

Taraveeh: Twenty-Sixth Night

Surah Al-Jinn

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

Name

“Al-Jinn” is the name of this Surah as well as the title of its subject matter, for in it the event of the Jinn's hearing the Qur'an and returning to their people to preach Islam to them, has been related in detail.

Period of Revelation

According to a tradition related in Bukhari and Muslim, on the authority of Hadrat Abdullah bin Abbas, once the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) was going to Visit the Fair of Ukaz with some of his Companions, On the way he led the Fajr Prayer at Nakhlah. At that time a company of the jinn happened to pass that way. When they heard the Quran being recited, they

tarried and listened to it attentively. This very event has been described in this Surah.

Most of the commentators, on the basis of this tradition, believe that this relates to the Holy Prophet's well known journey to Taif, which had taken place three years before the Hijrah in the 10th year of the Prophethood. But this is not correct for several reasons. The jinn's hearing the Qur'an during the journey to Taif has been related in Al-Ahqaf 29-32. A cursory reading of those verses shows that the jinn who had believed after hearing the Qur'an on that occasion were already believers in the Prophet Moses and the previous scriptures. On the contrary, vv. 2-7 of this surah clearly show that the jinn who heard the Qur'an on this occasion were polytheists and deniers of the Hereafter and Prophethood. Then, it is confirmed historically that in his journey to Taif none accompanied the Holy Prophet except Hadrat Zaid bin Harithah. On the contrary, concerning this journey Ibn Abbas says that the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) was accompanied by some of his Companions. Furthermore, the traditions also agree that in that journey the jinn heard the Qur'an when the Holy Prophet had stopped at Nakhlah on his return journey from Taif to Makkah, and in this journey, according to the traditions of Ibn Abbas, the event of the jinn's hearing the Qur'an occurred when the Holy Prophet was going to Ukaz from Makkah. Therefore, in view of these reasons what seems to be correct is that in Surah Al-Ahqaf and Surah Al Jinn, one and the same event has not been narrated, but these were two separate events, which took place during two separate journeys.

As far as Surah Al-Ahqaf is concerned, it is agreed that the event mentioned in it occurred on the return journey from Taif in the 10th year of Prophethood. As for the question, when this second event took place, its answer is not given by the tradition of Ibn Abbas, nor any other historical tradition shows as to when the Holy Prophet had gone to the Fair of Ukaz along with some of his Companions. However, a little consideration of vv 8-10 of this surah shows that this could only be an event of the earliest stage

of Prophethood. In these verses it has been stated that before the appointment of the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) to Divine Mission the jinn used to have one or another opportunity to eavesdrop in the heavens in order to hear news of the unseen, but after it they suddenly found that angels had been set as guards and meteorites were being shot on every side so that they could find no place of safety from where they could hear the secret news. Thereupon they had set about searching for the unusual thing that had occurred on the earth, or was going to occur, because of which the security measures had been tightened up. Probably since then many companies of the jinn must have been moving about in search of the unusual occurrence and one of them after having heard the Qur'an from the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) must have formed the opinion that that was the very thing for the sake of which all the gates of the heavens had been shut against the jinn.

Reality of Jinn

Before one starts the study of this Surah one must clearly know what is the reality of the jinn so as to avoid any possible mental confusion. Many people of the modern times are involved in the misunderstanding that the jinn are not real, but only a figment of the ancient superstition and myths. They have not formed this opinion on the basis that they have known all the realities and truths about the universe and have thus discovered that the jinn do not exist. They cannot claim to possess any such knowledge either. But they have assumed without reason and proof that nothing exists in the universe except what they can see, whereas the sphere of human perceptions as against the vastness of this great universe is not even comparable to a drop of water as against the ocean. Here, the person who thinks that what he does not perceive, does not exist, and what exists must necessarily be perceived, in fact, provides a proof of the narrowness of his own mind. With this mode of thought, not to speak of the jinn, man cannot even accept and acknowledge any reality, which he cannot directly

experience and observe, and he cannot even admit the existence of God, to say nothing of admitting any other unseen reality.

Those of the Muslims who have been influenced by modernism, but cannot deny the Qur'an either, have given strange interpretations of the clear statements of the Qur'an about the jinn, Iblis and Satan. They say that this does not refer to any hidden creation, which may have its own independent existence, but it sometimes implies man's own animal forces, which have been called Satan, and sometimes it implies savage and wild mountain tribes, and sometimes the people who used to listen to the Qur'an secretly. But the statements of the Qur'an in this regard are so clear and explicit that these interpretations bear no relevance to them whatever.

The Qur'an frequently mentions the jinn and the men in a manner as to indicate that they are two separate creations. For this, see Al Araf: 38, Hind : 119, Ha Mim As-Sajdah:25,29, Ahqaf: 18, Adh Dhariyat: 56, and the entire surah Ar-Rahman, which bears such clear evidence as to leave no room to regard the jinn as a human species.

In Surah Al-Araf: 12, Al Hizr : 26-27 and Ar-Rahman: 14-19, it has been expressly stated that man was created out of clay and jinn out of fire.

In Surah Al Hizr: 27, it has been said that the jinn had been created before man. The same thing is testified by the story of Adam and Iblis, which has been told at seven different places in the Qur'an, and at every place it confirms that Iblis was already there at the creation of man. Moreover, in surah Al-Kahf: 50, it has been stated that Iblis belonged to the jinn.

In surah Al-Araf: 27, it has been stated in clear words that the jinn see the human beings but the human beings do not see them.

In surah Al-Hizr: 16-18, surah As-Saaffat: 6-10 and surah Al-Mulk: 5, it has been said that although the jinn can ascend to the heavens, they cannot exceed a certain limit; if they try to ascend beyond that limit and try to hear

what goes on in the heavens, they are not allowed to do so, and if they try to eavesdrop they are driven away by meteorites. By this the belief of the polytheistic Arabs that the jinn possess the knowledge of the unseen, or have access to Divine secrets, has been refuted. The same error has also been refuted in Saba: 14.

Al-Baqarah: 30-34 and Al-Kahf: 50 show that Allah has entrusted man with the vicegerency of the earth and the men are superior to the jinn. Although the jinn also have been given certain extraordinary powers and abilities an example of which is found in An-Naml 39, yet the animals likewise have been given some powers greater than man, but these are no argument that the animals are superior to man.

The Qur'an also explains that the jinn, like men, are a creation possessed of power and authority, and they, just like them, can choose between obedience and disobedience, faith and disbelief. This is confirmed by the story of Satan and the event of the jinn affirming the faith as found in Surahs Al-Ahqaf and Al-Jinn.

At scores of places in the Qur'an, it has also been stated that Iblis at the very creation of Adam had resolved to misguide mankind, and since then the Satanic jinn have been persistently trying to mislead man, but they do not have the power to overwhelm him and make him do something forcibly. However, they inspire him with evil suggestions, beguile him and make evil seem good to him. For this, see An-Nisa 117-120, Al-Araf: 11-17, Ibrahim: 22, Al-Hijr: 30-42, An-Nahl 98-100, Bani Israil 61-65.

The Qur'an also tells us that in the pre Islamic ignorance the polytheistic Arabs regarded the jinn as associates of God, worshiped them and thought they were descended from God. For this, see Al-An'am: 100, Saba : 40-41, As Saffat: 158.

From these details, it becomes abundantly clear that the jinn have their own objective existence and are a concealed creation of an entirely

different species from man. Because of their mysterious qualities, ignorant people have formed exaggerated notions and concepts about them and their powers, and have even worshiped them, but the Qur'an has explained the whole truth about them, which shows what they are and what they are not.

Theme and Topics

In this Surah in vv. 1-15, it has been told what was the impact of the Qur'an on the company of the jinn when they heard it and what they said to their fellow jinn when they returned to them. Allah, in this connection, has not cited their whole conversation but only those particular things which were worthy of mention. That is why the styles not that of a continuous speech but sentences have been cited so as to indicate that they said this and this. If one studies these sentences spoken by the jinn carefully, one can easily understand the real object of the narration of this event of their affirming the faith and or mentioning this conversation of theirs with their people in the Qur'an. The explanations that we have given of their statements in our Notes will be of further help in understanding this object.

After this, in vv 16-18, the people have been admonished to the effect: "If you refrain from polytheism and follow the way of righteousness firmly, you will be blessed; otherwise if you turn away from the admonition sent down by Allah, you will meet with a severe punishment." Then, in vv. 19-23, the disbelievers of Makkah have been reproached, as if to say: When the Messenger of Allah calls you towards Allah, you surround and mob him from every side, whereas the only duty of the Messenger is to convey the messages of Allah. He does not claim to have any power to bring any gain or cause any harm to the people." Then, in vv. 24-25 the disbelievers have been warned to the effect: "Today you are trying to overpower and suppress the Messenger seeing that he is helpless and friendless, but a time will come when you will know who in actual fact is helpless and friendless. Whether that time is yet far off, or near at hand, the Messenger

has no knowledge thereof, but it will come to pass in any case." In conclusion, the people have been told: The Knower of the unseen is Allah alone. The Messenger receives only that knowledge which Allah is pleased to give him. This knowledge pertains to matters connected with the performance of the duties of Prophethood and it is delivered to him in such security which does not admit of any external interference whatever.

Surah Al-Muzzammil

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

Name

The Surah has been so designated after the word al-muzzammil occurring in the very first verse. This is only a name and not a title of its subject matter.

Period of Revelation

The two sections of this Surah were revealed in two separate periods.

The first section (vv. 1-19) is unanimously a Makki Revelation, and this is supported both by its subject matter and by the traditions of the Hadith. As for the question, in which specific period of the life at Makkah it was revealed, it is not answered by the tradition, but the internal evidence of the subject matter of this section helps to determine the period of its revelation.

First, in it the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) has been instructed to the effect: "Arise during the night and worship Allah so that you may develop the capability to shoulder the heavy burden of Prophethood and to

discharge its responsibilities." This shows that this Command must have been given in the earliest period of the Prophethood ' when training was being imparted to the Holy prophet by Allah for this office.

Secondly, a Command has been given in it that the Qur'an be recited in, the Tahajjud Prayer for half the night, or thereabout. This Command by itself points out that by that time at least so much of the Qur'an had been revealed as could be recited for that long.

Thirdly, in this section the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) has been exhorted to have patience at the excesses being committed by his opponents, and the disbelievers of Makkah have been threatened with the torment. This shows that this section was revealed at a time when the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) had openly started preaching Islam and the opposition to him at Makkah had grown active and strong.

About the second section (v. 20) although many of the commentators have expressed the opinion that this too was sent down at Makkah, yet some other commentators regard it as a Madani Revelation, and this same opinion is confirmed by the subject matter of this section. For it mentions fighting in the way of Allah, and obviously, there could be no question of it at Makkah; it also contains the Command to pay the obligatory zakat, and it is fully confirmed that the zakat at a specific rate and with an exemption limit (nisab) was enjoined at Madinah.

Theme and Subject Matter

In the first seven verses the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) has been commanded to the effect: "Prepare yourself to shoulder the responsibilities of the great Mission that has been entrusted to you; its practical form is that you should rise during the hours of night and stand up in Prayer for half the night, or for a little more or less of it."

In vv. 8-14, he has been exhorted to the effect: "Devote yourself exclusively to that God Who is the Owner of the whole universe. Entrust all your affairs to Him with full satisfaction of the heart. Bear with patience whatever your opponents may utter against you. Do not be intimate with them. Leave their affair to God: He Himself will deal with them."

Then, in vv. 15-19, those of the people of Makkah, who were opposing the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) have been warned, so as to say: "We have sent a Messenger to you just as We sent a Messenger to the Pharaoh. Just consider what fate the Pharaoh met when he did not accept the invitation of the Messenger of Allah. Supposing that you are not punished by a tormenting this world, how will you save yourselves from the punishment for disbelief on the Day of Resurrection."

This is the subject matter of the first section. The second section, according to a tradition from Hadrat Sa'id bin Jubair, was sent down ten years later, and in it the initial Command given in connection with the Tahajjud Prayer, in the beginning of the first section, was curtailed. The new Command enjoined, "Offer as much of the Tahajjud Prayer as you easily can, but what the Muslims should particularly mind and attend to is the five times obligatory Prayer a day; they should establish it regularly and punctually; they should discharge their zakat dues accurately; and they should spend their wealth with sincere intentions for the sake of Allah. In conclusion, the Muslims have been exhorted, saying: "Whatever good works you do in the world, will not go waste, but they are like the provision which a traveler sends up in advance to his permanent place of residence. Whatever good you send up from the world, you will find it with Allah, and the provision thus sent up is much better than what you will have to leave behind in the world, and with Allah you will also get a much better and richer reward than what you have actually sent up before."

Surah Al-Muddaththir

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

Name

The Surah takes its name from the word al-muddaththir in the first verse. This also is only a name, not a title of its subject matter.

Period of Revelation

The first seven verses of this Surah belong to the earliest period at Makkah. Even according to some traditions which have been related in Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi, Musnad Ahmad, etc., on the authority of Hadrat Jabir bin Abdullah, these are the very earliest verses of the Qur'an to be revealed to the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace). But the Muslim Ummah almost unanimously agreed that the earliest Revelation to the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) consisted of the first five verses of Surah Al-Alaq(XCVI) However, what is established by authentic traditions is that after this first Revelation, no Revelation came down to the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) for quite some time. Then, when it was resumed, it started with theme verses of Surah Al-Muddaththir. Imam Zuhri has given the following details of it:

"Revelation to the Holy Prophet remained suspended for quite some time, and it was such a period of deep grief and distress for him that he started going early to the tops of the mountains to throw himself down from them. But whenever he stood on the edge of a peak, the Angel Gabriel would appear and tell him that he was Allah's Prophet. This would console him and restore to him full peace of mind." (Ibn Jarir).

After this Imam Zuhri relates the following tradition on the authority of Hadrat Jabir bin Abdullah:

"The Ho]y Messenger of Allah describing the period of falrat al-wahi (break in revelation) said: One day whenI was passing on the way, I suddenly heard a call from heaven. I raised my head and saw that the same Angel who had visited me in the Cave of Hira was sitting on a throne between heaven and earth. This struck terror in my heart, and reaching home quickly, I said: 'Cover me up, cover me up'. So the people of the house covered me up with a quilt (or blanket). At that time Allah sent down the Revelation: Yaayyuh al-Muddaththiru. From then on revelation became intense and continuous." (Bukhari, Muslim Musnad Ahmad, Ibn Jarir).

The rest of the Surah (vv. 8-56) was revealed when the first Hajj season came after public preaching of Islam had begun in Makkah. This has been fully well described in the Sirah by Ibn Hisham and we shall cite it below.

Theme and Subject Matter

As has been explained above, the earliest Revelation to the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) consisted of the first five verses of Surah Al-Alaq, in which it had been Said: "Read (O Prophet), in the name of your Lord, Who created: created man from a clot of congealed blood. Read: and your Lord is Most Generous, Who taught knowledge by the pen, taught man what he did not know."

This was the first experience of Revelation met with suddenly by the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace). in this message it was not told what great mission he had been entrusted with and what duties he had to perk form in future. He was only initiated into it and then left alone for a time so that the great strain this experience had caused should pass away and he should mentally become prepared to receive the Revelation and perform the prophetic mission in the future. After this intermission when Revelation Was

resumed, the first seven verses of this Surah We revealed: In these he Was for the first time commanded to arise and warn the people of the consequences of the way of life they were following and to proclaim the greatness of God in the world where others were being magnified without any right. Along with that he was given this instruction: The demand of the Unique mission that you have to perform, now is that your life should be pure in every respect and you should carry out the duty of reforming your people sincerely irrespective of any worldly gain. Then, in the last sentence, he was exhorted to endure with patience, for the sake of his Lord, all the hardships and troubles that he might have to face while performing his mission.

In the implementation of this Divine Command when the Holy Messenger of Allah began to preach Islam and recite the Qur'anic Surahs revealed successively, the people of Makkah felt alarmed, and it provoked a great storm of opposition and hostility. A few months passed in this state until the Hajj season approached. The people of Makkah feared that if Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) started visiting the caravans of the pilgrims coming from all over Arabia at their halting places and reciting the spell binding and unique Revelations of the Qur'an in their assemblies on the occasion of Hajj, his message would reach every part of Arabia and influence countless people. Therefore, the Quraish chiefs held a conference and settled that they would start a propaganda campaign against the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) among the pilgrims as soon as they arrived. After they had agreed on this, Walid bin al-Mughirah said to the assembled people: "If you said contradictory things about Muhuammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings), we all would lose our trust among the people. Therefore, let us agree upon one opinion, which we should all say without dispute. Some people said that they would call Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) a soothsayer. Walid said: No, by God, be is not a soothsayer. We have seen the soothsayers: what they murmur and what they utter has no remote

resemblance with the Qur'an. Some other people said: Then we say he is possessed. Walid said: He is not a possessed one: we have seen bad and insane people; the way one talks disjointedly and behaves foolishly in that state is known to all: who would believe that what Muhammad (upon whom be peace) presented was the incoherent speech of a madman? The people said: Then we say he is a poet. Walid said: No, he is not a poet, for we know poetry in all its forms, and what he presents conforms to no form of it. The people said: Then he is a sorcerer. Walid said: He is no sorcerer either: we have seen sorcerers and we also know what methods they adopt for their sorcery. This also does not apply to Muhammad. Then he said: "Whichever of these things you said about Muhammad, it would be known to be a false accusation. By God, his speech is sweet, his root is deep and his branches are fruitful. At this Abu Jahl urging on Walid said: Your people will never be pleased with you unless you say something about Muhammad. He said: Let me think over it awhile. Then, after prolonged thought and consideration, he said: The nearest thing to the truth is that you tell the Arabs that he is a sorcerer, who has brought a message by which he separates a man from his father; and from his brother, and from his wife and children, and from his family. They all agreed on what Walid had proposed. Then, according to a scheme the men of Quraish spread among the pilgrims in the Hajj season and they warned everyone they met of the sorcery of Muhammad (upon whom be peace) and of his stirring up divisions in the families by it." But the result was that by their this plan the Quraish chiefs themselves made the name of the Holy Messenger known throughout Arabia. (Ibn Hisham, pp. 288-289. That Walid had made this proposal on the insistence of Abu Jahl has been related by Ibn Jarir in his Tafsir on the authority of Ikrimah).

This same event has been reviewed and commented upon in the second section of this Surah. The sequence of its contents is as follows:

In vv. 8-10 the deniers of Truth have been warned, saying: "You will see the evil result of what you are doing today on the Resurrection Day."

In vv. 11-26, without naming Walid bin al-Mughirah, it has been told how Allah had blessed him and how inimical he proved to be to true Faith. In this connection, his mental conflict has been portrayed, telling that, on the one hand, he was fully convinced of the truth of Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) and the Qur'an, but, on the other, he did not want to risk his leadership and position among his people. Therefore, not only he did not believe himself but after a long-drawn-out conflict with his conscience he also came out with the proposal that in order to restrain the people from believing the Qur'an should be branded as magic. After exposing his evil nature, it has been said: "Notwithstanding such evil inclinations and misdeeds, this person desires that he should be further blessed, whereas he has now become worthy of Hell, and never of further blessings."

In vv. 27-48, the dreadfulness of Hell has been depicted and it has been explained as to people of what character and morals really deserve it.

In vv. 49-53, the root cause of the disbelievers' aversion has been pointed out, saying: "Since they are fearless of the Hereafter, and look upon this worldly life as an end in itself, they flee from the Qur'an as though they were wild asses fleeing away from the lion: therefore, they propose unreasonable conditions for believing, whereas even if each and every condition of theirs was fulfilled, they could not advance even an inch on the way of Faith with their denial of the Hereafter."

In conclusion, it has been explicitly stated: Allah does not stand in need of anybody's faith that He may fulfill his conditions. The Qur'an is an admonition that has been presented before the people openly; now whoever wills may accept it. Allah has a right that the people should fear His disobedience and He alone has the power to forgive the one who adopts piety and an attitude of God consciousness even though one may have committed many acts of disobedience in the past.

Surah Al-Qiyamat

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

Name

The Surah has been so named after the word al- Qiyamah in the first verse. This is not only the name but also the title of this Surah, for it is devoted to Resurrection itself.

Period of Revelation

Although there is no tradition to indicate its period of revelation, yet there is in the subject matter of this Surah an internal evidence, which shows that it is one of the earliest Surahs to be sent down at Makkah. After verse 15 the discourse is suddenly interrupted and the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) told: "Do not move your tongue to remember this Revelation hastily. It is Our responsibility to have it remembered and read. Therefore, when We are reciting it, listen to its recital carefully. Again, it is Our responsibility to explain its meaning." Then, from verse 20 onward the same theme which was interrupted at verse 15, is resumed. This parenthetical passage, according to both the context and the traditions, has been interposed here for the reason that when the Angel Gabriel was reciting this Surah to the Holy Prophet, the Holy Prophet, lest he should forget its words later, was repeating them at the same moment. This in fact happened at the time when the coming down and receipt of Revelation was yet a new experience for him and he was not yet fully used to receiving it calmly. There are two other instances also of this in the Qur'an. First, in Surah Ta Ha the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) has been told: "And see that you do not

hasten to recite the Qur'an before its revelation is completed to you." (v. 114). Then, in Surah Al-A'la, it has been said: "We shall enable you to recite: then you shall never forget. (v. 6). Later, when the Holy Prophet became fully used to receiving the Revelation well, there remained no need to give him any such instruction. That is why except for these, three, there is no other instance of this in the Qur'an.

Theme and Subject Matter

Most of the Surahs, from here till the end of the Qur'an, in view of their content and style, seem to have been sent down in the period when after the first seven verses of Surah Al-Muddaththir, revelation of the Qur'an began like a shower of rain: Thus, in the successively revealed Surahs Islam and its fundamental concepts and moral teachings were presented so forcefully and effectively in pithy, brief sentences and the people of Makkah warned so vehemently on their errors and deviations that the Quraish chiefs were utterly confounded. Therefore, before the next Hajj season came they held the conference for devising schemes to defeat the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) as has been mentioned in the Introduction to the Surah Al-Muddaththir above.

In this Surah, addressing thee deniers of the Hereafter, replies have been given to each of their doubts and objections, strong arguments have been given to prove the possibility, occurrence and necessity of the Resurrection and Hereafter, and also it has been pointed out clearly that the actual reason of the people's denying the Hereafter is not that they regard it as impossible rationally but because their selfish motives do not allow them to affirm it. At the same time, the people have been warned, as if to say: "The event, the occurrence of which you deny, will inevitably come: all your deeds will be brought and placed before you. As a matter of fact, even before any of you sees his record, he will be knowing fully well what he has done in the world, for no man is unaware of himself, no matter what

excuses and pretenses he may offer to deceive the world and deceive himself in respect of his misdeeds."

Surah Ad-Dahr

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

Name

This Surah is called Ad-Dahr as well as As-Insan after the words occurring in the first verse.

Period of Revelation

Most of the commentators, including Allama Zamakhshari, Imam Razi, Qadi, Baidawi, Allama Nizam ad-Din Nisaburi, Hafiz Ibn Kathir and many others, regard it as a Makki Surah, and, according to Allama Alusi, the same is the opinion of the majority of scholars. However, some commentators hold the view that the Surah was revealed at Madinah, and some others say that it was revealed at Makkah but vv. 8-10 of it were sent down at Madinah.

As far as the subject matter and the style of the Surah are concerned, these are very different from those of the Madani Surahs. A little study of it rather shown that it is not only a Makki Surah but it was revealed during the earliest period at Makkah, which began just after the revelation of the first seven verses of Surah Al-Muddaththir. As for vv 8-10, they are so naturally set in the theme of the Surah that if they are read in their proper context, no one can say that the theme preceding and following them had been sent

down 15 to 16 years earlier but these three verses which were revealed many years later were inserted here unnaturally.

In fact, the basis of the idea that this Surah; or some verses of it were revealed at Madinah, is a tradition which has related from Ibn Abbas (may Allah bless him). He says that once Hadrat Hasan and Husain fell ill The Holy Prophet and some of his Companions visited them. They wished Hadrat Ali to make a vow to Allah for the recovery of the two children. There upon, Hadrat Ali, Hadrat Fatimah and Fiddah their maid servant, vowed a fast of three days if Allah restored the children to health. The children recovered by the grace of Allah and the three of them began to fast as avowed. As there was nothing to eat in the house, Hadrat Ali borrowed three measures (as') of barley from somebody (according to another tradition, earned through labor). When on the first day they sat down to eat after breaking the fast, a poor man came and begged for food. They gave all their food to him, drank water and retired to bed. The next day when they again sat down to eat after breaking the fast, an orphan came and begged for something. They again gave away the whole food to him, drank water and went to bed. On the third day when they were just going to eat after breaking the fast, a captive came up and begged for food likewise. Again the whole food was given away to him. On the fourth day Hadrat Ali took both the children with him and went before the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace). The Holy Prophet (on whom be peace) seeing the weak condition of the three, returned with them to the house of Hadrat Fatimah and found her lying in a corner half dead with hunger. This moved him visibly. In the meantime the Angel Gabriel (peace be on him) came and said; "Look, Allah has congratulated you on the virtues of the people of your house!" When the Holy Prophet asked what it was, he recited this whole Surah in response. (According to Ibn Mahran's tradition, he recited it from verse 5 till the end. But the tradition which Ibn Marduyah has related from Ibn Abbas only says that the verse Wa yut'imun-atta'am... was sent down concerning Hadrat Ali and Hadrat Fatimah; there is no mention of this

story in it). This whole story has been narrated by Ali bin Ahmad al-Wahidi in his Commentary of the Qur'an, entitled Al'Basit, and probably from the same it has been taken by Zamakhshari, Razi, Nisaburi and others.

In the first place, this tradition is very weak as regards its chain of transmission. Then, from the point of view of its subject matter also, it is strange that when a poor man, or an orphan, or a captive, comes to beg for food, he is given all the food. He could be given one member's food and the five of them could share the rest of it among themselves: Then this also is incredible that illustrious persons like Hadrat Ali and Hadrat Fatimah, who possessed perfect knowledge of Islam, should have regarded it as an act of virtue to keep the two children, who had just recovered their health and were still weak, hungry for three consecutive days. Moreover, in respect of the captives also, it has never been a practice under the Islamic government that they should be left to beg for food for themselves. For if they were prisoners of the government, the government itself was responsible to arrange food and clothing for them, and if they were in an individual's custody, he was made responsible to feed and clothe them. Therefore, it was not possible that in Madinah a captive should have gone about begging food from door to door. However, overlooking the weaknesses of transmission and the probability of subject matter, even if the narrative is accepted as it goes, at the most what it shows is that when the people of the Holy Prophet's house acted righteously as they did, Gabriel came and gave him the good news that Allah had much appreciated their act of virtue, for they had acted precisely in the righteous way that Allah had commanded in these verses of Surah Ad-Dahr. This does not necessitate that these verses too were sent down on that very occasion. The same is the case with many traditions concerning the occasion of revelation. When about a certain verse it is said that it was sent down on a particular occasion, it in fact does not mean that the verse was sent down on the very occasion the incident took place. But it means that the verse applies precisely and exactly to the incident. Imam Suyuti in Al-

Itqan has quoted this from Hafiz Ibn Taimiyyah: "When the reporters say that a verse was sent down concerning a particular incident, it sometimes implies that the same incident (or matter) occasioned its revelation, and sometimes that the verse applies to the matter although it may not have occasioned its revelation." Further on he quotes Imam Badr ad-Din Akashi's view from his *Al-Burgan fi Alum al-Quran*: "It is well known in respect of the Companions and their immediate successors that when one of them says that a verse was sent down concerning a particular matter, it means that the ruling contained in it applied to that matter and not that the matter itself occasioned the revelation of the verse. Thus, it only uses the ruling of the verse for the purpose of reasoning and not for stating a fact." (*Al-Itqan fi Ulum al-Quran*, vol. I, p. 31, Ed. 1929).

Theme and Subject Matter

The theme of this Surah is to inform man of his true position in the world and to tell him that if he understood his true position rightly and adopted the attitude of gratefulness, he would meet with such and such good end, and if he adopted the way of disbelief, he would meet with such and such evil ends. In the longer Surahs of the Qur'an this same theme has been presented at length, but a special characteristic of the style of the earliest Surahs revealed at Makkah is that the subjects dealt with at length in the later period, "have been presented in a brief but highly effective way in this period in such concise, elegant sentences as may automatically be preserved in the memory of the hearers.

In this Surah, first of all man has been reminded that there was a time when he was nothing; then a humble beginning of him was made with a mixed drop of sperm and ovum of which even his mother was not aware; even she did not know that he had been conceived nor anyone else seeing the microscopic cell could say that it was a man, who in future would become the best of creation on the earth. After this, man has been warned, so as to say: "Beginning your creation in this way We have developed and

shaped you into what you are today in order to test and try you in the world. That is why, unlike other creatures, you were made intelligent and sensible and were shown both the way of gratitude and the way of ingratitude clearly so that you may show, in the interval that you have been granted here for work, whether you have emerged as a grateful servant from the test or an unbelieving, Un-grateful wretch!"

Then, just in one sentence, it has been stated decisively what will be the fate to be met with in the Hereafter by those who emerged as unbelievers from this test.

After this, in vv. 5-22 continuously, the blessings with which those who do full justice to servitude in the world, will be favored, have been mentioned in full detail. In these verses, not only have their best rewards been mentioned but they have also been told briefly what are the acts on the basis of which they would become worthy of those rewards. Another special characteristic of the earliest Surahs revealed at Makkah is that besides introducing in them briefly the fundamental beliefs and concepts of Islam, here and there, those moral qualities and virtuous acts have been mentioned, which are praiseworthy according to Islam, and also those evils of deed and morality of which Islam strives to cleanse human life. And these two things have not been mentioned with a view to show what good or evil result is entailed by them in the transitory life of the world, but they have been mentioned only to point out what enduring results they will produce in the eternal and everlasting life of the Hereafter, irrespective of whether an evil quality may prove useful or a good quality may prove harmful in the world.

This is the subject matter of the first section (vv. 1-22). In the second section, addressing the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace), three things have been stated: first, that "it is in fact We Our self Who are revealing this Qur'an piece meal to you, and this is intended to inform the disbelievers, not you, that the Qur'an is not being fabricated by Muhammad (upon whom

be Allah's peace and blessings) but it is "We Who are revealing it, and it is Our Own wisdom which requires that We should reveal it piece by piece and not all at once."Second, the Holy Prophet has been told: "No matter how long, it may take for the decree of your Lord to be forced and no matter what afflictions may befall you in the meantime, in any case you should continue to perform your mission of Apostleship patiently, and not to yield to the pressure tactics of any of these wicked and unbelieving people."The third thing he has been told is:"Remember Allah day and night, perform the Prayer and spend your nights in the worship of Allah, for it is these things which sustain and strengthen those who call to Allah in the face of iniquity and disbelief."

Then in one single sentence, the actual cause of the disbelievers wrong attitude has been stated: they have forgotten the Hereafter and are enamored of the world. In the second sentence, they have been warned to the effect: "You have not come into being by yourself: We have created you. You have not made these broad chests, and strong, sturdy hands and feet for yourselves, it is We Who made these for you; and it so lies in Our power to treat you as We please. We can distort your figures, We can destroy you and replace you by some other nation. We can cause you to die and can recreate you in whatever form We like."

In conclusion, it has been said: This is an Admonition: whoever wills may accept it and take a path to his Lord. But man's own will and desire is not everything in the world. No one's will and desire can be fulfilled unless Allah (also) so wills. And Allah's willing is not haphazard: whatever He wills, He wills it on the basis of His knowledge and wisdom. He admits into His mercy whomever He regards as worthy of His mercy on the basis of His knowledge and wisdom, and He has prepared a painful torment for those whom He finds unjust and wicked.

Surah Al-Mursalat

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

Name

The Surah takes its name from the word wal-mursalat in the first verse.

Period of Revelation

Its subject matter bears full evidence that it was revealed in the earliest period at Makkah. If this Surah is read together with the two Surahs preceding it, namely Al-Qiyamah and Ad-Dahr, and the two Surahs following it, namely An-Naba and An-Naziat, it becomes obvious that all these Surahs are the Revelations of the same period, and they deal with one and the same theme, which has been impressed on the people of Makkah in different ways.

Theme and Subject Matter

Its theme is to affirm the Resurrection and Hereafter and to warn the people of the consequences which will ultimately follow the denial and the affirmation of these truths.

In the first seven verses, the system of winds has been presented as an evidence of the truth that the Resurrection which is being foretold by the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) must come to pass. The reasoning is that the power of All-Mighty Allah Who established this wonderful system on the earth, cannot be helpless in bringing about the Resurrection, and the express wisdom

which underlies this system bears full evidence that the Hereafter must appear, for no act of an All- Wise Creator can be vain and purposeless, and if there was no Hereafter, it would mean that the whole of one's life was useless and absurd.

The people of Makkah repeatedly asked, "Bring about the Resurrection with which you threaten us; only then shall we believe in it." In vv. 8-15, their demand has been answered, saying: "Resurrections no sport or fun so that whenever a jester should ask for it, it should be brought forth immediately. It is indeed the Day of Judgment to settle the account of all mankind and of all its individuals. For it Allah has fixed a specific time it will take place at its own time, and when it takes place with all its dreads and horrors, it will confound those who are demanding it for fun today. Then their cases will be decided only on the evidence of those Messengers whom these deniers of the truth are repudiating with impunity. Then they will themselves realize how they themselves are responsible for their dooms

In vv. 16-28 arguments have been given continuously for the occurrence and necessity of the Resurrection and Hereafter. In these it has been stated that man's own history, his own birth, and the structure of the earth on which he lives, bear the testimony that the coming of Resurrection and the establishment of the Hereafter are possible as well as the demand of Allah Almighty's wisdom. History tells us that the nations which denied the Hereafter ultimately became corrupted and met with destruction. This means that the Hereafter is a truth which if denied and contradicted by a nation by its conduct and attitude, will cause it to meet the same doom, which is met by a blind man who bushes head long into an approaching train. And it also means that in the kingdom of the universe only physical laws are not at work but a moral law also is working in it, under which in this very world the process of retribution is operating. But since in the present life of the world retribution is not taking place in its complete and perfect form, the moral law of the universe necessarily demands that there should come a time when it should take its full course and all those good

works and evil deeds, which could not be rewarded here, or which escaped their due punishment should be fully rewarded and punished. For this it is inevitable that there should be a second life after death. If man only considers how he takes his birth in the world, his intellect, provided it is sound intellect, cannot deny that for the God Who began his creation from an insignificant sperm drop and developed him into a perfect man, it certainly possible to create the same man once again. After death the particles of man's body do not disappear but continue to exist on the same earth on which he lived his whole life. It is from the resources and treasures of this very earth that he is made and nourished and then into the same treasures of the earth he is deposited. The God who caused him to emerge from the treasures of the earth, in the first instance, can also cause him to re-emerge from the same treasures after he has been restored to them at death. If one only considers the powers of Allah, one cannot deny that He can do this; and if one considers the wisdom of Allah, one also cannot deny that it is certainly the very demand of His wisdom to call man to account for the right and wrong use of the powers that He has granted him on the earth; it would rather be against wisdom to let him off without rendering an account.

Then, in vv. 28-40, the fate of the deniers of the Hereafter has been depicted, and in vv. 41-45 of those who affirming faith in it in their worldly life, endeavored to improve their Hereafter, and abstained from the evils of disbelief and thought, morality and deed, conduct and character which might be helpful in man's worldly life, but a certainly ruinous for his life hereafter.

In the end, the deniers of the Hereafter and those who turn away from God-worship, have been warned as if to say: "Enjoy your short-lived worldly pleasure as you may, but your end will ultimately be disastrous." The discourse concludes with the assertion that the one who fails to obtain guidance from Book like the Qur'an, can have no other source in the world to afford him Guidance.

Surah An-Nabaa

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

Name

The Surah derived its name from the word an-Naba in the second verse. This is not only a name but also a title of its subject matter, for Naba implies the news of Resurrection and Hereafter and the whole Surah is devoted to the same theme.

Period of Revelation

As we have explained in the introduction to Surah Al-Mursalat, the theme of all the Surahs, from Al- Qiyamah to An-Naziat, closely resembles one another's, and all these seem to have been revealed in the earliest period at Makkah.

Theme and Subject Matter

Its theme also is the same as of Surah Al-Mursalat, i. e. to affirm the Resurrection and Hereafter, and to warn the people of the consequences of acknowledging or disacknowledging it.

When the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) first started to preach Islam in Makkah, his message consisted of three elements:(1) That none be held as an associate with Allah in Godhead; (2) that Allah had appointed him as His Messenger;(3) that this world will come to an end one day and then another world will be established when all the former and the latter generations will be resurrected with the same bodies in which they lived and worked in the world; then they will be called to account for their beliefs

and deeds and those who emerge as believing and righteous in this accountability will go to Paradise and those who are proved to be disbelieving and wicked will live in Hell for ever.

Of these although the first thing was highly unpleasant for the people of Makkah, yet in any case they were not disbelievers in the existence of Allah. They believed in His Being the Supreme Sustainer, Creator and Providence and also admitted that all those beings whom they regarded as their deities, were themselves Allah's creatures. Therefore, in this regard the only thing they disputed was whether they had any share in the attributes and powers of Divinity and in the Divine Being itself or not.

As for the second thing, the people of Makkah were not prepared to accept it. However, what they could not possibly deny was that during the 40 years life that the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) had lived among them before his claim to Prophethood, they had never found him a lying deceitful person or the one who would adopt unlawful methods for selfish ends. They themselves admitted that he was a man possessed of wisdom, righteousness and moral superiority. Therefore, in spite of charging him with a thousand false accusations, nothing to say of making others believe, they were finding it difficult even for themselves to believe that although he was an honest and upright man in every other affair and dealing of life, yet, God forbid, a liar only in his claim to be a Prophet.

Thus, the first two things were not in fact so perplexing for the people of Makkah as the third thing. When this was presented before them, they mocked it most of all, expressed unusual wonder at it, and regarding it as remote from reason and impossible, started talking against it as incredible, even inconceivable, in their assemblies. But in order to bring them to the way of Islam it was absolutely essential that the doctrine of the Hereafter should be instilled into their minds, for without belief in this doctrine, it was not at all possible that they could adopt a serious attitude with regard to the truth and falsehood, could change their standard of values in respect of

good and evil, and giving up worship of the world, could be inclined to follow the way that Islam urged them to follow. That is why in the earliest Surahs revealed at Makkah the doctrine of the Hereafter has been impressed and stressed more than anything else. However, the arguments for it have been given in such a way that the doctrine of the Oneness of God (Tauhid) also is impressed on the minds automatically. This also contains brief arguments, here and there, to confirm the truth of the Holy Messenger of Allah and the Qur'an.

After understanding well why the theme of the Hereafter has been so frequently repeated in the Surahs of this period, let us now have a look at the subject matter of this Surah. In it first of all, allusion has been made to the common talk and the doubts that were being expressed in every street of Makkah and in every assembly of the people of Makkah on hearing the news about Resurrection. Then, the deniers have been asked: "Don't you see this earth which We have spread as a carpet for you? Don't you see the high mountains which we have so firmly placed in the earth? Don't you consider your own selves how We have created you as pairs of men and women? Don't you consider your sleep by which We make you seek a few hours rest after every few hours labor and toil so as to keep you fit for work in the world? Don't you see the alternation of the night and day which We are so regularly perpetuating precisely according to your needs and requirements? Don't you see the strongly fortified system of the heavens above you? Don't you see the sun by means of which you are receiving your light and heat? Don't you see the rains which fall from the clouds and help produce corns and vegetables and luxuriant gardens? Do these things only tell you that the power of the Almighty Being Who has created them, will be unable to bring about Resurrection and establish the Next World? Then, from the supreme wisdom which is clearly working in this world around you, do you only understand this that although each part of it and each function of it is purposive, yet life is meaningless? Nothing could be more absurd and meaningless that after appointing man to the office of

foreman and granting him vast powers of appropriation, in this work house, when he leaves the world after fulfilling his role, he should be let off without any accountability. He should neither be rewarded and granted pension on satisfactory work, nor subjected to any accountability and punishment on unsatisfactory performance of duty.

After giving these arguments it has been emphatically stated that the Day of Judgment shall certainly come to pass on its appointed time. No sooner is the Trumpet sounded than whatever is being foretold shall appear before the eyes, and whether you believe in it today, or not, at that time you will come out in your multitudes from wherever you would be lying dead and buried to render your account. Your denial cannot in any way avert this inevitable event.

Then, in vv. 21-30; it has been stated that every single misdeed of those who do not expect any accountability to take place and have thus belied Our Revelations, lies reckoned and recorded with Us, and Hell is ever lying in ambush to punish them and punish them fully for all their doings. Then, in vv. 31-36, the best rewards of those who lived as responsible people in the world and have provided for their Hereafter beforehand have been mentioned. They have been reassured that they will not only be rewarded richly for their services but in addition they will also be given sufficient gifts.

In conclusion, the Divine Court in the Hereafter has been depicted, making it plain that there will be no question of somebody's being adamant in the matter of getting his followers and associates forgiven, none will speak without leave, and leave will be granted on the condition that intercession be made only for the one to whom leave of intercession will have been given, and the intercessor will say only what is right. Moreover, leave for intercession will be given only for those who had acknowledged the Truth in the world but were sinners; rebels of God and rejecters of the Truth will deserve no intercession at all.

The discourse has been concluded with this warning: The Day the coming of which is being foretold, shall certainly come to pass. Do not think it is yet far off, it is close at hand. Now, whoever wills, let him believe in it and take the way towards his Lord. But he who disbelieves, in spite of the warning, "will have all his deeds placed before him: and he will exclaim regretfully: "Oh, would that I were not born in the world!" At that time, his regrets will be about the same world of which he is so enamored today!

Surah An-Nazi'at

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

Name

It is derived from the word wan-nazi'at with which the Surah opens.

Period of Revelation

According to Hadrat Abdullah bin Abbas, this Surah was sent down after Surah An-Naba. Its subject matter also testifies that it belongs to the earliest period at Makkah.

Theme and Subject Matter

Its theme is affirmation of Resurrection and the life hereafter; It also warns of the consequences of belying the Messenger of God.

The Surah opens with oaths sworn by the angels who take the soul at deaths and those who hasten to carryout Allah's Commands, and those who conduct the affairs of the universe according to Divine Will, to assure that the Resurrection will certainly come to pass and the second life after

death will certainly take place. For the angels who are employed to pluck out the soul today can also be employed to restore the soul tomorrow, and the angels who promptly execute Allah's Commands and conduct the affairs of the universe today can also upset the order of the universe tomorrow by orders of the same God and can also bring about a new order.

After this the people have been told, so as to say: "This work which you regard as absolutely impossible is not any difficult for Allah, for which He may have to make lengthy preparations. Just a single jolt will upset this system of the world and a second jolt will be enough to cause you to appear as living beings in the new world. At that time the same people who were wont to deny it, would be trembling with fear and seeing with awe struck eyes all that they thought was impossible.

Then, relating the story of the Prophet Moses and Pharaoh briefly, the people have been warned to the effect: "You know full well what fate the Pharaoh met in consequence of belying the Messenger and rejecting the guidance brought by him and endeavoring to defeat his mission by trickery and deceit. If you do not learn any lesson from it and do not change your ways and attitude accordingly, you also will have to meet the same fate.

Then, in vv.27-13, arguments have been given for the Hereafter and life after death. In this regard, the deniers have been asked the question: "Is your resurrection a more difficult task or the creation of the huge Universe which spreads around you to infinite distances with myriads of its stars and planets? Your recreation cannot be difficult for the God for Whom this was an easy task. Thus, after presenting in a single sentence, a decisive argument for the possibility of the Hereafter, attention has been drawn to the earth and its provisions that have been arranged in it for the sustenance of man and animal and of which everything testifies that it has been created with great wisdom for fulfilling some special purpose. Pointing to this the question has been left for the intellect of man to ponder for itself and form the opinion whether calling man to account after having delegated authority

and responsibilities to a creature like him in this wise system would be more in keeping with the demands of wisdom, or that he should die after committing all sorts of misdeeds in the world and should perish and mix in the dust forever and should never be called to account as to how he employed the authority and fulfilled the responsibilities entrusted to him. Instead of discussing this question, in vv. 34-41, it has been said: "When the Hereafter is established, men's eternal future will be determined on the criterion as to which of them rebelled against his God transgressing the bounds of service and made the material benefits and pleasures his objective of life and which of them feared standing before his Lord and refrained from fulfilling the unlawful desires of the self." This by itself provides the right answer to the above question to every such person who considers it honestly, free from stubbornness. For the only rational, logical and moral demand of giving authority and entrusting responsibilities to man in the world is that he should be called to account on this very basis ultimately and rewarded or punished accordingly.

In conclusion, the question of the disbelievers of Makkah as to when Resurrection will take place, has been answered. They asked the Holy Prophet this question over and over again. In reply it has been said that the knowledge of the time of its occurrence rests with Allah alone. The Messenger is there only to give the warning that it will certainly come. Now whoever wishes may mend his ways, fearing its coming, and whoever wishes may behave and conduct himself as he likes, fearless of its coming. When the appointed time comes, those very people who loved the life of this world and regarded its pleasures as the only object of life, would feel that they had stayed in the world only for an hour or so. Then they will realize how utterly they had ruined their future for ever for the sake of the short lived pleasures of the world.

Surah Abasa

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

Name

The Surah is so designated after the word `abasa with which it opens.

Period of Revelation

The commentators and traditionists are unanimous about the occasion of the revelation of this Surah. According to them, once some big chiefs of Makkah were sitting in the Holy Prophet's assembly and he was earnestly engaged in trying to persuade them to accept Islam. At that very point, a blind man, named Ibn Umm Maktum, approached him to seek explanation of some point concerning Islam. The Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) disliked his interruption and ignored him. There upon Allah sent down this Surah. From this historical incident the period of the revelation of this Surah can be precisely determined.

In the first place, it is confirmed that Hadrat Ibn Umm Maktum was one of the earliest converts to Islam. Hafiz Ibn Hajar and Hafiz Ibn Kathir have stated that he was one of those who had accepted Islam at a very early stage at Makkah.

Secondly, some of the traditions of the Hadith which relate this incident show that he had already accepted Islam and some others show that he was inclined to accept it and had approached the Holy Prophet in search of the truth. Hadrat Aishah states that coming to the Holy Prophet he had said: "O Messenger of Allah, guide me to the straight path." (Tirmidhi, Hakim, Ibn Hibban, Ibn Jarir, Abu Ya'la. According to Hadrat Abdullah bin

Abbas, he had asked the meaning of averse of the Qur'an and said to the Holy Prophet: "O Messenger of Allah, teach me the knowledge that Allah has taught you." Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abu Hatim). These statements show that he had acknowledged the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace as a Messenger of Allah and the Quran as a Book of Allah. Contrary to this, Ibn Zaid has interpreted the words *la allahu yazzakka* of verse 3 to mean: *la allahu yuslim*: "may be that he accepts Islam." (Ibn Jarir) And Allah's own words: "What would make you know that he might reform, or heed the admonition, and admonishing might profit him?" and "The one who comes to you running, of his own will, and fears, from him you turn away", point out that by that time he had developed in himself a deep desire to learn the truth: he had come to the Holy Prophet with the belief that he was the only source of guidance and his desire would be satisfied only through him; his apparent state also reflected that if he was given instruction, he would benefit by it.

Thirdly, the names of the people who were sitting in the Holy Prophet's assembly at that time, have been given in different traditions. In this list we find the names of Utbah, Shaibah, Abu Jahl, Umayyah bin Khalaf, Ubayy bin Khalaf, who were the bitterest enemies of Islam. This shows that the incident took place in the period when these chiefs were still on meeting terms with the Holy Prophet and their antagonism to Islam had not yet grown so strong as to have stopped their paying visits to him and having dialogues with him off and on. All these arguments indicate that this is one of the very earliest Surahs to be revealed at Makkah.

Theme and Subject Matter

In view of the apparent style with which the discourse opens, one feels that in this Surah Allah has expressed His displeasure against the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) for his treating the blind man with indifference and attending to the big chiefs exclusively. But when the whole Surah is considered objectively, one finds that the displeasure, in fact, has been

expressed against the disbelieving Quraish, who because of their arrogant attitude and indifference to the truth, were rejecting with contempt the message of truth being conveyed by the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace). Then, besides teaching him the correct method of preaching, the error of the method that he was adopting at the start of his mission has also been pointed out. His treating the blind man with neglect and disregard and devoting all his attention to the Quraish chiefs was not for the reason that he regarded the rich as noble and a poor blind man as contemptible, and, God forbid, there was some rudeness in his manner for which Allah reproved him. But, as a matter of fact, when a caller to Truth embarks on his mission of conveying his message to the people, he naturally wants the most influential people of society to accept this message so that his task becomes easy, for even if his invitation spreads among the poor and weak people, it cannot make much difference. Almost the same attitude had the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) also adopted in the beginning, his motive being only sincerity and a desire to promote his mission and not any idea of respect for the big people and hatred for the small people. But Allah made him realize that that was not the correct method of extending invitation to Islam, but from his mission's point of view, every man, who was a seeker after truth, was important, even if he was weak, or poor, and everyman, who was heedless to the truth, was unimportant, even if he occupied a high position in society. Therefore, he should openly proclaim and convey the teachings of Islam to all and sundry, but the people who were really worthy of his attention, were those who were inclined to accept the Truth, and his sublime and noble message was too high to be presented before those haughty people who in their arrogance and vanity thought that they did not stand in need of him but rather he stood in need of them.

This is the theme of vv. 1-16. From verse 17 onward the rebuke directly turns to the disbelievers, who were repudiating the invitation of the Holy Messenger of Allah (upon whom be peace). In this, first they have been

reproved for their attitude which they had adopted against their Creator, Providence and Sustainer. In the end, they have been warned of the dreadful fate that they would meet in consequence of their conduct on the Day of Resurrection.

Surah At-Takwir

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

Name

It is derived from the word kuwwirat in the first verse. Kuwwirat is passive voice from takvir in the past tense, and means "that which is folded up", thereby implying that it is a Surah in which the "folding up" has been mentioned:

Period of Revelation

The subject matter and the style clearly show that it is one of the earliest Surahs to be revealed at Makkah.

Theme and Subject Matter

It has two themes: the Hereafter and the institution of Apostleship.

In the first six verses the first stage of the Resurrection has been mentioned when the sun will lose its light, the stars will scatter, the mountains will be uprooted and will disperse, the people will become heedless of their dearest possessions, the beasts of the jungle will be stupefied and will gather together, and the seas will boil up. Then in the next seven verses the second stage has been described when the souls will be reunited with the bodies, the records will be laid open, the people

will be called to account for their crimes, the heavens will be unveiled, and Hell and Heaven will be brought into full view. After depicting the Hereafter thus, man has been left to ponder his own self and deeds, saying: "Then each man shall himself know what he has brought with him."

After this the theme of Apostleship has been taken up. In this the people of Makkah have been addressed, as if to say "Whatever Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) is presenting before you, is not the bragging of a madman, nor an evil suggestion inspired by Satan, but the word of a noble, exalted and trustworthy messenger sent by God, whom Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) has seen with his own eyes in the bright horizon of the clear sky in broad day light. Whither then are you going having turned away from this teaching?"

Surah Al-Infitar

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

Name

It is derived from the word infatarat in the first verse. Infitar is an infinitive which means to burst or split asunder, thereby implying that it is the Surah in which the splitting asunder of the sky has been mentioned.

Period of Revelation

This Surah and the Surah At-Takwir closely resemble each other in their subject matter. This shows that both were sent down in about the same period.

Theme and Subject Matter

Its theme is the Hereafter. According to a tradition related in Musnad Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Ibn al-Mundhir, Tabarani, Hakim and Ibn Marduyah, on the authority of Hadrat Abdullah bin Umar, the Holy Messenger (upon whom be peace) said: "The one who wants that he should see the Resurrection Day as one would see it with one's eyes, should read Surah At-Takwir, Surah Al-Infitar and Surah Al-Inshiqaq".

In this Surah first the Resurrection Day has been described and it is said that when it occurs, every person will see whatever he has done in the world. After this, man has been asked to ponder the question: "O man, what has deluded you into thinking that the God, Who brought you into being and by Whose favor and bounty you possess the finest body, limbs and features among all creatures, is only bountiful and not just? His being bountiful and generous does not mean that you should become fearless of His justice." Then, man has been warned, so as to say: "Do not remain involved in any misunderstanding. Your complete record is being prepared. There are trustworthy writers who are writing down whatever you do." In conclusion, it has been forcefully stated that the Day of Resurrection will surely take place when the righteous shall enjoy every kind of bliss in Paradise and the wicked shall be punished in Hell. On that day no one shall avail anyone anything. All powers of judgment shall be with Allah.

Surah Al-Mutaffifin

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

Name

It is derived from the very first verse; Wayl-ul-lil mutaffifin.

Period of Revelation

The style of the Surah and its subject matter clearly show that it was revealed in the earliest stage at Makkah, when surah after surah was being revealed to impress the doctrine of the Hereafter on the people's minds. This Surah was revealed when they had started ridiculing the Muslims and disgracing them publicly in the streets and in their assemblies, but persecution and man handling of the Muslims had not yet started. Some commentators regard this as a Madani Surah. This misunderstanding has been caused by a tradition from Ibn Abbas according to which when the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) arrived in Madinah, the evil of giving short weight and measure was wide spread among the people there. Then Allah sent down Wayl ul-lil mutaffifin and the people began to give full weight and measure. (Nasa'i, Ibn Majah, Ibn Marduyah, Ibn Jarir, Baihaqi: Shu`ab-il-Iman) But, as we have explained in the introduction to Surah Ad-Dahr, the common practice with the Companions and their successors was that when they found that a verse applied to a certain matter of life, they would say that it had been sent down concerning that particular matter. Therefore, what is proved by the tradition of Ibn Abbas is that when after his emigration to Madinah the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) saw that the evil was widespread among the people there, he recited this Surah before them by Allah's Command and this helped them mend their ways.

Theme and Subject Matter

The theme of this Surah too is the Hereafter. In the first six verses the people have been taken to task for the prevalent evil practice in their commercial dealings. When they had to receive their due from others, they demanded that it be given in full, but when they had to measure or weigh for others, they would give less than what was due. Taking this one evil as an example out of countless evils prevalent in society, it has been said that it is an inevitable result of the heedlessness of the Hereafter. Unless the

people realized that one day they would have to appear before God and account for each single act they performed in the world, it was not possible that they would adopt piety and righteousness in their daily affairs. Even if a person might practice honesty in some of his less important dealings in view of "honesty is the best policy", he would never practice honesty on occasions when dishonesty would seem to be "the best policy". Man can develop true and enduring honesty only when he fears God and sincerely believes in the Hereafter, for then he would regard honesty not merely as "a policy" but as "a duty" and obligation, and his being constant in it, or otherwise, would not be dependent on its being useful or useless in the world.

Thus, after making explicit the relation between morality and the doctrine of the Hereafter in an effective and impressive way, in vv. 7-17, it has been said: The deeds of the wicked are already being recorded in the black list of the culprits, and in the Hereafter they will meet with utter ruin. Then in vv. 18-28, the best end of the virtuous has been described and it has been laid that their deeds are being recorded in the list of the exalted people, on which are appointed the angels nearest to Allah.

In conclusion, the believers have been consoled, and the disbelievers warned, as if to say: "The people who are disgracing and humiliating the believers today, are culprits who, on the Resurrection Day, will meet with almost evil end in consequence of their conduct, and these very believers will feel comforted when they see their fate."

Surah Al-Inshiqaq

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

Name

It is derived from the word inshaqqat in the first verse. Inshaqqat is infinitive which means to split asunder, thereby implying that it is the Surah in which mention has been made of the splitting asunder of the heavens.

Period of Revelation

This too is one of the earliest Surahs to be revealed at Makkah. The internal evidence of its subject matter indicates that persecution of the Muslims had not yet started; however, the message of the Qur'an was being openly repudiated at Makkah and the people were refusing to acknowledge that Resurrection would ever take place when they would have to appear before their God to render an account of their deeds.

Theme and Subject Matter

Its theme is the Resurrection and Hereafter.

In the first five verses not only have the state of Resurrection been described vividly but an argument of its being true and certain also have been given. It has been stated that the heavens on that Day will split asunder, the earth will be spread out plain and smooth, and it will throw out whatever lies inside it of the dead bodies of men and evidences of their deeds so as to become completely empty from within. The argument given for it is that such will be the Command of their Lord for the heavens and the earth; since both are His creation. they cannot dare disobey His Command. For them the only right and proper course is that they should obey the Command of their Lord.

Then, in vv 6-19 it has been said that whether man is conscious of this fact or not, he in any case is moving willy nilly to the destination when he will appear and stand before his Lord. At that time all human beings will divide

into two parts: first those whose records will be given in their right hands: they will be forgiven without any severe reckoning; second those whose records will be given them behind their back. They will wish that they should die somehow, but they will not die; instead they will be cast into Hell. They will meet with this fate because in the world they remained lost in the misunderstanding that they would never have to appear before God to render an account of their deeds, whereas their Lord was watching whatever they were doing, and there was no reason why they should escape the accountability for their deeds. Their moving gradually from the life of the world to the meting out of rewards and punishments in the Hereafter was as certain as the appearance of twilight after sunset, the coming of the night after the day, the returning of men and animals to their respective abodes at night, and the growing of the crescent into full moon.

In conclusion, the disbelievers who repudiate the Qur'an instead of bowing down to God when they hear it, have been forewarned of a grievous punishment and the good news of limitless rewards has been given to the believers and the righteous.

Surah Al-Buruj

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

Name

The Surah is so designated after the word al buruj appearing in the first verse.

Period of Revelation

The subject matter itself indicates that this Surah was sent down at Makkah in the period when persecution of the Muslims was at its climax and the disbelievers of Makkah were trying their utmost by tyranny and coercion to turn away the new converts from Islam.

Theme and Subject Matter

Its theme is to warn the disbelievers of the evil consequences of the persecution and tyranny that they were perpetrating on the converts to Islam, and to console the believers, so as to say: "If you remain firm and steadfast against tyranny and coercion, you will be rewarded richly for it, and Allah will certainly avenge Himself on your persecutors on your behalf."

In this connection, first of all the story of the people of the ditch (ashab al-ukhdud) had been related, who had burnt the believers to death by casting them into pits full of fire. By means of this story the believers and the disbelievers have been taught a few lessons. First, that just as the people of the ditch became worthy of Allah's curse and punishment, so are the chiefs of Makkah also becoming worthy of it. Second, that just as the believers at that time had willingly accepted to sacrifice their lives by being burnt to death in the pits of fire instead of turning away from the faith, so also the believers now should endure every persecution but should never give up the faith. Third, that God's acknowledging Whom displeases the disbelievers and is urged on by the believers, is Dominant and Master of the Kingdom of the earth and heavens; He is self-praiseworthy and is watching what the two groups are striving for. Therefore, it is certain that the disbelievers will not only be punished in Hell for their disbelief but, more than that, they too will suffer punishment by fire as a fit recompense for their tyranny and cruelties. Likewise, this also is certain that those, who believe and follow up their belief with good deeds, should go to Paradise and this indeed is the supreme success. Then the disbelievers have been

warned, so as to say: "God's grip is very severe. If you are proud of the strength of your hosts, you should know that the hosts of Pharaoh and Thamud were even stronger and more numerous. Therefore, you should learn a lesson from the fate they met. God's power has so encompassed you that you cannot escape His encirclement, and the Qur'an that you are bent upon belying, is unchangeable: it is inscribed in the Preserved Tablet, which cannot be corrupted in any way."

Surah At-Tariq

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

Name

The Surah takes its name from the word at-tariq in its first verse.

Period of Revelation

The style of its subject matter resembles that of the earliest Surahs revealed at Makkah, but this surah was sent down at a stage when the disbelievers of Makkah were employing all sorts of devices and plans to defeat and frustrate the message of the Qur'an and Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings).

Theme and Subject Matter

It discusses two themes: first that man has to appear before God after death; second, that the Qur'an is a decisive Word which no plan or device of the disbelievers can defeat or frustrate.

First of all, the stars of the heavens have been cited as an evidence that there is nothing in the universe which may continue to exist and survive without guardian over it. Then man has been asked to consider his own self as to how he has been brought into existence from a mere sperm drop and shaped into a living human being. Then it has been said that the God, Who has so brought him into existence, has certainly the power to create him once again, and this resurrection will be for the purpose to subject to scrutiny all the secrets of man which remained hidden in the world. At that time, man will neither be able to escape the consequences of his deeds by his own power, nor will anyone else come to his rescue.

In conclusion, it has been pointed out that Just as the falling of rain from the sky and the sprouting of plants and crops from the earth is no child's play but a serious task, so also the truths expressed in the Qur'an are no jest but a firm and unchangeable reality. The disbelievers are involved in the misunderstanding that their plans and devices will defeat the invitation of the Qur'an, but they do not know that Allah too is devising a plan which will bring to naught all their scheming and planning. Then in one sentence the discourse has been summed up, with a word of consolation to the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) and a tacit warning to the disbelievers, saying: "Have patience for a while: let the disbelievers do their worst. Before long they will themselves realize whether they have been able to defeat the Qur'an by their scheming or the Qur'an has dominated them in the very place where they are exerting their utmost to defeat it."

