one of their designs.

At last, the Holy Prophet sent Hadrat Uthman (may Allah be pleased with him) as his own messenger to Makkah with the message that they had not come to fight but only for pilgrimage and had brought their sacrificial camels along, and they would go back after performing the rite of pilgrimage and offering the sacrifice. But the Quraish did not agree and withheld Hadrat Uthman in the city. In the meantime a rumor spread that Hadrat Uthman had been killed; and when he did not return in time the Muslims took the rumor to be true. Now they could show no more forbearance. Entry into Makkah was different for there was no intention to use force. But when the ambassador was put to death, the Muslims had no alternative but to prepare for war. Therefore, the Holy Prophet summoned all his Companions together and took a solemn pledge from them that they would fight to death. In view of the critical occasion it was not an ordinary undertaking. The Muslims numbered only 1400 and had come without any weapons, were encamping at the boundary of Makkah, 250 miles away from their own city, and the enemy could attack them in full strength, and could surround them with its allies from the adjoining tribes as well. In spite of this, none from the caravan except one man failed to give his pledge to fight to death, and there could be no greater proof of their dedication and sincerity than that in the cause of Allah. This pledge is well known in the history of Islam as the pledge of Ridwan.

Later it was known that the news about Hadrat Uthman was false. Not only did he return but under Suhail bin'Amr from the Quraish also arrived a deputation to negotiate peace with the Holy Prophet. Now, the Quraish no more insisted that they would disallow the Holy Prophet and his Companions to enter Makkah. However, in order to save their face they only insisted that he went back that year but could come the following year

to perform the umrah. After lengthy negotiations peace was concluded on the following terms:

1. War would remain suspended for ten years, and no party would indulge in any hostility, open or secret, against the other.
2. If anyone during that period from among the Quraish went over to Muhammad, without his guardian's permission, he would return him to them, but if a Companion of Muhammad came over to the Quraish, they would not return him to him.
3. Every Arab tribe would have the option to join either side as its ally and enter the treaty.
4. Muhammad and his men would go back that year and could come the following year for umrah and stay in Makkah for three days, provided that they brought only one sheathed sword each, and no other weapon of war. In those three days the Makkans would vacate the city for them (so that there was no chance of a clash), but they would not be allowed to take along any Makkan on return.

When the conditions of the treaty were being settled, the whole of the Muslim army was feeling greatly upset. No one understood the expedience because of which the Holy Prophet was accepting the conditions. No one was far sighted enough to foresee the great benefit that was to result from this treaty. The disbelieving Quraish looked at it as their victory, and the Muslims were upset as to why they should be humiliated to accepting those mean conditions. Even a statesman of the caliber of Hadrat Umar says that he had never given way to doubt since the time he had embraced Islam but on this occasion he also could not avoid it. Impatient he went to Hadrat Abu Bakr and said "Is he (the Holy Prophet) not Allah's Messenger, and are we not Muslims, and are they not polytheists? Then, why should we agree to what is humiliating to our Faith?" He replied "O Umar, he is surely Allah's Messenger, and Allah will never make him the loser." Unsatisfied he went to the Holy Prophet himself and put the same questions to him, and he also gave him the same replies as Hadrat Abu-Bakr had given. Afterwards Hadrat Umar continued to offer voluntary prayers and give aims so that

Allah may pardon his insolence that he had shown towards the Holy Prophet on that occasion.

Two things in the treaty were highly disturbing for the Muslims first, the second condition, about which they said that it was an expressly unfair condition, for if they had to return a fugitive from Makkah, why should not the Quraish return a fugitive from Madinah? To this the Holy Prophet replied: "What use would be he to us, who fled from us to them? May Allah keep him away from us! And if we return the one who flees to us from them, Allah will create some other way out for him." The other thing that was rankling in their minds was the fourth condition. The Muslims thought that agreeing to it meant that they were going back unsuccessful and this was humiliating. Furthermore, the question that was causing them feel upset was that they had accepted the condition of going back without performing the pilgrimage to the Ka'bah, whereas the Holy Prophet had seen in the vision that they were performing tawaf at Makkah. To this the Holy Prophet replied that in his vision the year had not been specified. According to the treaty conditions, therefore, they would perform the tawaf the following year if it pleased Allah.

Right at the time when the document was being written, Suhail bin 'Amr's own son, Abu Jandal, who had become a Muslim and been imprisoned by the pagans of Makkah somehow escaped to the Holy Prophet's camp. He had fetters on his feet and signs of violence on his body. He implored the Holy Prophet that he help secure his release from imprisonment. The scene only increased the Companions' dejection, and they were moved beyond control. But Suhail bin 'Amr said the conditions of the agreement had been concluded between them although the writing was not yet complete; therefore, the boy should be returned to them. The Holy Prophet admitted his argument and Abu Jandal was returned to his oppressors.

When the document was finished, the Holy Prophet spoke to the Companions and told them to slaughter their sacrificial animals at that very

place, shave their heads and put off the pilgrim garments, but no one moved from his place. The Holy Prophet repeated the order thrice but the Companions were so overcome by depression and dejection that they did not comply. During his entire period of apostleship on no occasion had it ever happened that he should command his Companions to do a thing and they should not hasten to comply with it. This caused him a great shock, and he repaired to his tent and expressed his grief before his wife, Hadrat Umm Salamah. She said, "You may quietly go and slaughter your own camel and call the barber and have your head shaved. After that the people would automatically do what you did and would understand that whatever decision had been taken would not be changed." Precisely the same thing happened. The people slaughtered their animals, shaved their heads or cut their hair short and put off the pilgrim garb, but their hearts were still afflicted with grief.

Later, when this caravan was returning to Madinah, feeling depressed and dejected at the truce of Hudaibiyah, this Surah came down at Dajnan (or according to some others, at Kura' al-Ghamim), which told the Muslims that the treaty that they were regarding as their defeat, was indeed a great victory. After it had come down, the Holy Prophet summoned the Muslims together and said: "Today such a thing has been sent down to me, which is more valuable to me than the world and what it contains." Then he recited this Surah, especially to Hadrat Umar, for he was the one who was feeling most dejected.

Although the believers were satisfied when they heard this Divine Revelation, not much longer afterwards the advantages of this treaty began to appear one after the other until everyone became fully convinced that this peace treaty indeed was a great victory:

1. In it for the first time the existence of the Islamic State in Arabia was duly recognized. Before this in the eyes of the Arabs the position of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) and his

Companions was no more than of mere rebels against the Quraish and other Arab tribes, and they regarded them as the outlaws. Now the Quraish themselves by concluding this agreement with the Holy Prophet recognized his sovereignty over the territories of the Islamic State and opened the way for the Arab tribes to enter treaties of alliance with either of the political powers they liked.

2. By admitting the right of pilgrimage to the House of Allah for the Muslims, the Quraish also admitted that Islam was not an anti-religious creed, as they had so far been thinking, but it was one of the admitted religions of Arabia, and like the other Arabs, its followers also had the right to perform the rites of hajj and umrah. This diminished the hatred in the Arabs hearts that had been caused by the propaganda made by the Quraish against Islam.
3. The signing of a no-war pact for ten years provided full peace to the Muslims, and spreading to every nook and corner of Arabia they preached Islam with such spirit and speed that within two years after Hudaibiyah the number of the people who embraced Islam far exceeded those who had embraced it during the past 19 year or so. It was all due to this treaty that two years later when in consequence of the Quraish's violating the treaty the Holy Prophet invaded Makkah, he was accompanied by an army 10,000 strong, whereas on the occasion of Hudaibiyah only 1,400 men had joined him in the march.
4. After the suspension of hostilities by the Quraish the Holy Prophet had the opportunity to establish and strengthen Islamic rule in the territories under him and to turn the Islamic society into a full fledged civilization and way of life by the enforcement of Islamic law. This is that great blessing about which Allah says in verse 3 of Surah Al-Ma'idah: "Today I have perfected your Religion for you and completed My blessing on you and approved Islam as the Way of Life for you." (for explanation, see Introduction to Surah Al-Ma'idah and its E. N. 15).
5. Another gain that accrued from the truce with the Quraish was that being assured of peace from the south the Muslims overpowered all the opponent forces in the north and central Arabia easily. Just three months after Hudaibiyah, Khaiber, the major stronghold of the Jews, was conquered and after it the Jewish settlements of Fadak, Wad-

ilQura, Taima and Tabuk also fell to Islam one after the other. Then all other tribes of central Arabia, which were bound in alliance with the Jews and Quraish, came under the sway of Islam. Thus, within two years after Hudaibiyah the balance of power in Arabia was so changed that the strength of the Quraish and pagan gave way and the domination of Islam became certain.

These were the blessings that the Muslims gained from the peace treaty which they were looking upon as their defeat and the Quraish as their victory. However, what had troubled the Muslims most in this treaty, was the condition about the fugitives from Makkah and Madinah, that the former would be returned and the latter would not be returned. But not much long afterwards this condition also proved to be disadvantageous for the Quraish, and experience revealed what far reaching consequences of it had the Holy Prophet foreseen and then accepted it. A few days after the treaty a Muslim of Makkah, Abu Basir, escaped from the Quraish and reached Madinah. The Quraish demanded him back and the Holy Prophet returned him to their men who had been sent from Makkah to arrest him. But while on the way to Makkah he again fled and went and sat on the road by the Red Seashore, which the trade caravans of the Quraish took to Syria. After that every Muslim who succeeded in escaping from the Quraish would go and join Abu Basir instead of going to Madinah, until 70 men gathered there. They would attack any Quraish caravan that passed the way and cut it into pieces at last, the Quraish themselves begged the Holy Prophet to call those men to Madinah, and the condition relating to the return of the fugitives of itself became null and void.

The Surah should be read with this historical background in view in order to fully understand it.

