

Taraveeh: Eleventh Night

Surah Ibrahim

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

Name

The Surah takes its name from v. 35 in which mention has been made of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham). But it does not mean that it contains the life story of Prophet Abraham. The name is merely a symbol lid the names of many other surahs, i. e., the Surah in which Abraham's mention has been made.

Period of Revelation

It appears from the tone of the Surah that it belongs to that group of the Surahs which were revealed during the last stage of the Makkan period. For instance, v. 13 ("The disbelievers warned their Messengers, 'you shall have to return to our community or we will assuredly expel you from our

land") clearly indicates that the persecution of the Muslims was at its worst at the time of the revelation of this Surah, and the people of Makkah were bent on expelling the Believers from there like the disbelievers of the former Prophets. That is why in v.14 they have been warned, "We will destroy these evil doers," and the Believers have been comforted as were the believers before them, "and after them settle you in the land" Likewise the stern warning contained in the concluding portion (vv. 43-52 also confirms that the Surah relates to the last stage of the Makkan Period.

Central Theme and Purpose

This Surah is an admonition and a warning to the disbelievers who were rejecting the Message of the Holy Prophet and devising cunning schemes to defeat his Mission. But warning, reproof, censure and reproach dominate admonition. This is because a good deal of admonition had already been made in the preceding Surahs, but in spite of this their obduracy, enmity, antagonism, mischief, persecution etc. had rather increased.

Surah Al-Hijr

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

Name

This Surah takes its name from v. 80.

Period of Revelation

It is clear from its topics and style that the period of its revelation is about the same as that of Surah Ibrahim, for two things are quite prominent in its background. First, it appears from the repeated warnings in this Surah that in spite of the fact that the Holy Prophet had been propagating the

Message for many years, his people in general had not shown any inclination towards its acceptance nay, they had become more and more obdurate and stubborn in their antagonism, enmity and ridicule with the passage of time. Secondly, by that time the Holy Prophet had begun to feel a little tired of making strenuous efforts to eradicate disbelief and opposition of his people. That is why Allah has consoled and comforted him over and over again by way of encouragement.

Topics and the Central Theme

Though the main topics of the surah are : (a) warning to those who rejected his Message, opposed it tooth and nail, and ridiculed him, and (b) comfort and encouragement to the Holy Prophet, it does not mean that this Surah does not contain admonition and instructions. As a matter of fact, the Quran never confines itself to mere warning; rebuke and censure, but resorts to precept in every suitable place. Accordingly, this Surah contains brief arguments for Tauhid on the one hand, and admonition in the story of Adam and Satan on the other.

Surah An-Nahl

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

Name

The name, An-Nahl, of this Surah has been taken from v. 68. This is merely to distinguish it from other Surahs.

Period of Revelation

The following internal evidence shows that this Surah was revealed during the last Makkan stage of Prophet-hood:

- V. 41 clearly shows that persecution had forced some Muslims to emigrate to Habash before the revelation of this Surah.
- It is evident from v. 106 that at that time the persecution of the Muslims was at its height. Therefore a problem had arisen in regard to the utterance of a blasphemous word, without actual disbelief, under unbearable conditions. The problem was that if one did so how he should be treated.
- VV. 112-114 clearly refer to the end of seven year famine that had struck Makkah some years after the appointment of the Holy Prophet as Allah's Messenger.
- There is a reference to V 116 of this Surah in VI: 145, and v. 118 of this Surah contains a reference to VI: 146. This is a proof that both these Surahs (VI and XVI) were sent down in the same period.

The general style of the Surah also supports the view that this was revealed during the last stage at Makkah.

Central Theme

All the topics of the Surah revolve round different aspects of the Message, ie., refutation of shirk, proof of Tauhid, and warning of the consequences of the rejection of and opposition and antagonism to the Message.

Topics of Discussion

The very first verse gives direct and strict warning to those who were rejecting the Message outright, as if to say, "Allah's decision has already been made concerning your rejection of the Message. Why are you then clamoring for hastening it? Why don't you make use of their spite that is being given to you!" And this was exactly what the disbelievers of Makkah needed at the time of the revelation of this Surah. For they challenged the Holy Prophet over and over again: "Why don't you bring that scourge with which you have been threatening us! For we have not only rejected your Message but have been openly opposing it for a long time." Such a

challenge had become a by-word with them, which they frequently repeated as a clear proof that Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) was not a true Prophet.

Immediately after this warning they have been admonished to give up shirk, for this false creed was the main obstacle in the way of the Message. Then the following topics come over and over again, one after the other:

1. Very convincing proofs of Tauhid and refutation of shirk have been based on the plain signs in the universe and in man's own self.
2. The objections of the disbelievers have been answered, their arguments refuted, their doubts removed and their false pretexts exposed.
3. Warnings have been given of the consequences of persistence in false ways and antagonism to the Message.
4. The moral changes which the Message of the Holy Prophet aims to bring practically in human life have been presented briefly in an appealing manner. The mushriks have been told that belief in Allah, which they also professed, demanded that it should not be confined merely to lip service, but this creed should take a definite shape in moral and practical life.
5. The Holy Prophet and his companions have been comforted and told about the attitude they should adopt in the face of antagonism and persecution by the disbelievers.



Taraveeh: Twelfth Night

Surah Al-Israa

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

Name

This Surah takes its name (Bani Israil) from v. 4. But this name is merely a distinctive appellation like the names of many other surahs and not a descriptive title, and does not mean that "Bani Isra'il" is the theme of this Surah.

Period of Revelation

The very first verse indicates that this Surah was revealed on the occasion of Mi'raj (Ascension). According to the Traditions and books on the life of the Holy Prophet, this event happened one year before Hijrah. Thus, this Surah is one of those which were revealed in the last stage of Prophet-hood at Makkah.

Background

The Holy Prophet had been propagating Tauhid for the previous twelve years and his opponents had been doing all they could to make his Mission a failure, but in spite of all their opposition, Islam had spread to every corner of Arabia and there was hardly any clan which had not been influenced by his invitation. In Makkah itself the true Believers had formed themselves into a small community and were ready and willing to face every danger to make Islam a success. Besides them, a very large number of the people of Aus and Khazraj (two influential clans of Al-Madinah) had accepted Islam. Thus the time had come for the Holy Prophet to emigrate from Makkah to Al- Madinah and to regather together the scattered Muslims and establish a state based on the principles of Islam.

These were the conditions when Mi'raj took place and on his return the Holy Prophet brought down the Message contained in this Surah.

Theme and Topics

This Surah is a wonderful combination of warning, admonition and instruction, which have been blended together in a balanced proportion.

The disbelievers of Makkah had been admonished to take a lesson from the miserable end of the Israelites and other communities and mend their ways within the period of respite given by Allah, which was about to expire. They should, therefore, accept the invitation that was being extended by Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) and the Quran; otherwise they shall be annihilated and replaced by other people. Incidentally, the Israelites, with whom Islam was going to come in direct contact in the near future at Al-Madinah have also been warned that they should learn a lesson from the chastisements that have already been inflicted on them. They were warned, "Take advantage of the Prophet-hood of Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) because that is the last opportunity which is

being given to you. If even now you behave as you have been behaving, you shall meet with a painful torment."

As regards the education of mankind, it has been impressed that human success or failure, gain or loss, depends upon the right understanding of Tauhid, life-after- death and Prophet-hood. Accordingly, convincing arguments have been put forward to prove that the Quran is the Book of Allah and its teachings are true and genuine the doubts of the disbelievers about these basic realities have been removed and on suitable occasions they have been admonished and rebuked in regard to their ways of ignorance.

In this connection, those fundamental principles of morality and civilization on which the Islamic System of life is meant to be established have been put forward. Thus this was a sort of the Manifesto of the intended Islamic state which had been proclaimed a year before its actual establishment. It has been explicitly stated that that was the sketch of the system on which Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) intended to build human life first in his own country and then in the outside world.

Besides these, the Holy Prophet has been instructed to stick firmly to his stand without minding the opposition and difficulties which he was encountering and should never think of making a compromise with unbelief. The Muslims who sometimes showed signs of impatience, when they met with persecution, calumny, and crooked arguments, have also been instructed to face adverse circumstances with patience and fortitude and keep full control over their feelings and passions. Moreover, salat was prescribed in order to reform and purify their souls, as if to say, "This is the thing' which will produce in you those high qualities of character which are essential for everyone who intends to struggle in the righteous way. Incidentally, we learn from Traditions that Mi'raj was the first occasion on which the five daily Prayers were prescribed to be offered at fixed times.

Surah Al-Kahf

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

Name

This Surah takes its name from v. 9 in which the word (al-kahf) occurs.

Period of Revelation

This is the first of those Surahs which were sent down in the third stage of Prophet-hood at Makkah. We have already divided the life of the Holy Prophet at Makkah into four stages in the Introduction to Chapter VI. According to that division the third stage lasted from the fifth to the tenth year of Prophet-hood. What distinguishes this stage from the second and the fourth stages is this. During the second stage the Quraish mainly resorted to ridiculing, scoffing, threatening, tempting, raising objections and making false propaganda against the Holy Prophet and his followers in order to suppress the Islamic Movement. But during the third stage they employed the weapons of persecution, man handling and economic pressure for the same purpose. So much so that a large number of the Muslims had to emigrate from Arabia to Habash, and those who remained behind were besieged in Shi'ib Abi Talib along with the Holy Prophet and his family. To add to their misery, a complete social and economic boycott was applied against them. The only redeeming feature was that there were two personalities, Abu Talib and Hadrat Khadijah, whose personal influence had been conducive to the support of two great families of the Quraish. However, when in the tenth year of Prophet-hood these two persons died, the fourth stage began with such severe persecutions as forced the Holy Prophet and all his Companions to emigrate from Makkah.

It appears from the theme of the Surah that it was revealed at the beginning of the third stage when in spite of persecutions and opposition, migration to Habash had not yet taken place. That is why the story of "Ashab-i-Kahf" (the Sleepers of the Cave) has been related to comfort and encourage the persecuted Muslims and to show them how the righteous people have been saving their Faith in the past.

Subject and Topics

This Surah was sent down in answer to the three questions which the mushriks of Makkah, in consultation with the people of the Book, had put to the Holy Prophet in order to test him. These were:

- (1) Who were "the Sleepers of the Cave"?
- (2) What is the real story of Khidr? And
- (3) What do you know about Zul- Qarnain?

As these three questions and the stories involved concerned the history of the Christians and the Jews, and were unknown in Hijaz, a choice of these was made to test whether the Holy Prophet possessed any source of the knowledge of the hidden and unseen things. Allah, however, not only gave a complete answer to their questions but also employed the three stories to the disadvantage of the opponents of Islam in the conflict that was going on at that time at Makkah between Islam and un-belief:

1. The questioners were told that "the Sleepers of the Cave" believed in the same doctrine of Tauhid which was being put forward in the Quran and that their condition was similar to the condition of the persecuted Muslims of Makkah. On the other hand, the persecutors of the Sleepers of the Cave had behaved in the same way towards them as the disbelievers of the Quraish were behaving towards the Muslims. Besides this, the Muslims have been taught that even if a Believer is persecuted by a cruel society, he should not bow down

before falsehood but emigrate from the place all alone, if need be, with trust in God. Incidentally the disbelievers of Makkah were told that the story of the Sleepers of the Cave was a clear proof of the creed of the Hereafter, for this showed that Allah has the power to resurrect anyone He wills even after a long sleep of death as He did in case of the Sleepers of the Cave.

2. The story of the Sleepers of the Cave has also been used to warn the chiefs of Makkah who were persecuting the small newly formed Muslim Community. At the same time, the Holy Prophet has been instructed that he should in no case make a compromise with their persecutors nor should he consider them to be more important than his poor followers. On the other hand, those chiefs have been admonished that they should not be puffed up with the transitory life of pleasure they were then enjoying but should seek after those excellences which are permanent and eternal.
3. The story of Khidr and Moses has been related in such a way as to supply the answer to the question of the disbelievers and to give comfort to the Believers as well. The lesson contained in this story is this "You should have full faith in the wisdom of what is happening in the Divine Factory in accordance with the will of Allah. As the reality is hidden from you, you are at a loss to understand the wisdom of what is happening, and sometimes if it appears that things are going against you, you cry out, 'How and why has this happened'. The fact is that if the curtain be removed from the "unseen", you would yourselves come to know that what is happening here is for the best. Even if sometimes it appears that something is going against you, you will see that in the end it also produces some good results for you.
4. The same is true of the story of Zul-Qarnain for it also admonishes the questioners, as if to say, "O you vain chiefs of Makkah you should learn a lesson from Zul-Qarnain. Though he was a great ruler, a great conqueror and the owner of great resources, yet he always surrendered to his Creator, whereas you are rebelling against Him even though you are insignificant chieftains in comparison with him. Besides this, though Zul-Qarnain built one of the strongest walls for protection, yet his real trust was in Allah and not in the "wall". He

believed that the wall could protect him against his enemies as long as it was the will of Allah and that there would be crack and holes in it, when it would be His will: whereas you who possess only insignificant fortified abodes and dwellings in comparison with him, consider yourselves to be permanently safe and secure against all sorts of calamities."

While the Quran turned the tables on the questioners who had tried to "expose" the Holy Prophet, in the end of the Surah the same things have been reiterated that were stated at its beginning: "Tauhid and the Hereafter are absolutely true and real and for your own good you should accept these doctrines, mend your ways in accordance with them and live in this world with this conviction that you are accountable to Allah: otherwise you shall ruin your life and all your doings shall be set at naught."



Taraveeh: Thirteenth Night

Surah Maryam

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

Name

It takes its name from v. 16.

Period of Revelation

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

Historical Background

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Theme and Subject

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

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

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

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

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

Surah Ta-ha

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

Name

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

Period of Revelation

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

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

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

Theme and Topics of Discussion

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Surah Al-Anbiyaa

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

Name

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

Period of Revelation

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

Subject and Topics

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

Main Themes

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

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

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

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

Along with these two other things have also been mentioned:

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

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

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



Taraveeh: Fourteenth Night

Surah Al-Hajj

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

Name

This Surah takes its name from v. 27.

Period of Revelation

As this Surah contains the characteristics of both the Makki and the Madani Surahs, the commentators have differed as to its period of revelation, but in the light of its style and themes we are of the opinion that a part of it (vv. 1-24) was sent down in the last stage of the Makki life of the Holy Prophet a little before migration and the rest (vv. 25-78) during the first stage of his Madani life. That is why this Surah combines the characteristics of both the Makki and the Madani Surahs.

The sudden change of the style from v. 25 shows that probably vv. 25-78 were sent down in the month of Zul-Hijjah in the very first year after Hijrah.

This is indicated by vv. 25-41 and confirmed by the occasion of the revelation of vv. 39-40. It appears that the month of Zul-Hijjah must have brought to the immigrants nostalgic memories of their homes in Makkah and naturally they must have thought of their Sacred City and of their Hajj congregation there, and grieved to think that the mushrik Quraish had debarred them from visiting the Sacred Mosque. Therefore, they might even have been praying for and expecting Divine permission to wage war against those tyrants who had expelled them from their homes and deprived them of visiting the House of Allah and made it difficult for them to follow the way of Islam. It was at this psychological occasion that these verses were sent down. That is why the purpose for which Masjid-al-Haram was built has been specifically mentioned. It has been made plain that Hajj (pilgrimage) had been enjoined for the worship of One Allah. But it is an irony that afterwards it had been dedicated to the rituals of shirk and the worshipers of One Allah had been debarred from visiting it. Therefore, permission for waging war against those tyrants has been given to oust them from there and to establish the righteous way of life for establishing virtue and eradicating evil. According to Ibn Abbas, Mujahid, Urwah bin Zubair, Zaid bin Aslam, Muqatil bin Hayyan, Qatadah and other great commentators, v. 39 is the first verse that grants the Muslims permission to wage war. Collections of Hadith and books on the life of the Holy Prophet confirm that after this permission actual preparations for war were started and the first expedition was sent to the coast of the Red Sea in Safar A.H. 2, which is known as the Expedition of Waddan or Al-Abwa.

Subject Matter and Theme

This Surah is addressed to: (1) The mushriks of Makkah, (2) the wavering Muslims, and (3) the True Believers. The mushriks have been warned in a forceful manner to this effect: "You have obdurately and impudently persisted in your ideas of ignorance and trusted in your deities instead of Allah, though they possess no power at all and you have repudiated the

Divine Messenger. Now you will meet the same end as has been the doom of those like you before. You have only harmed yourselves by rejecting Our Prophet and by persecuting the best element of your own community; now your false deities shall not be able to save you from the wrath of God". At the same time, they have been admonished time and again for their creed of shirk and sound arguments have been given in favour of Tauhid and the Hereafter.

The wavering Muslims, who had embraced Islam but were not prepared to endure any hardship in its way, have been admonished to this effect: "What is this faith of yours? On the one hand, you are ready to believe in Allah and become His servants provided you are given peace and prosperity but, on the other, if you meet with afflictions and hardships in His Way, you discard your Allah and cease to remain His servant. You should bear in mind that this wavering attitude of yours cannot avert those misfortunes and losses which Allah has ordained for you."

As regards the true Believers, they have been addressed in two ways: (1) in a general way so as to include the common people of Arabia also, and (2) in an exclusive way:

1. The Believers have been told that the mushriks of Makkah had no right to debar them from visiting the Holy Mosque. They had no right to prevent anyone from performing Hajj because the Holy Mosque was not their private property. This objection was not only justified but it also acted as an effective political weapon against the Quraish. For it posed this question to the other clans of Arabia: Were the Quraish mere attendants of the Holy Mosque or its owners? It implied that if they succeeded in debarring the Muslims from Hajj without any protest from others, they would feel encouraged in future to debar from Hajj and Umrah the people of any other clan, who happened to have strained relations with the Quraish. In order to emphasize this point, the history of the construction of the Holy Mosque has been cited to show that it was built by Prophet Abraham by the Command

of Allah and he had invited all the peoples to perform Hajj there. That is why those coming from outside had enjoyed equal rights by the local people from the very beginning. It has also been made clear that that House had not been built for the rituals of shirk but for the worship of One Allah. Thus it was sheer tyranny that the worship of Allah was being forbidden there while the worship of idols enjoyed full license.

2. In order to counteract the tyranny of the Quraish, the Muslims were allowed to fight with them. They were also given instructions to adopt the right and just attitude as and when they acquired power to rule in the land. Moreover, the Believers have been officially given the name of "Muslims", saying, "You are the real heirs to Abraham and you have been chosen to become witnesses of the Truth before mankind. Therefore you should establish salat and pay the zakat dues in order to become the best models of righteous life and perform Jihad for propagating the Word of Allah." (vv. 41,77, 78.)

It will be worthwhile to keep in view the introductions to Chapters II (Al-Baqarah) and VIII (Al-Anfal).

Surah Al-Muminun

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

Name

The surah takes its name, Al-Mu'minun, from the first verse.

Period of Revelation

Both its style and theme indicate that it was revealed during the middle stage of Prophet hood at Makkah. Reading between the lines, one feels

that a bitter conflict had begun between the, Holy Prophet and the disbelievers of Makkah, though the persecution by them had not yet become tyrannical. It appears that the surah was sent down during the climax of the "Famine" in Makkah (vv. 75-76), which according to authentic traditions occurred during the middle stage of Prophet hood. Moreover, according to a tradition related by 'Urwah bin Zubair, Hadarat Umar who had embraced Islam by that time, said, "This Surah was revealed in my presence and I myself observed the state of the Holy Prophet during its revelation. When the revelation ended, the Holy Prophet remarked, 'On this occasion ten such verses have been sent down to me that the one who measures up to them, will most surely go to Paradise'. Then he recited the initial verses of the surah." (Ahmad, Tirmizi, Nasai, Hakim).

Theme Topics

The central theme of the surah is to invite the people to accept and follow the Message of the Holy Prophet and the whole Surah revolves round this theme.

Summary

The fact that the people who have accepted the Message of the Holy Prophet have started acquiring such and such noble qualities of character is a practical proof of the truth of the Message. **1 - 11**

In this passage, attention has been drawn to the creation of man and the universe to impress that the whole universe including man's own self, is a clear proof of the truth of the Holy Prophet's Message, which invites the people to accept Tauhid and life in the Hereafter. **12 - 22**

Then the stories of the former Prophets and their communities have been cited as historical evidences of the truth of the Message. They prove the following things :

1. The objections and the doubts that the antagonists are raising against the Message of Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) are not new. These were raised against the former Prophets also whom they themselves acknowledged as Messengers of Allah. Therefore they should learn a lesson from their history and judge for themselves whether the Prophets were in the right or their objectors.
2. The Message of Tauhid and the Hereafter that Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) is conveying is the same as was brought by the former Prophets; therefore they should accept it.
3. They should take a warning from the consequences met by those communities who rejected the Message of their Prophets.
4. All the Prophets brought one and the same religion from Allah and they all belonged to one and the same community. All other religions were invented by the people themselves and none of them is from Allah. **23 - 54**

After relating the stories of the Prophets, a fundamental principle has been enunciated: Success and prosperity in the worldly life is not a criterion of success in the sight of Allah. If some persons (or a person) are enjoying prosperity, wealth, power and the like in this world, it does not mean that they are favorites of Allah. Likewise, the poverty and adversity of other people is not a proof that Allah is displeased with them. The real criterion is Faith (or lack of it). This declaration was needed because the antagonists of the Holy Prophet were the great chiefs of Makkah, who (and their followers) were deluded by their own prosperity that God and their deities were well pleased with them. On the other hand, they argued, the fact that Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) and his followers were indigent and in a state of helplessness, was a clear proof that Allah was not pleased with them, and they were under the curse of their deities. **55 - 67**

In this passage different arguments have been used to convince them that Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) was a true Prophet of Allah. Then they have been told that the Famine (vv. 75 - 76) was merely a warning and therefore "it is better for you to mend your ways; otherwise you will be visited by a terrible scourge." **68 - 77**

Again they have been invited to observe the Signs in the universe and in their own selves because these are clear proofs of the truth of the Message of the Holy Prophet. **78 - 95**

The Holy Prophet has been told not to adopt any wrong way in retaliation to counteract the evil ways of the enemies, and to guard against the incitement of Satan. **96 - 97**

In this concluding passage, the enemies of the truth have been warned that they shall have to render an account in the Hereafter and bear the consequences of their persecution of the Believers; therefore they should mend their ways. **98 – 118**

Surah An-Nur

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

Name

This Surah takes its name, An Nur, from verse 35.

Period of Revelation

The consensus of opinion is that it was sent down after the Campaign against Bani al-Mustaliq and this is confirmed by vv. 11-20 that deal with the incident of the "Slander", which occurred during that Campaign. But there is a difference of opinion as to whether this Campaign took place in 5 A. H. before the Battle of the Trench or in 6A. H. after it. It is important to decide this issue in order to determine whether this Surah was sent down earlier or Surah Al-Ahzab (XXXIII), which is the only other Surah containing the Commandments about the observance of purdah by women. Surah Al-Ahzab was admittedly sent down on the occasion of the Battle of the

Trench. Now if this Battle occurred earlier, it would mean that the initial instructions in connection with the Commandments of purdah were sent down in Surah Al-Ahzab? and they were complemented later by the Commandments revealed in this Surah. On the other hand, if the Campaign against Bani al-Mustaliq occurred earlier, the chronological order of the Commandments would be reversed, and it would become difficult to understand the legal wisdom and implications of the Commandments of purdah.

According to Ibn Sa'd, the Campaign against Bani al Mustaliq took place in Shaban 5 A. H. and the Battle of the Trench in Zil-Qa'dah the same year. This opinion is based on some traditions from Hadrat Ayesha about the events connected with the "Slander" in which she refers to a dispute between Hadrat Sa'd bin 'Ubadah and Sa'd bin Mu'az. Hadrat Sa'd bin Mu'az, according to authentic traditions, died during the Campaign against Bani Quraizah, which took place immediately after the Battle of the Trench. It is, therefore, evident that he could not be present in 6 A. H. to take part in a dispute about the "Slander".

On the other hand, Muhammad bin Ishaq says that the Battle of the Trench took place in Shawwal 5 A. H. and the Campaign against Bani al-Mustaliq in Sha'ban 6 A. H. This opinion is supported by many authentic traditions from Hadrat Ayesha and others. According to these traditions, (1) the Commandments about purdah had been sent down in Surah Al-Ahzab before the incident of the "Slander", (2) the Holy Prophet had married Hadrat Zainab in Zil-Qa'dah 5 A. H. after the Battle of the Trench, (3) Hamnah, sister of Hadrat Zainab, had taken a leading part in spreading the "Slander", just because Hadrat Ayesha was a rival of her sister. All this evidence supports the view of Muhammad bin Ishaq.

Now let us consider the two opinions a little more closely. The only argument in favor of the first opinion is the mention of the presence of Hadrat Sa'd bin Mu'az in a dispute connected with the incident of the

"Slander". But this argument is weakened by some other traditions from Hadrat Ayesha, in which she mentions Hadrat Usaid bin Hudair instead of Hadrat Sa'd bin Mu'az in this dispute. It may, therefore, be assumed that there has been some confusion regarding the two names in reporting the traditions. Moreover, if we accept the first opinion, just because of the mention of the name of Hadrat Sa'd bin Mu'az in some traditions, we encounter other difficulties that cannot be resolved in any way. For, in that case, we shall have to admit that the revelation of the Commandments of purdah and the Holy Prophet's marriage with Hadrat Zainab had taken place even earlier than the Battle of the Trench. But we learn from the Qur'an and many authentic traditions that both these events happened after that Battle and the Campaign against Bani Quraizah. That is why Ibn Hazm, Ibn Qayyim and some other eminent scholars have held the opinion of Muhammad bin Ishaq as correct, and we also hold it to be so. Thus, we conclude that Surah Al Ahzab was sent down earlier than Surah An-Nur, which was revealed in the latter half of 6 A. H. several months after Surah Al Ahzab.

Historical Background

Now let us review the circumstances existing at the time of the revelation of this surah. It should be kept in mind that the incident of the "Slander", which was the occasion of its revelation, was closely connected with the conflict between Islam and the disbelievers.

After the victory at Badr, the Islamic movement began to gain strength day by day; so much so that by the time of the Battle of the Trench, it had become so strong that the united forces of the enemy numbering about ten thousand failed to crush it and had to raise the siege of AlMadinah after one month. It meant this, and both the parties understood it well, that the war of aggression which the Disbelievers had been waging for several years, had come to an end. The Holy Prophet himself declared: "After this

year, the Quraish will not be able to attack you; now you will take the offensive."

When the disbelievers realized that they could not defeat Islam on the battlefield, they chose the moral front to carry on the conflict. It cannot be said with certainty whether this Change of tactics was the outcome of deliberate consultations, or it was the inevitable result of the humiliating retreat in the Battle of the Trench, for which all the available forces of the enemy had been concentrated: They knew it well that the rise of Islam was not due to the numerical strength of the Muslims nor to their superior arms and ammunition nor to their greater material resources; nay, the Muslims were fighting against fearful odds on all these fronts. They owed their success to their moral superiority. Their enemies realized that the pure and noble qualities of the Holy Prophet and his followers were capturing the hearts of the people, and were also binding them together into a highly disciplined community. As a result of this, they were defeating the mushriks and the Jews both on the peace and on the war front, because the latter lacked discipline and character.

Under the above mentioned circumstances, the wicked designs of the disbelievers led them to start a campaign of vilification against the Holy Prophet and the Muslims in order to destroy the bulwark of morale that was helping them to defeat their enemies. Therefore the strategy was to attain the assistance of the hypocrites to spread slanders against the Holy Prophet and his followers so that the mushriks and the Jews could exploit these to sow the seeds of discord among the Muslims and undermine their discipline.

The first opportunity for the use of the new strategy was afforded in Zil-Qa'dah 5 A. H. when the Holy Prophet married Hadrat Zainab (daughter of Jahsh), who was the divorced wife of his adopted son, Zaid bin Harithah. The Holy Prophet had arranged this marriage in order to put an end to the custom of ignorance, which gave the same status to the adopted son that

was the right only of the son from one's own loins. The hypocrites, however, considered it a golden opportunity to vilify the Holy Prophet from inside the community, and the Jews and the mushriks exploited it from outside to ruin his high reputation by this malicious slander. For this purpose fantastic stories were concocted and spread to this effect: "One day Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) happened to see the wife of his adopted son and fell in love with her; he maneuvered her divorce and married her." Though this was an absurd fiction it was spread with such skill, cunning and artfulness that it succeeded in its purpose; so much so that some Muslim traditionalist and commentators also have cited some parts of it in their writings, and the orientalist have exploited these fully to vilify the Holy Prophet. As a matter of fact, Hadrat Zainab was never a stranger to the Holy Prophet that he should see her by chance and fall in love with her at first sight. For she was his first cousin, being the daughter of his real paternal aunt, Umaymah, daughter of Abdul Muttalib. He had known her from her childhood to her youth. A year before this incident, he himself had persuaded her against her will to marry Hadrat Zaid in order to demonstrate practically that the Quraish and the liberated slaves were equal as human being. As she never reconciled herself to her marriage with a liberated slave, they could not pull on together for long, which inevitably led to her divorce. The above mentioned facts were well known to all, yet the slanderers succeeded in their false propaganda with the result that even today there are people who exploit these things to defame Islam.

The second slander was made on the honor of Hadrat Ayesha, a wife of the Holy Prophet, in connection with an incident which occurred while he was returning from the Campaign against Bani al-Mustaliq. As this attack was even severer than the first one and was the main background of this Surah, we shall deal with it in greater detail.

Let us say a few words about Abdullah bin Ubayy, who played the part of a villain in this attack. He belonged to the clan of Khazraj and was one of the

most important chiefs of Al-Madinah. The people had even intended to make him their king a little before the Holy Prophet's migration there, but the scheme had to be dropped because of the changed circumstances. Though he had embraced Islam, he remained at heart a hypocrite and his hypocrisy was so manifest that he was called the "Chief of the Hypocrites". He never lost any opportunity to slander Islam in order to take his revenge.

Now the main theme. When in Sha'ban 6 A. H. the Holy Prophet learned that the people of Bani al-Mustaliq were making preparations for a war against the Muslims and were trying to muster other clans also for this purpose, he fore-stalled and took the enemy by surprise. After capturing the people of the clan and their belongings, the Holy Prophet made a halt near Muraishi, a spring in their territory. One day a dispute concerning taking water from the spring started between a servant of Hadrat Umar and an ally of the clan of Khazraj, and developed into a quarrel between the Muhajirs (immigrants) and the Ansar (Muslims of Madinah), but was soon settled. This, however, did not suit the strategy of Abdullah bin Ubayy, who also had joined the expedition with a large number of hypocrites. So he began to incite the Ansar, saying, "You yourselves brought these people of the quraish from Makkah and made them partners in your wealth and property. And now they have become your rivals and want domination over you. If even now you withdraw your support from them, they shall be forced to leave your city." Then he swore and declared, "As soon as we reach back Al-Madinah, the respectable people will turn out the degraded people from the city."

When the Holy Prophet came to know of this, he ordered the people to set off immediately and march back to Al-Madinah. The forced march continued up to noon the next day without a halt on the way so that the people became exhausted and had no time for idle talk.

Though this wise judgment and quick action by the Holy Prophet averted the undesirable consequences of the mischief, Abdullah bin Ubayy got

another opportunity for doing a far more serious and greater mischief, i.e. by engineering a "Slander" against Hadrat Ayesha, for that was a mischief which might well have involved the young Muslim Community in a civil war, if the Holy Prophet and his sincere and devoted followers had not shown wisdom, forbearance and marvelous discipline in dealing with it. In order to understand the events that led to the incident of the "Slander", we cite the story in Hadrat 'Ayesha's own words. She says:

"Whenever the Holy Prophet went out on a journey, he decided by lots as to which of his wives should accompany him. Accordingly, it was decided that I should accompany him during the expedition to Banial Mustaliq. On the return journey, the Holy Prophet halted for the night at a place which was the last stage on the way back to Al-Madinah. It was still night, when they began to make preparations for the march. So I went outside the camp to ease myself. When I returned and came near my halting place, I noticed that my necklace had fallen down somewhere. I went back in search for it but in the meantime the caravan moved off and I was left behind all alone. The four carriers of the litter had placed it on my camel without noticing that it was empty. This happened because of my light weight due to lack of food in those days. I wrapped myself in my sheet and lay down in the hope that when it would be found that I had been left behind, a search party would come back to pick me up. In the meantime I fell asleep. In the morning, when Safwan bin Mu'attal Sulami passed that way, he saw me and recognized me for he had seen me several times before the Commandment about purdah had been sent down. No sooner did he see me than he stopped his camel and cried out spontaneously: "How sad! The wife of the Holy Prophet has been left here!" At this I woke up all of a sudden and covered my face with my sheet. Without uttering another word, he made his camel kneel by me and stood aside, while I climbed on to the camel back. He led the camel by the nose-string and we overtook the caravan at about noon, when it had just halted and nobody had yet noticed that I had been left behind. I learnt afterwards that this incident had been

used to slander me and Abdullah bin Ubayy was foremost among the slanderers.(According to other traditions, when Hadrat Ayesha reached the camp on the camel, led by Safwan, and it was known that she had been left behind, Abdullah bin Ubayy cried out, 'By God, she could not have remained chaste. Look, there comes the wife of your Prophet openly on the camel led by the person with whom she passed the night.')

"When I reached Al-Madinah, I fell ill and stayed in bed for more than a month. Though I was quite unaware of it, the news of the "Slander" was spreading like a scandal in the city, and had also reached the Holy Prophet. Anyhow, I noticed that he did not seem as concerned about my illness he used to be. He would come but without addressing me directly, would inquire from others how I was and leave the house. Therefore it troubled my mind that something had gone wrong somewhere. So I took leave of him and went to my mother's house for better nursing.

"While I was there, one night I went out of the city to ease myself in the company of Mistah's mother, who was a first cousin of my mother. As she was walking along she stumbled over something and cried out spontaneously, 'May Mistah perish!' To this I retorted, 'What a good mother you are that you curse your own son -- the son who took part in the Battle of Badr.' She replied, 'My dear daughter, are you not aware of his scandal mongering?' Then she told me everything about the campaign of the "Slander".(Besides the hypocrites, some true Muslims also had been involved in this campaign, and among them who took leading part in it, were Mistah, Hassan bin Thabit, the famous poet of Islam, and Hamnah, daughter of Jahsh and sister of Hadrat Zainab). Hearing this horrible story, my blood curdled, and I immediately returned home, and passed the rest of the night in crying over it.

"During my absence the Holy Prophet took counsel with Ali and Usamah bin Zaid about this matter. Usamah said good words about me to this effect: 'O Messenger of Allah, we have found nothing but good in your wife.

All that is being spread about her is a lie and calumny.' As regards Ali, he said, 'O Messenger of Allah, there is no dearth of women; you may, if you like, marry another wife. If, however, you would like to investigate into the matter, you may send for her maid servant and enquire into it through her.' Accordingly, the maid servant was sent for and questioned. She replied, 'I declare on an oath by Allah, Who has sent you with the Truth, that I have never seen any evil thing in her, except that she falls asleep when I tell her to look after the kneaded dough in my absence and a goat comes and eats it.'

"On that same day the Holy Prophet addressed the people from the pulpit, saying: 'O Muslims, who from among you will defend my honor against the attacker of the person who has transgressed all bounds in doing harm to me by slandering my wife. By God, I have made a thorough enquiry and found nothing wrong with her nor with the man, whose name has been linked with the "Slander". At this Usaid bin Hudair (or Sa'd bin Mauz) according to other traditions) stood up and said, 'O Messenger of Allah, if that person belongs to our clan, we will kill him by ourselves, but if he belongs to the Khazraj clan, we will kill him if you order us to do so.' Hearing this Sa'd bin 'Ubadah,² chief of the Khazraj clan, stood up and said, 'You lie you can never kill him. You are saying this just because the person belongs to our clan of Khazraj. Had he belonged to your clan, you would never have said so.' Hadrat Usaid retorted, 'You are a hypocrite: that is why you are defending a hypocrite.' At this, there was a general turmoil in the mosque, which would have developed into a riot, even though the Holy Prophet was present there the whole time. But he cooled down their anger and came down from the pulpit."

The remaining details of the incident will be cited along with our commentary on the Text, which honorably absolved Hadrat Aisha from the blame. But here we would only want to point out the enormity of the mischief that was engineered by Abdullah bin Ubayy: (1) It implied an attack on the honor of the Holy Prophet and Hadrat Abu Bakr Siddiq.(2) He

meant to undermine the high moral superiority which was the greatest asset of the Islamic Movement (3)He intended to ignite civil war between the Muhajirs and the Ansar, and between Aus and Khazraj, the two clans of the Ansar.

Theme and Topics

This Surah and vv. 28-73 of Surah Al-Ahzab(of which this is the sequel)were sent down to strengthen the moral front, which at that time was the main target of the attack, vv. 28-73 of Al-Ahzab were sent down concerning the Holy Prophet's marriage with Hadrat Zainab, and on the occasion of the second attack (the "Slander" about Hadrat Aishah), Surah An-Nur was sent down to repair the cracks that had appeared in the unity of the Muslim Community. If we keep this in view during the study of the two Surahs, we shall understand the wisdom that underlies the Commandments about purdah. Allah sent the following instructions to strengthen and safeguard the moral front, and to counteract the storm of propaganda that was raised on the occasion of the marriage of Hazrat Zainab:

1. The wives of the Holy Prophet were enjoined to remain within their private quarters, to avoid display of adornments and to be cautious in their talk with other persons (vv. 32, 33).
2. The other Muslims were forbidden to enter the private rooms of the Holy Prophet and instructed to ask whatever they wanted from behind the curtain.(v. 53).
3. A line of demarcation was drawn between the mahram and the non-mahram relatives. Only the former were allowed to enter the private rooms of those wives of the Holy Prophet with whom they were so closely related as to prohibit marriage with them.(v. 55).
4. The Muslims were told that the wives of the Prophet were prohibited for them just like their own real mothers; therefore every Muslim should regard them with the purest of intentions.(vv. 53, 54).
5. The Muslims were warned that they would invite the curse and scourge of Allah if they offended the Holy Prophet. Likewise it was a

heinous sin to attack the honor of or slander any Muslim man or woman.(vv. 57, 58).

6. All the Muslim women were enjoined to cover their faces with their sheets if and when they had to go out of their houses.(v. 59).

On the occasion of the second attack, this Surah was sent down to keep pure and strengthen the moral fiber of the Muslim society, which had been shaken by the enormity of the slander. We give below a summary of the Commandments and instructions in their chronological order so that one may understand how the Qur'an makes use of the psychological occasion to reform the Community by the adoption of legal, moral and social measures.

1. Fornication which had already been declared to be a social crime (IV: 15,16) was now made a criminal offense and was to be punished with a hundred lashes.
2. It was enjoined to boycott the adulterous men and women and the Muslims were forbidden to have any marriage relations with them.
3. The one, who accused the other of adultery but failed to produce four witnesses, was to be punished with eighty lashes.
4. The Law of Li'an was prescribed to decide the charge of adultery against his own wife by a husband.
5. The Muslims were enjoined to learn a lesson from the incident of the "Slander" about Hadrat Aishah, as if to say, "You should be very cautious in regard to charges of adultery against the people of good reputation, and should not spread these; nay, you should refute and suppress them immediately." In this connection, a general principle was enunciated that the proper spouse for a pure man is a pure woman, for he cannot pull on with a wicked woman for long, and the same is the case with a pure woman, as if to say, "When you knew that the Holy Prophet was a pure man, nay, the purest of all human beings, how could you believe that he had experienced happiness with a wicked woman and exalted her as the most beloved of his wives? For it was obvious that an adulterous woman could not have been able to deceive, with her affected behavior, a pure man like the

Holy Prophet. You ought also to have considered the fact that the accuser was a mean person while the accused was a pure woman. This should have been enough to convince you that the accusation was not worth your consideration; nay, it was not even conceivable.

6. Those who spread news and evil rumors and propagate wickedness in the Muslim Community, deserve punishment and not encouragement.
7. A general principle was laid down that relations in the Muslim Community should be based on good faith and not on suspicion: everyone should be treated as innocent unless he is proved to be guilty and vice versa.
8. The people were forbidden to enter the houses of others unceremoniously and were instructed to take permission for this.
9. Both men and women were instructed to lower their gaze and forbidden to cast glances or make eyes at each other.
10. Women were enjoined to cover their heads and breasts even inside their houses.
11. Women were forbidden to appear with make-up before other men except their servants or such relatives with whom their marriage is prohibited.
12. They were enjoined to hide their make-ups when they went out of their houses, and even forbidden to put on jingling ornaments, while they moved out of their houses.
13. Marriage was encouraged and enjoined even for slaves and slave girls, for unmarried people help spread indecency.
14. The institution of slavery was discouraged and the owners and other people were enjoined to give financial help to the slaves to earn their freedom under the law of Mukatabat.
15. Prostitution by slave girls was forbidden in the first instance, for prostitution in Arabia was confined to this class alone. This in fact implied the legal prohibition of prostitution.
16. Sanctity of privacy in home life was enjoined even for servants and under age children including one's own. They were enjoined not to enter the private rooms of any man or woman without permission; especially in the morning, at noon and at night.

17. Old women were given the concession that they could set aside their head covers within their houses but should refrain from display of adornments. Even they were told that it was better for them to keep themselves covered with head wrappers.
18. The blind, lame, crippled and sick persons were allowed to take any article of food from the houses of other people without permission, for it was not to be treated like theft and cheating, which are cognizable offenses.
19. On the other hand, the Muslims were encouraged to develop mutual relationships by taking their meals together, and the nearest relatives and intimate friends were allowed to take their meals in each other's house without any formal invitation. This was to produce mutual affection and sincere relationships between them to counteract any future mischief. Side by side with these instructions, clear signs of the Believers and the hypocrites were stated to enable every Muslim to discriminate between the two. At the same time the Community was bound together by adopting disciplinary measures in order to make it stronger and firmer than it was at the time so as to discourage the enemies from creating mischief in it.

Above all, the most conspicuous thing about this discourse is that it is free from the bitterness which inevitably follows such shameful and absurd attacks. Instead of showing any wrath at this provocation, the discourse prescribes some laws and regulations and enjoins reformative commandments and issues wise instructions that were required at the time for the education and training of the Community. Incidentally, this teaches us how to deal with such provocative mischief's coolly, wisely and generously. At the same time, it is a clear proof that this is not the word of Prophet Muhammad (Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) but of a Being Who is observing all human conditions and affairs from the highest level, and guiding mankind without any personal prejudices, feelings and leanings. Had this been the word of the Holy Prophet; there would have been at least some tinge of natural bitterness in spite of his great

generosity and forbearance, for it is but human that a noble man naturally become enraged when his own honor is attacked in this mean manner.



Taraveeh: Fifteenth Night

Surah Al-Furqan

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

Name

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

Period of Revelation

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

Subject Matter and Topics

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

Surah Ash-Shu'araa

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

Name

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

Period of Revelation

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

Subject Matter and Topics

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

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

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

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

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



Taraveeh: Sixteenth Night

Surah An-Naml

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

Name

The Surah takes its name from the phrase wad-in-naml which occurs inverse 18, implying that it is a Surah in which the story of An-Naml (the Ant) has been related.

Period of Revelation

The subject matter and the style bear full resemblance with the Surahs of the middle Makkan period and this is supported by traditions as well. According to Ibn Abbas and Jabir bin Zaid, "First the Surah Ash-Shu`araa' was sent down, then the Surah An Naml and then Al-Qasas."

Theme and Topics

The Surah consists of two discourses, the first from the beginning of the Surah to the end of verse 58, and the second from verse 59 to the end of the Surah.

The theme of the first discourse is that only those people can benefit from the guidance of the Quran and become worthy of the good promises made in it, who accept the realities which this Book presents as the basic realities of the universe, and then follow up their belief with obedience and submission in their practical lives as well. But the greatest hindrance for man to follow this way is the denial of the Hereafter. For it makes him irresponsible, selfish and given to worldly life, which in turn makes it impossible for him to submit himself before God and to accept the moral restrictions on his lusts and desires. After this introduction three types of character have been presented.

The first type is characterized by Pharaoh and the chiefs of Thamud and the rebels of the people of Lot, who were all heedless of the accountability of the Hereafter and had consequently become the slaves of the world. These people did not believe even after seeing the miracles. Rather they turned against those who invited them to goodness and piety. They persisted in their evil ways which are held in abhorrence by every sensible person. They did not heed the admonition even until a moment before they were overtaken by the scourge of Allah.

The second type of character is of the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him), who had been blessed by God with wealth and kingdom and grandeur to an extent undreamt of by the chiefs of the disbelievers of Makkah. But, since he regarded himself as answerable before God and had the feeling that whatever he had was only due to Allah's bounty, he had adopted the attitude of obedience before Him and there was no tinge of vanity in his character.

The third type is of the queen of Sheba, who ruled over a most wealthy and well known people in the history of Arabia. She possessed all those means of life, which could cause a person to become vain and conceited. Her wealth and possessions far exceeded the wealth and possessions of the Quraish. Then she professed shirk, which was not only an ancestral way of life with her, but she had to follow it in order to maintain her position as a ruler. Therefore, it was much more difficult for her to give up shirk and adopt the way of Tauhid than it could be for a common mushrik. But when the Truth became evident to her, nothing could stop her from accepting it. Her deviation was, in fact, due to her being born and brought up in a polytheistic environment and not because of her being a slave to her lusts and desires. Her conscience was not devoid of the sense of accountability before God.

In the second discourse, at the outset, attention has been drawn to some of the most glaring and visible realities of the universe, and the disbelievers of Makkah have been asked one question after the other to the effect : "Do these realities testify to the creed of shirk which you are following, or to the truth of Tauhid to which the Qur'an invites you?" After this the real malady of the disbelievers has been pointed out, saying, "The thing which has blinded them and made them insensitive to every glaring reality is their denial of the Hereafter. This same thing has rendered every matter and affair of life non-serious for them. For, when according to them, everything has to become dust ultimately, and the whole struggle of life is purposeless and without an object before it, the truth and falsehood are equal and alike. Therefore, the question whether one's system of life is based on the right or wrong foundations becomes meaningless for him."

But the discourse, as outlined above, is not meant to dissuade the Prophet and the Muslims from calling the obdurate and heedless people to the way of Tauhid; it is, in fact, intended to arouse them from their slumber. That is why in vv. 67-93 certain things have been said repeatedly in order to produce in the people a sense of the Hereafter, to warn them of the

consequences of being heedless of it, and to convince them of its coining, like an eye witness of something, who convinces the other person of it, who has not seen it.

In conclusion, the real invitation of the Quran that is, the invitation to serve One Allah alone, has been presented in a concise but forceful manner, and the people warned that accepting it would be to their own advantage and rejecting it to their own disadvantage. For if they deferred their faith until they saw those Signs of God after the appearance of which they would be left with no choice but to believe and submit, they should bear in mind the fact that that would be the time of judgment and believing then would be of no avail.

Surah Al-Qasas

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

Name

The Surah takes its name from verse 25 in which the word Al-Qasas occurs. Lexically, qasas means to relate events in their proper sequence. Thus, from the view- point of the meaning too, this word can be a suitable title for this Surah, for in it the detailed story of the Prophet Moses has been related.

Period of Revelation

As already mentioned in the introduction to Surah An Naml, according to Ibn Abbas and Jabir bin Zaid, Surahs Ash-Shu'araa', An-Naml and Al-Qasas were sent down one after the other. The language, the style and the theme also show that the period of the revelation of these three Surahs is

nearly the same. Another reason for their loose resemblance is that the different parts of the Prophet Moses story as mentioned in these Surahs together make up a complete story. In Surah Ash-Shu'araa', excusing himself for not accepting the office of Prophethood the Prophet Moses submits, "The people of Pharaoh have the charge of a crime against me; therefore, I fear that they will put me to death." Then, when he goes before Pharaoh, the latter says, "Did we not bring you up as a child in our house? You lived quite a few years of your life among us, and then you did what you did." Nothing more of this has been mentioned there, but in this Surah the other details have been supplied. Similarly, in Surah An-Naml the story starts abruptly from the time when the Prophet Moses was journeying with his family and suddenly saw a fire at a distance. In that Surah nothing has been said about the nature of his journey, or the place he was coming from, or his destination, but this Surah supplies all the necessary details. Thus, the three Surahs read together complete the story of the Prophet Moses (Allah's peace be upon him).

Theme and Topics

The main theme is to remove the doubts and objections that were being raised against the Prophethood of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) and to invalidate the excuses which were being offered for not believing in him.

For this purpose, first the story of the Prophet Moses has been related, which, by analogy with the period of revelation, impresses the following points in the listeners' mind automatically:

First, Allah provides the means and motives of whatever He wills to do, in imperceptible ways. Thus, Allah so arranged things that the child through whom Pharaoh had to be removed from power, was bred and brought up in his own house, and he could not know whom he was fostering. Who can then fight God and frustrate Him by his machinations.

Secondly, Prophet hood is not granted to a person amid festivities by issuing a proclamation from the earth and heavens. You wonder how Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) has been blessed with Prophet hood unexpectedly, all of a sudden, but Moses whom you yourselves acknowledge as a Prophet (v. 48) had also become a Prophet unexpectedly, while on a journey, and nobody had known what event had occurred in the desolation at the foot of Mt. Sinai. Even Moses himself did not know a moment before what he was going to be blessed with. He, in fact, had gone to bring a piece of the fire but had returned with the gift of Prophet hood.

Thirdly, the person from whom Allah wants to take some service comes out without any army and armor and without an apparent helper or force at his back, yet he puts to rout much stronger and better equipped opponents. The contrast that existed between the strengths of Moses (peace be upon him) and Pharaoh was much more prominent and glaring than that which existed between Muhammad (peace be upon him) and the quraish; yet the world knows who had come out victorious in the end and who had been routed.

Fourthly, you refer to Moses again and again and say, "Why has Muhammad not been given the same which was given to Moses? -- i.e. miracles of the staff, the shining hand, etc. -- as if to suggest that you would readily believe only if you were shown the kind of the miracles that were shown by Moses to Pharaoh. But do you know what sort of response was made by those who were shown those miracles? They had not believed even after seeing the miracles, and had only said, "This is magic", for they were involved in stubbornness and hostility to the Truth. The same malady afflicts you today. Will you believe only when you are slowly the same kind of miracles? Then, do you know what fate the disbelievers had met even after seeing the miracles? They were annihilated by Allah. Do you now wish to meet the same doom by asking for the miracles in your obstinacy?

These were the things which were automatically impressed in the mind of every listener who heard this story in the pagan environment of Makkah, for a similar conflict was going on at that time between the Holy Prophet and disbelievers of Makkah as had already taken place between the Prophet Moses and Pharaoh before. This was the background against which the story of the Prophet Moses was narrated so that a perfect analogy was established automatically in every detail between the conditions prevailing then in Makkah and those existing in the time of the Prophet Moses. Then, from verse 43 onward the discourse turns to the real theme.

In the first place, the narration of a two thousand year old historical event by the Holy Prophet with such accuracy and detail, is presented as a proof of his Prophet hood although he was un-lettered and the people of his city and clan knew full well that he had no access to any source of such information as they could point out.

Then the disbelievers of Makkah have been warned and put to shame for an event that occurred in those very days. Some Christians had come to Makkah and embraced Islam when they heard the Qur'an from the Holy Prophet. Instead of learning any lesson from this the Makkans were so upset at this that their leader, Abu Jahl, disgraced those people publicly.

In conclusion, the excuse that the disbelievers put forward for not believing in the Holy Prophet has been dealt with. What they feared was this: "If we give up the polytheistic creed of the Arabs and accept the doctrine of Tauhid instead, this will put an end to our supremacy in the religious, political and economic fields, which, in turn, will destroy our position of the most influential tribe of Arabia and we shall be left with no refuge anywhere in the land." As this was the real motive of the chiefs of the Quraish for their antagonism towards the Truth, and their doubts and objections were only the pretenses, which they invented to deceive the common people, Allah has dealt with these fully till the end of the Surah, considered each aspect of these in a wise manner and offered the remedy for their basic ailment

due to which those people judged the Truth and falsehood only from the viewpoint of their worldly interests.



Taraveeh: Seventeenth Night

Surah Al-Ankabut

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

Name

The Surah takes its name from verse 41 in which the word Ankabut (Spider) has occurred.

Period of Revelation

Verses 56 to 60 clearly show that this Surah was sent down a little before the migration to Habash, and this is supported by the internal evidence of the subject matter as well. Some commentators have opined that since it mentions the hypocrites, and hypocrisy appeared in Madinah, the first ten verses of this Surah were revealed at Madinah and the rest of it at Makkah; whereas the people whose hypocrisy has been mentioned here are those

who had adopted a hypocritical way of life because they were afraid of the oppression and extreme physical torture to which the Muslims were being subjected by the disbelievers. Evidently, this kind of hypocrisy could be there only at Makkah and not at Madinah. Similarly, some other commentators, seeing that in this Surah the Muslims have been exhorted to migrate, have regarded it as the last Surah to be revealed at Makkah, whereas the Muslims had migrated to Habash even before their migration to Madinah. These opinions are not based on any tradition but on the internal evidence of the subject matter, and this internal evidence, when considered against the subject matter of the Surah as a whole, points to the conditions prevailing in the time of the migration to Habash and not to the last stage at Makkah.

Theme and Subject matter

A perusal of the Surah shows that the period of its revelation was the period of extreme persecution of the Muslims at Makkah. The disbelievers were opposing and fighting Islam tooth and nail and the new converts were being subjected to the severest oppression. Such were the conditions when Allah sent down this Surah to strengthen and encourage the sincere Muslims as well as to put to shame those who were showing weakness of the faith. Besides, the disbelievers of Makkah have been threatened and warned not to invite for themselves the fate that the antagonists of the Truth have been experiencing in every age.

In this connection, the questions that some young men answered. For instance, their parents were urging them to abandon Muhammad (may Allah's peace be upon him), and return to their ancestral religion, for they argued: "The Qur'an in which you have put your faith, regards the rights of the parents as the uppermost; therefore, listen to what we say; otherwise you will be working against the dictates of your own Faith." This has been answered in verse 8.

Similarly, the people of some clans said to the new converts to Islam, "Leave the question of punishments etc., to us. Listen to us and abandon this man. If God seizes you in the Hereafter, we will come forward and say, 'Lord, these people are innocent: we had forced them to give up the Faith; therefore, seize us'." This has been dealt with, in vv. 12-13.

The stories mentioned in this Surah also impress the same point mostly, as if to say, "Look at the Prophets of the past: they were made to suffer great hardships and were treated cruelly for long periods. Then, at last they were helped by Allah. Therefore, take heart: Allah's succor will certainly come. But a period of trial and tribulation has to be undergone." Besides teaching this lesson to the Muslims, the disbelievers also have been warned, as if to say, "If you are not being immediately seized by Allah, you should not form the wrong impression that you will never be seized. The signs of the doomed nations of the past are before you. Just see how they met their doom and how Allah succored the Prophets."

Then the Muslims have been instructed to the effect: "If you feel that the persecution has become unbearable for you, you should give up your homes, instead of giving up your Faith: Allah's earth is vast: seek a new place where you can worship Allah with the full peace of mind." Besides all this, the disbelievers also have been urged to understand Islam. The realities of Tauhid and the Hereafter have been impressed with rational arguments, shirk have been refuted, and drawing their attention towards the signs in the universe, they have been told that all these Signs confirm the teachings that the Prophet is presenting before them.

Surah Ar-Rum

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

Name

The Surah takes its name Ar-Rum from the second verse in which the words ghulibat-ur-Rum have occurred.

Period of Revelation

The period of the revelation of this Surah is determined absolutely by the historical event that has been mentioned at the outset. It says: "The Romans have been vanquished in the neighboring land." In those days the Byzantine occupied territories adjacent to Arabia were Jordan, Syria and Palestine, and in these territories the Romans were completely overpowered by the Iranians in 615 A. D. Therefore, it can be said with absolute certainty that this Surah was sent down in the same year, and this was the year in which the migration to Habash took place.

Historical Background

The prediction made in the initial verses of this Surah is one of the most outstanding evidences of the Quran's being the Word of Allah and the Holy Prophet Muhammad's being a true Messenger of Allah. Let us have a look at the historical background relevant to the verses.

Eight years before the Holy Prophet's advent as a Prophet the Byzantine Emperor Maurice was overthrown by Phocus, who captured the throne and became king. Phocus first got the Emperor's five sons executed in front of him, and then got the Emperor also killed and hung their heads in a thoroughfare in Constantinople. A few days after this he had the empress and her three daughters also put to death. The event provided Khusrau Parvez, the Sassanid king of Iran; a good moral excuse to attack Byzantium. For Emperor Maurice had been his benefactor; with his help he had got the throne of Iran. Therefore, he declared that he would avenge his godfather's and his children's murder upon Phocus, the usurper. So, he

started war against Byzantium in 603 A. D. and within a few years, putting the Phocus armies to routine succession, he reached Edessa (modern, Urfa) in Asia Minor, on the one hand, and Aleppo and Antioch in Syria, on the other. When the Byzantine ministers saw that Phocus could not save the country, they sought the African governor's help, who sent his son, Heraclius, to Constantinople with a strong fleet. Phocus was immediately deposed and Heraclius made emperor. He treated Phocus as he had treated Maurice. This happened in 610 A. D., the year the Holy Prophet was appointed to Prophet hood.

The moral excuse for which Khusrau Parvez had started the war was no more valid after the deposition and death of Phocus. Had the object of his war really been to avenge the murder of his ally on Phocus for his cruelty, he would have come to terms with the new Emperor after the death of Phocus. But he continued the war, and gave it the color of a crusade between Zoroastrianism and Christianity. The sympathies of the Christian sects (i. e. Nestorians and Jacobians etc.) which had been excommunicated by the Roman ecclesiastical authority and tyrannized for years also went with the Magian (Zoroastrian) invaders, and the Jews also joined hands with them; so much so that the number of the Jews who enlisted in Khusrau's army rose up to 26,000.

Heraclius could not stop this storm. The very first news that he received from the East after ascending the throne was that of the Iranian occupation of Antioch. After this Damascus fell in 613 A. D. Then in 614 A.D. the Iranians occupying Jerusalem played havoc with the Christian world. Ninety thousand Christians were massacred and the Holy Sepulcher was desecrated. The Original Cross on which, according to the Christian belief, Jesus had died was seized and carried to Mada'in. The chief priest Zacharia was taken prisoner and all the important churches of the city were destroyed. How puffed up was Khusrau Parvez at this victory can be judged from the letter that he wrote to Heraclius from Jerusalem. He wrote: "From Khusrau, the greatest of all gods, the master of the whole world : To

Heraclius, his most wretched and most stupid servant: 'You say that you have trust in your Lord, why didn't then your Lord save Jerusalem from me?'"

Within a year after this victory the Iranian armies over-ran Jordan, Palestine and the whole of the Sinai Peninsula, and reached the frontiers of Egypt. In those very days another conflict of a far greater historical consequence was going on in Makkah. The believers in One God, under the leadership of the Prophet Muhammad (may Allah's peace be upon him), were fighting for their existence against the followers of shirk under the command of the chiefs of the Quraish, and the conflict had reached such a stage that in 615 A. D., a substantial number of the Muslims had to leave their homes and take refuge with the Christian kingdom of Habash, which was an ally of the Byzantine Empire. In those days the Sassanid victories against Byzantium were the talk of the town, and the pagans of Makkah were delighted and were taunting the Muslims to the effect: "Look the fire worshipers of Iran are winning victories and the Christian believers in Revelation and Prophethood are being routed everywhere. Likewise, we, the idol worshipers of Arabia, will exterminate you and your religion."

These were the conditions when this Surah of the Quran was sent down, and init a prediction was made, saying:"The Romans have been vanquished in the neighboring land and within a few years after their defeat, they shall be victorious. And it will be the day when the believers will rejoice in the victory granted by Allah." It contained not one but two predictions: First, the Romans shall be Victorious; and second, the Muslims also shall win a victory at the same time. Apparently, there was not a remote chance of the fulfillment of the either prediction in the next few years. On the one hand, there were a handful of the Muslims, who were being beaten and tortured in Makkah, and even till eight years after this prediction there appeared no chance of their victory and domination. On the other, the Romans were losing more and more ground every next day. By 619 A. D. the whole of Egypt had passed into Sassanid hands and the

Magian armies had reached as far as Tripoli. In Asia Minor they beat and pushed back the Romans to Bosphorus, and in 617 A. D. they captured Chalcedon (modern, Kadikoy) just opposite Constantinople. The Emperor sent an envoy to Khusrau, praying that he was ready to have peace on any terms, but he replied, "I shall not give protection to the emperor until he is brought in chains before me and gives up obedience to his crucified god and adopts submission to the fire god." At last, the Emperor became so depressed by defeat that he decided to leave Constantinople and shift to Carthage (modern, Tunis). In short, as the British historian Gibbon says, even seven to eight years after this prediction of the Quran, the conditions were such that no one could even imagine that the Byzantine Empire would ever gain an upper hand over Iran. Not to speak of gaining domination, no one could hope that the Empire, under the circumstances, would even survive.

In 622 A. D. as the Holy Prophet migrated to Madinah, the Emperor Heraclius set off quietly for Trabzon from Constantinople via the Black Sea and started preparations to attack Iran from rear. For this he asked the Church for money and Pope Sergius lent him the Church collections on interest, in a bid to save Christianity from Zoroastrianism. Heraclius started his counter attack in 623 A. D. from Armenia. Next year, in 624 A. D., he entered Azerbaijan and destroyed Clorumia, the birthplace of Zoroaster, and ravaged the principal fire temple of Iran. Great are the powers of Allah, this was the very year when the Muslims achieved a decisive victory at Badr for the first time against the mushriks. Thus both the predictions made in Surah Rum were fulfilled simultaneously within the stipulated period of ten years.

The Byzantine forces continued to press the Iranians hard and in the decisive battle at Nineveh (627 A.D.) they dealt them the hardest blow. They captured the royal residence of Dastagerd, and then pressing forward reached right opposite to Ctesiphon, capital of Iran in those days. In 628 A. D. in an internal revolt, Khusrau Parvez was imprisoned and 18 of his sons

were executed in front of him and a few days later he himself died in the prison. This was the year when the peace treaty of Hudaibiya was concluded, which the Quran has termed as "the supreme victory", and in this very year Khusrau's son, Qubad II, gave up all the occupied Roman territories, restored the True Cross and made peace with Byzantium. In 628 A. D., the Emperor himself went to Jerusalem to install the "Holy Cross" in its place, and in the same year the Holy Prophet entered Makkah for the first time after the Hijrah to perform the 'Umra-tul-Qada'.

After this no one could have any doubt about the truth of the prophecy of the Quran, with the result that most of the Arab polytheists accepted Islam. The heirs of Ubayy bin Khalaf lost their bet and had to give a hundred camels to Hadrat Abu Bakr Siddiq. He took them before the Holy Prophet, who ordered that they be given away in charity, because the bet had been made at a time when gambling had not yet been forbidden by the Shari'ah; now it was forbidden. Therefore, the bet was allowed to be accepted from the belligerent disbelievers, but instruction given that it should be given away in charity and should not be brought in personal use.

Theme and Subject matter

The discourse begins with the theme that the Romans have been overcome and the people the world over think that the empire is about to collapse, but the fact is that within a few years the tables will be turned and the vanquished will again become victorious.

This introductory theme contains the great truth that man is accustomed to seeing only what is apparent and superficial. That which is behind the apparent and superficial he does not know. When in the petty matters of life, this habit to see only the apparent and superficial can lead man to misunderstandings and miscalculations, and when he is liable to make wrong estimates only due to lack of knowledge about "what will happen tomorrow", how stupendous will be his error if he risks his whole life-activity

by placing reliance only upon what is visible and apparent with respect to his worldly life as a whole.

Surah Luqman

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

Name

The Surah has been named Luqman after Luqman the Sage, whose admonitions to his son have been related in vv. 12-19 of this Surah.

Period of Revelation

A perusal of the subject matter shows that it was sent down in the period when persecution to suppress and thwart the invitation to Islam had begun and every sort of machination had started being employed for the purpose. This is borne out by vv. 14,15, in which the young converts to Islam have been told that although the rights of the parents are the uppermost after God, they should not listen to them if they prevented them from accepting Islam, or compelled them to revert to the creed of shirk and polytheism. The same thing has been said in Surah Al-Ankabut, which indicates that both these Surahs were sent down in the same period. A study of the style and subject matter of the two Surahs on the whole, however, shows that Surah Luqman was sent down earlier, for one does not see any sign of the antagonism in its background though, contrary to this, while studying Surah Al-Ankabut one can clearly feel that the Muslims were being severely persecuted during the period of its revelation.

Theme and Subject matter

In this Surah the people have been made to understand the meaninglessness and absurdity of shirk and the truth and reasonableness of Tauhid, and they have been invited to give up blind imitation of their forefathers, consider with a cool mind the teachings which the Prophet Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) is presenting from the Lord of the worlds, and see with open eyes the manifest Signs found in the universe around them and in their own selves, which bear evidence to its truth.

In this connection, it has also been pointed out that this is not a new teaching which might have been, presented in the world, or in the land of Arabia, for the first time, and with which the people might be unfamiliar. The learned and wise people of the past ages said and taught the same thing which Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) is teaching today. It is as if to say, "O people: In your own country there has lived a wise man, named Luqman, whose wisdom has been well known among you, whose proverbs and wise sayings are cited in your daily conversation and who is often quoted by your poets and orators. Now you should see for yourselves what creed and what morals he used to teach."



Taraveeh: Eighteenth Night

Surah Luqman

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

Name

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Surah As-Sajda

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

Name

The Surah has been entitled As-Sajda after the theme of Sajdah (prostration) as expressed in verse 15.

Period of Revelation

From the style of the Surah it appears that it was sent down during the middle Makkah period, more particularly in its initial stage, for one does not find in its background that severity of the persecution and tyranny which one finds in the Surahs sent down in the later stages.

Theme and Topics

The main theme of the Surah is to remove the doubts of the people concerning Tauhid, the Hereafter and the Prophethood , and to invite them to all these three realities. The disbelievers of Makkah, when they talked of the Holy Prophet in private, said to one another, "This person is forging strange things sometimes he gives news of what will happen after death. He says: when you have become dust, you will be called to render your accounts, and there will be Hell and Heaven. Sometimes he says: these gods and goddesses and saints are nonentities: One God alone is the Deity. And sometimes he says: the discourses which I recite are not my own but Allah's Word. All these are strange things which he presents."The answer to these doubts and misgivings forms the theme and subject matter of this Surah.

In this connection, the disbelievers have been told: "Most certainly it is Allah's Word, which has been sent down in order to arouse a people who are sunk in heedlessness, being deprived of the bounties and blessings of Prophet hood. How can you call it a fabrication when its having been sent down from Allah is manifest and self evident?"

Then, they have been asked, "Use your common sense and judge for yourselves which of the things presented by the Quran is strange and novel? Look at the administration of the heavens and the earth: consider your own creation and structure. Don't these things testify to the teaching which this Prophet is presenting before you in the Quran? Does the system of the universe point to Tauhid or to shirk? When you consider this whole system and your own creation, does your intellect testify that the One Who has given you your present existence, will not be able to create you once again?"

Then a scene of the Hereafter has been depicted, the fruits of belief and the evil consequences of disbelief have been mentioned and the people exhorted to give up disbelief even before they meet their doom and accept the teaching of the Quran, which will be to their own advantage in the Hereafter.

Then they have been told: It is Allah's supreme Mercy that He does not seize man immediately for his errors to punish him finally and decisively but warns him beforehand by afflicting him with small troubles and hardships and calamities and losses and strokes of misfortune so that he may wake up and take admonition.

Then it is said: "This is not the first and novel event of its kind that a Book has been sent down upon a man from God. Before this the Book had been sent upon Moses also, which you all know. There is nothing strange in this at which you should marvel. Be assured that this Book has come down from God, and note it well that the same will happen now as has already

happened in the time of Moses. Leadership now will be bestowed only on those who will accept this Divine Book. Those who reject it shall be doomed to failure."

Then the disbelievers of Makkah have been admonished to the effect:"See the end of the doomed communities of the past by whose ruined habitations you pass during your trade journeys. Will you like to meet the same doom yourself? Do not be deluded by the apparent and superficial. Today you see that no one is listening to Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) except a few young men and some slaves and poor men, and he is being made the target of curses and ugly remarks from every side. From this you have formed the wrong impression that his mission will fail. But this is only a deception of your eyes. Don't you see the phenomenon in your daily life that a land previously lying absolutely barren starts swelling with vegetation and plant life everywhere just by a single shower of the rain though before this no one could ever imagine that under the layers of its soil there lay hidden such treasures of greenery and herbage?"

In conclusion, the Holy Prophet has been addressed to the effect: "These people mock at what you say and ask as to when you will attain this decisive victory. Tell them: when the time comes for the final judgment regarding you and us, believing then will not profit you at all. If you have to believe, believe now. But if you intend to await the final judgment, then await it as you please."

Surah Al-Ahzab

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

Name

The Surah derives its name Al-Ahzab from verse 20.

Period of Revelation

The Surah discusses three important events which are: the Battle of the Trench (or Al-Ahzab: the Clans), which took place in Shawwal, A. H. 5; the raid on Bani Quraizah, which was made in Dhil-Qa'dah, A. H. 5; and the Holy Prophet's marriage with Hadrat Zainab, which also was contracted in Dhil-Qa'dah, A. H. 5. These historical events accurately determine the period of the revelation of this Surah.

Historical Background

The Islamic army's setback in the Battle of Uhud (A. H. 3) that resulted from the error of the archers appointed by the Holy Prophet so boosted up the morale of the Arab pagans and the Jews and the hypocrites that they started entertaining the hope that they would soon be able to exterminate Islam and the Muslims completely. Their high state of morale can be judged from the events that occurred in the first year after Uhud. Hardly two months had passed then the tribe of Bani Asad of Najd began to make preparations for a raid on Madinah, and the Holy Prophet had to dispatch an expedition under Abu Salamah to counteract them. In Safar A. H. 4 some people of the tribes of Adal and Qarah asked the Holy Prophet to send some men to instruct them in Islam. Accordingly six of the Companions were allowed to accompany them for the purpose. But when they reached Raji (a place between Rabigh and Jeddah), they summoned

Hudhail against them, who killed four of the Companions, and took the other two (Hadrat Khubaib bin Adi and Hadrat Zaid bin ad-Dathinnah) to Makkah and sold them to the enemy. Then in the same month of Safar, on the request of a chief of Bani Amir, the Holy Prophet sent another deputation of 40 (according to others, 70) preachers, consisting of the Ansar young men, to Najd. But they were also betrayed. The people of Usayyah and Ri'l and Dhakwan, tribes of Bani Sulaim, surrounded them suddenly at Bir Maunah and slew all of them. Meanwhile the Jewish tribe of Bani an-Nadir of Madinah, getting encouragement, continued to commit breaches of the treaties; so much so that in Rabi'ul Awwal, A.H. 4, they plotted against the life of the Holy Prophet himself. Then in Jamadi al-Ula, A. H. 4, Bani Thalbah and Bani Muharib, the two tribes of Bani Ghatafan, started making preparations to attack Madinah and the Holy Prophet had to go to punish them. Thus, after their setback at Uhud, the Muslims went on encountering repercussions continuously for seven to eight months.

However, it was the Holy Prophet's determination and wisdom and his great Companions' spirit of sacrifice that changed these adverse conditions completely within a short span of time. The economic boycott by the Arabs had made life hard for the people of Madinah. All the polytheistic tribes around Madinah were becoming rebellious. Inside Madinah itself the Jews and the hypocrites were bent upon mischief. But the successive steps taken by a handful of the sincere Muslims, under the leadership of the Holy Prophet not only restored the image of strength of Islam in Arabia but also increased it manifold.

Raids Preceding the Battle of the Trench

The first such step was taken immediately after the Battle of Uhud. The very next day when quite a large number of Muslims lay wounded and the martyrdom of the near and dear ones was being mourned in many houses, and the Holy Prophet himself was injured and sad at the martyrdom of his uncle, Hadrat Hamzah, he called out to the devoted servants of Islam to

accompany him in pursuit of the pagans so as to deter them from returning and attacking Madinah again. The Holy Prophet's assessment was absolutely correct. He knew that, although the Quraish had retreated without taking any advantage of their almost complete victory, they would certainly regret their folly when they would halt and consider the whole matter coolly on the way, and would return to attack Madinah again. Therefore, he decided to go in pursuit of them, and 630 of the Muslims at once volunteered to accompany him. When they reached Hamra al-Asad on the way to Makkah and camped there for three days, the Holy Prophet came to know through a sympathetic non-Muslim that Abu Sufyan had stayed at Ar-Rauha, 36 miles short of Madinah, with an army 2,978 strong: they were regretting their error and were, in fact, planning to return and attack Madinah once again. But when they heard that the Holy Prophet was coming in pursuit of them with an army, they lost heart and gave up their plan. Thus, not only were the Quraish deterred by this action but the other enemies living around Madinah also realized that the Muslims were being led by a person, who was highly well informed, wise and resolute, and that the Muslims were ever ready to lay down their lives at his command. (For further details, see Introduction to Surah Al-i-'Imran and E.N. 122 thereof).

Then as soon as the Bani Asad started making Preparations for a raid on Madinah, the Holy Prophet's secret agents gave him timely information about their intention. Thus, before they could come in force to attack Madinah, he sent an army 150 strong, under Hadrat Abu Salamah (the first husband of Hadrat Umm Salamah) to punish them. They took Bani Asad by surprise, who fled in panic leaving all their possessions behind, which fell into the Muslim hands.

After this came the turn of the Bani an-Nadir. The day they plotted against the life of the Holy Prophet, and the secret was disclosed, the Holy Prophet ordered them to leave Madinah within ten days and warned that anyone who remained behind after that would be put to death. Abdullah bin Ubayy, the chief of the hypocrites of Madinah, encouraged them to defy the order

and refuse to leave Madinah. He even promised to help them with 2,000 men, and assured them that the Bani Ghatafan from Najd also would come to their aid. Accordingly, the Bani an-Nadir sent word that they would not leave no matter what the Holy Prophet might do.

As soon as the time limit of ten days came to an end, the Holy Prophet laid siege to their quarters, but none of their supporters had the courage to come to their rescue. At last, they surrendered on condition that every three of them would be allowed to load a camel with whatever they could carry and go away leaving the rest of their possessions behind. Thus, the whole suburbs of the city which were inhabited by the Banian-Nadir, and their gardens and their fortresses and other properties fell to the Muslims, and the people of this treacherous tribe became scattered in Khyber, Wad il Qura and Syria.

Then the Holy Prophet turned his attention to the Bani Ghatafan, who were preparing for a war against Madinah. He took 400 of the Muslims and overtook them at Dhat ar-Riqā. They were so taken by surprise that they fled their houses without a struggle and took refuge in the mountains.

After this in Shaban A. H. 4, the Holy Prophet went forth to Badr to fight Abu Sufyan. At the end of the Battle of Uhud, he had challenged the Holy Prophet and the Muslims, saying, "We shall again meet you in combat at Badr next year." In reply the Holy Prophet announced through a Companion: "All right: we accept your challenge." Accordingly, at the appointed time he reached Badr with 1,500 of the Muslims. From the other side, Abu Sufyan left Makkah with an army of 2,000 men, but could not have the courage to march beyond Marr-az-Zahran (modern, Wadi Fatimah). The Holy Prophet waited for him at Badr for eight days; the Muslims during these days did profitable business with a trading party. This incident helped more than restore the image of strength of the Muslims that had been tarnished at Uhud. It also made the whole of Arabia realize that

the Quraish alone could no longer resist Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings). (Please also refer to E.N. 124 of Al-i-'Imran).

This image and position of the Muslims was further strengthened by another event. Dumat al-Jandal (modern, Al-Jauf) was an important place at the border between Arabia and Syria. When the caravans of the Arabs, trading between Iraq in the south and Syria and Egypt in the north, passed that way, they were harassed and looted by the natives. In Rabi al-Awwal, A. H. 5, the Holy Prophet himself went to punish them with an army of 1,000 men. They could not muster up courage to come out and fight him and, therefore, fled the place. This caused the whole of northern Arabia to dread the power of Islam, and the tribes began to realize that the great power emerging from Al-Madinah was formidable and could no longer be resisted by one or a few of the tribes.

The Battle of the Trench

Such were the conditions when the Battle of the Trench took place. It was in fact a combined raid by many of the Arab tribes, who wanted to crush the power of Madinah. It had been instigated by the leaders of the Bani an-Nadir, who had settled in Khyber after their banishment from Madinah. They went round to the Quraish and Ghatafan and Hudhail and many other tribes and induced them to gather all their forces together and attack Madinah jointly. Thus, in Shawwal, A. H. 5, an unprecedentedly large army of the Arab tribes marched against the small city of Madinah. From the north came Jews of Bani an-Nadir and Bani Qainuqa who after their banishment from Madinah, had settled in Khaiber and Wad il Qura. From the east advanced the tribes of Ghatafan, Bani Sulaim, Fazarah, Murrah, Ashja, Sad, Asad, etc. and from the south the Quraish, along with a large force of their allies. Together they numbered from ten to twelve thousand men.

Had it been a sudden attack, it would have been disastrous. But the Holy Prophet was not unaware of this in Madinah. His intelligence men and the sympathizers of the Islamic movement and the people influenced by it were present in every tribe, who kept him informed of the enemy's movements. Even before the enemy could reach his city, he got a trench dug out on the north-west of Madinah in six days, and having the Mount Salat their back, took up a defensive position with 3,000 men in the protection of the Trench. To the south of Madinah there were many gardens (even now there are) so that it could not be attacked from that side. To the east there are lava rocks which are impassable for a large army. The same is the case with the south western side. The attack, therefore, could be made only from the eastern and western sides of the Uhud, which the Holy Prophet had secured by digging a trench. The disbelievers were not at all aware that they would have to counter the trench outside Madinah. This kind of a defensive stratagem was unknown to the Arabs. Thus, they had to lay a long siege in winter for which they had not come prepared.

After this, only one alternative remained with the disbelievers: to incite the Jewish tribe of Bani Quraizah, who inhabited the south eastern part of the city, to rebellion. As the Muslims had entered a treaty with them that in case of an attack on Madinah they would defend the city along with them, the Muslims had made no defensive arrangement there and had even sent their families to take shelter in the forts situated on that side. The invaders perceived this weakness of the Islamic defenses. They sent Huyayy bin Akhtab, the Jewish leader of the Bani an-Nadir, to the Bani Quraizah so as to induce them to break the treaty and join the war. In the beginning, they refused to oblige and said that they had a treaty with Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) who had faithfully abided by it and given them no cause for complaint. But when Ibn Akhtab said to them, "Look, I have summoned the united force of entire Arabia against him: this is a perfect opportunity to get rid of him. If you lose it, you will never have another

opportunity," the anti Islamic Jewish mind prevailed over every moral consideration and the Bani Quraizah were persuaded to break the treaty.

The Holy Prophet received news of this. He at once told Sad bin Ubadah, Sad bin Muadh, Abdullah bin Rawahah and Khawwat bin Jubair, chiefs of the Ansar, to go and find out the truth. He advised them that if they found Bani Quraizah still loyal to the treaty, they should return and say so openly before the Muslim army; however, if they found that they were bent upon treachery they should only inform him so that the common Muslims would not be disheartened. On reaching there the Companions found the Bani Quraizah fully bent on mischief. They told the Companions openly, "There is no agreement and no treaty between us and Muhammad." At this they returned to the Islamic army and submitted their report to the Holy Prophet, saying, "Adal and Qarah." That is, "The Quraizah are bent upon doing what the Adal and Qarah had done with the preachers of Islam at Raji."

The siege was prolonged for more than 25 days. It was winter. The supply of food and water and forage was becoming more and more scarce everyday and division in the camp was also a great strain on the state of morale of the besiegers. Then, suddenly one night a severe windstorm accompanied by thunder and lightning hit the camp. It added to the cold and darkness. The wind overthrew the tents and put the enemy in disarray. They could not stand this severe blow of nature. They left the battleground even during the night and returned to their homes. When the Muslims awoke in the morning, there was not a single enemy soldier to be seen on the battlefield. The Holy Prophet, finding the battlefield completely empty, said: "The Quraish will never be able to attack you after this: now you will take the offensive." This was a correct assessment of the situation. Not only the Quraish but the united front of all the enemy tribes had made their final assault against Islam and had failed. Now they could no longer dare invade Madinah; now the Muslims were on the offensive.

Raid on Bani Quraizah

When the Holy Prophet returned from the Trench, Gabriel came to him in the early afternoon with the Divine Command the Muslims should not lay aside the arms yet but should deal with the Bani Quraizah as well. On receipt of this Command, the Holy Prophet got announced: "Everyone who is steadfast in obedience should not offer his Asr Prayer till he reaches the locality of the Bani Quraizah." Immediately after this, he dispatched Hadrat Ali with a contingent of soldiers as vanguard towards the Quraizah. When they reached there, the Jews climbed on to their roof tops and started hurling abuses on the Holy Prophet and the Muslims, but their invectives could not save them from the consequences of their treachery. They had committed breach of the treaty right at the most critical moment of the war, joined hands with the invaders and endangered the entire population of Madinah. When they saw the contingent of Hadrat Ali, they thought that they had come only to overawe them. But when the whole Islamic army arrived under the command of the Holy Prophet himself and laid siege to their quarters, they were very frightened. They could not stand the severity of the siege for more than two or three weeks. At last, they surrendered themselves to the Holy Prophet on the condition that they would accept whatever decision Hadrat Sad bin Muadh, the chief of the Aus, would give. They had accepted Hadrat Sad as their judge because in the pre-Islamic days the Aus and the Quraizah had been confederates and they hoped that in view of the past ties he would help them quit Madinah as had happened in the case of the Bani Qainuqa and the Banian-Nadir before. The people of the Aus themselves wished that Hadrat Sad treat their previous allies leniently. But Hadrat Sad had just experienced and seen how the two Jewish tribes who had been allowed to leave Madinah previously had instigated the other tribes living around Madinah and summoned the united front of ten to twelve thousand men against the Muslims. He was also aware how treacherously this last Jewish tribe had behaved right on the occasion when the city was under attack from outside and threatened the

safety of the whole of its population. Therefore, he decreed that all the male members of the Quraizah should be put to death, their women and children taken prisoners, and their properties distributed among the Muslims. The sentence was carried out duly. When the Muslims entered their strongholds they found that the treacherous people had collected 1,500 swords, 300 coats of mail, 2,000 spears and 1,500 shields in order to join the war. If Allah's succor had not reached the Muslims, all this military equipment would have been used to attack Madinah from the rear right at the time when the polytheists were making preparations for a general assault on the Muslims after crossing the Trench. After this disclosure there remained no doubt that the decision of Hadrat Sad concerning those people was absolutely correct.

Social Reforms

Though the period of two years between the Battles of Uhud and the Trench was a period of disturbance and turmoil and the Holy Prophet and his Companions could hardly relax in peace and security even for a day, the work of reform as a whole and the reconstruction of the Muslim society continued uninterrupted. This was the time when the Islamic laws pertaining to marriage and divorce were complemented; the law of inheritance was introduced, drinking and gambling were prohibited, and the new laws and regulations concerning many other aspects of the economic and social life were enforced.

In this connection, an important thing that needed to be reformed was the question of the adoption of a son. Whoever was adopted by the Arabs as a son was regarded as one of their own offspring: he got share in inheritance; he was treated like a real son and real brother by the adopted mother and the adopted sister; he could not marry the daughter of his adopted father and his widow after his death. And the same was the case if the adopted son died or divorced a wife. The adopted father regarded the woman as his real daughter-in-law. This custom clashed in every detail with the laws of

marriage and divorce and inheritance enjoined by Allah in Surahs Al-Baqarah and An-Nisa. It made a person who could get no share in inheritance entitled to it at the expense of those who were really entitled to it. It prohibited marriage between the men and the women who could contract marriage perfectly lawfully. And, above all, it helped spread the immoralities which the Islamic Law wanted to eradicate. For a real mother and a real sister and a real daughter cannot be like the adopted mother and the adopted sister and the adopted daughter, however one may try to sanctify the adopted relations as a custom. When the artificial relations endowed with customary sanctity are allowed to mix freely like the real relations, it cannot but produce evil results. That is why the Islamic law of marriage and divorce, the law of inheritance and the law of the prohibition of adultery required that the concept and custom of regarding the adopted son as the real son should be eradicated completely.

This concept, however, could not be rooted out by merely passing a legal order, saying, the adopted son is not the real son. The centuries old prejudices and superstitions cannot be changed by mere word of mouth. Even if the people had accepted the command that these relations were not the real relations, they would still have looked upon marriage between the adopted mother and the adopted son, the adopted brother and the sister, the adopted father and the daughter, and the adopted father-in-law and the daughter-in-law odious and detestable. Moreover, there would still exist some freedom of mixing together freely. Therefore, it was inevitable that the custom should be eradicated practically, and through the Holy Prophet himself. For no Muslim could ever conceive that a thing done by the Holy Prophet himself, and done by him under Allah's Command, could be detestable. Therefore, a little before the Battle of the Trench, the Holy Prophet was inspired by Allah that he should marry the divorced wife of his adopted son, Zaid bin Harithah (may Allah be pleased with him), and he acted on this Command during the siege of the Bani Quraizah. (The delay probably was caused for the reason that the prescribed waiting period had

not yet ended, and in the meantime the Holy Prophet had to become busy in the preparation for war).

Storm of Propaganda at the Marriage of Hadrat Zainab

As soon as the marriage was contracted, there arose a storm of propaganda against the Holy Prophet. The polytheists, the hypocrites and the Jews, all were burning with jealousy at his triumphs which followed one after the other. The way they had been humbled within two years after Uhud, in the Battle of the Trench, and in the affair of the Quraizah, had made them sore at heart. They had also lost hope that they could ever subdue him on the battlefield. Therefore, they seized the question of this marriage as a god send for themselves and thought they would put an end to his moral superiority, which was the real secret of his power and success. Therefore, stories were concocted that Muhammad, God forbid, had fallen in love with his daughter-in-law, and when the son had come to know of this, he divorced his wife, and the father married his daughter-in-law. The propaganda, however, was absurd on the face of it. Hadrat Zainab was the Holy Prophet's first cousin. He had known her from childhood to youth. So, there could be no question of his falling in love with her at first sight. Then he himself had arranged her marriage with Hadrat Zaid under his personal influence, although her whole family had opposed it. They did not like that a daughter of the noble Quraish should be given in marriage to a freed slave. Hadrat Zainab herself was not happy at this arrangement. But everyone had to submit to the Holy Prophet's command. The marriage was solemnized and a precedent was set in Arabia that Islam had raised a freed slave to the status of the Quraishite nobility. If the Holy Prophet had in reality any desire for Hadrat Zainab, there was no need of marrying her to Hadrat Zaid; he himself could have married her. But in spite of all this, the shameless opponents invented stories of love, spread them with great exaggeration and publicized them so vehemently that even some Muslims also began to accept them as true.

Preliminary Commandments of Purdah

The fact that the tales invented by the enemies also became topics of conversation among the Muslims was a clear sign that the element of sensuality in society had crossed all limits. If this malady had not been there, it was not possible that minds would have paid any attention whatever to such absurd and disgusting stories about a righteous and pure person like the Holy Prophet. This was precisely the occasion when the reformatory Commandments pertaining to the law of Hijab or Purdah were first enforced in the Islamic society. These reforms were introduced in this Surah and complemented a year later in Surah An-Nur, when a slander was made on the honor of Hadrat Aishah. (For further details, see Introduction to Surah An-Nur).

Domestic Affairs of the Holy Prophet

There were two other problems which needed attention at that time. Though apparently they pertained to the Holy Prophet's domestic life, it was necessary to resolve them for the domestic and mental peace of the person, who was exerting every effort to promote the cause of Allah's Religion and was day and night absorbed in this great mission. Therefore, Allah took these two problems also officially in His own hand.

The first problem was that economically the Holy Prophet at that time was in straitened circumstances. During the first four years he had no source of income whatever. In 4 A. H. after the banishment of the Bani an-Nadir, a portion of their evacuated lands was reserved for his use by the Command of Allah, but it was not enough for his family requirements. On the other hand, the duties of the office of Prophethood were so onerous that they were absorbing all his energies of the mind and body and heart and every moment of his time, and he could not make any effort at all for earning his livelihood. In conditions such as these when his wives happened to disturb

his mental peace because of economic hardships he would feel doubly strained and taxed.

The other problem was that before marrying Hadrat Zainab, he had four wives already in the houses: Hadrat Saudah, Hadrat Aishah, Hadrat Hafsa, and Hadrat Umm Salamah. Hadrat Zainab was his fifth wife. At this the opponents raised the objection, and the Muslims also started entertaining doubts, that as for others it had been forbidden to keep more than four wives at a time, but how the Holy Prophet himself had taken a fifth wife also.

Subject Matter and Topics

These were the questions that were engaging the attention of the Holy Prophet and the Muslims at the time Surah Al-Ahzab was revealed, and replies to the same form the subject matter of this Surah.

A perusal of the theme and the background shows that the Surah is not a single discourse which was sent down in one piece but it consists of several injunctions and commandments and discourses, which were sent down, one after the other, in connection with the important events of the time, and then were put together in one Surah. Its following parts stand out clearly distinguished from one another:

1. Verses 1-8 seem to have been sent down before the Battle of the Trench. Their perusal, keeping the historical background in view, shows that at the time of their revelation Hadrat Zaid had already divorced Hadrat Zainab. The Holy Prophet was feeling the necessity that the concepts and customs and superstitions of ignorance concerning the adoption of the son should be eradicated, and he was also feeling that the delicate and deep sentiments the people cherished about the adopted relations merely one motional grounds would not be rooted out until he himself took the initiative to eradicate the custom practically. But at the same time he was hesitant and

considering seriously that if he married the divorced wife of Hadrat Zaid then, the hypocrites and the Jews and the **mushriks** who were already bent on mischief would get a fresh excuse to start a propaganda campaign against Islam. This was the occasion of the revelation of vv. 1-8.

2. In verses 9-27 an appraisal has been made of the Battle of the Trench and the raid against the Bani Quraizah. This is a clear proof that these verses were sent down after these events.
3. The discourse contained in vv. 28-35 consists of two parts. In the first part, Allah has given a notice to the wives of the Holy Prophet, who were being impatient of the straitened circumstances, to the effect: "Choose between the world and its adornments, and Allah, His Prophet and the Hereafter. If you seek the former, you should say so openly: you will not be kept back in hardship even for a day, but will be sent off gracefully. And if you seek the latter, you should cooperate with Allah and His messenger and bear patiently." In the second part, initial steps were taken towards the social reforms whose need was being felt by the minds molded in the Islamic pattern themselves. In this regard, reform was started from the house of the Holy Prophet himself and his wives were commanded to avoid behaving and conducting themselves in the ways of the pre Islamic days of ignorance, to remain in their houses with dignity, and to exercise great caution in their conversation with the other men. This was the beginning of the Commandments of Purdah.
4. Verses 36-48 deal with the Holy Prophet's marriage with Hadrat Zainab. In this section the opponents' objection about this marriage have been answered; the doubts that were being created in the minds of the Muslims have been removed; the Muslims have been acquainted with the Holy Prophet's position and status; and the Holy Prophet himself has been counseled to exercise patience on the false propaganda of the disbelievers and the hypocrites.
5. In verse 49 a clause of the law of divorce has been laid down. This is a unique verse which was sent down on some occasion probably in connection with the same events.
6. In verses 50-52 a special regulation of marriage has been laid down for the Holy Prophet, which points out that he is an exception to the

several restrictions that have been imposed on the other Muslims in regard to marital life.

7. In verses 53-55 the second step was taken towards social reform. It consists of the following injunctions: Restriction on the other men to visit the houses of the Holy Prophet's wives; Islamic etiquette concerning visits and invitations; the law that only the near relatives could visit the holy wives in their houses; as for the other men, they could speak to or ask them a thing from behind a curtain; the injunction that the Holy Prophet's wives were forbidden for the Muslims like their mothers; and none could marry any of them after him.
8. In verses 56-57 warning was given to stop criticizing the Holy Prophet's marriage and his domestic life, and the believers instructed not to indulge in fault finding like the enemies of Islam, but to invoke the blessings of Allah for their Prophet; moreover, they were instructed that they should avoid falsely accusing one another even among themselves, not to speak of the person of the Prophet.
9. In verse 59 the third step for social reform was taken. All the Muslim women were commanded that they should come out well covered with the outer garments and covering their faces whenever they came out of their houses for a genuine need.

After this till the end of the Surah the hypocrites and other foolish and mean people have been rebuked for the propaganda that they were carrying on at that time against Islam and the Muslims.

Surah Saba

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

Name

The Surah takes its name from verse 15 in which the word Saba has occurred, which implies that it is the Surah in which mention has been made of Saba (i. e. the Sabaeans).

Period of Revelation

The exact period of its revelation is not known from any reliable tradition. However, the style shows that it is either the middle or the early Makkan period. If it is the middle period, it was probably its initial stage when the persecution had not yet become tyrannical and the Islamic movement was being suppressed only by resort to derision and ridicule, rumor mongering, false allegations and casting of evil suggestions in the people's minds.

Theme and Subject Matter

The Surah deals with those objections of the disbelievers, which they were raising against the Holy Prophet's message of Tauhid and the Hereafter, and about his Prophethood itself, mostly in the form of absurd allegations and taunts and mockery. These objections have been answered, sometimes by citing them and sometimes without citing them, and the discourse itself shows which objection is being answered at a particular place. The answers mostly take the form of instruction and admonition and argument, but at some places the disbelievers have been warned also of the evil consequences, of their stubbornness. In this connection, the stories of the Sabaeans and the Prophets David and Solomon have been related to impress this lesson: "You have both these historical precedents before you. On the one hand, there were the Prophets David and Solomon, who

had been blessed by Allah with great powers and such grandeur and glory as had been granted to hardly any people before them. In spite of this, they were not proud and arrogant, but remained grateful servants of their Lord. They were never rebellious. On the other hand, there were the people of Saba, who, when blessed by Allah, became proud, and were consequently so thoroughly destroyed and dispersed as to be remembered only in myths and legends. With these precedents in view, you may see and judge for yourselves as to which kind of life is better: that which is built on belief in Tauhid and the Hereafter and the attitude of gratefulness to Allah, or that which is based on disbelief and shirk and denial of the Hereafter and the worship of the world."



Taraveeh: Nineteenth Night

Surah Saba

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

Name

The Surah takes its name from verse 15 in which the word Saba has occurred, which implies that it is the Surah in which mention has been made of Saba (i. e. the Sabaeans).

Period of Revelation

The exact period of its revelation is not known from any reliable tradition. However, the style shows that it is either the middle or the early Makkan period. If it is the middle period, it was probably its initial stage when the persecution had not yet become tyrannical and the Islamic movement was being suppressed only by resort to derision and ridicule, rumor mongering, false allegations and casting of evil suggestions in the people's minds.

Theme and Subject Matter

The Surah deals with those objections of the disbelievers, which they were raising against the Holy Prophet's message of Tauhid and the Hereafter, and about his Prophethood itself, mostly in the form of absurd allegations and taunts and mockery. These objections have been answered, sometimes by citing them and sometimes without citing them, and the discourse itself shows which objection is being answered at a particular place. The answers mostly take the form of instruction and admonition and argument, but at some places the disbelievers have been warned also of the evil consequences, of their stubbornness. In this connection, the stories of the Sabaeans and the Prophets David and Solomon have been related to impress this lesson: "You have both these historical precedents before you. On the one hand, there were the Prophets David and Solomon, who had been blessed by Allah with great powers and such grandeur and glory as had been granted to hardly any people before them. In spite of this, they were not proud and arrogant, but remained grateful servants of their Lord. They were never rebellious. On the other hand, there were the people of Saba, who, when blessed by Allah, became proud, and were consequently so thoroughly destroyed and dispersed as to be remembered only in myths and legends. With these precedents in view, you may see and judge for yourselves as to which kind of life is better: that which is built on belief in Tauhid and the Hereafter and the attitude of gratefulness to Allah, or that which is based on disbelief and shirk and denial of the Hereafter and the worship of the world."

Surah Fatir

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

Name

The word Fatir of the first very verse is the title given to this Surah, which simply means that it is a Surah in which the word Fatir has occurred. The other name is Al Malaika, which also occurs in the first verse.

Period of Revelation

The internal evidence of the style shows that the period of the revelation of this Surah is probably the middle Makkan period, and especially that part of it, when antagonism had grown quite strong and every sort of mischief was being adopted to frustrate the mission of the Holy Prophet.

Subject Matter and Theme

The discourse is meant to warn and reprove the people of Makkah and their chiefs for their antagonistic attitude that they had then adopted towards the Holy Prophet's message of Tauhid, like a well wisher, and also to admonish them like a teacher, as if to say: "O foolish people, the way to which this Prophet is calling you is to your own advantage. Your anger, your tricks and machinations against it and your conspiracies and designs to frustrate it are not directed against him but against your own selves. If you do not listen to him, you will be harming your own selves, not him. Just consider and ponder over what he says : there is nothing wrong in it. He repudiates shirk. If you look around carefully, you will yourself realize that there is no basis for shirk in the world. He presents the doctrine of Tauhid. If you use your common sense, you will come to the conclusion that there is no being, beside Allah, Creator of the Universe, which might possess

divine attributes and powers and authority. He tells you that you have not been created to be irresponsible in this world, but you have to render an account of your deeds before your God, and that there is life after the life of this world when everyone will meet the consequences of what he has done here. If you think a little you will see that your doubts and your astonishment about it are absolutely baseless. Don't you see the phenomenon of the reproduction of creation day and night. How can then your own recreation be impossible for that God Who created you from an insignificant sperm drop? Doesn't your own intellect testify that the good and the evil cannot be alike? Then think and judge for yourselves as to what is reasonable: should the good and the evil meet with the same fate and end up in the dust, or should the good be requited with good and the evil with evil? Now, if you do not admit and acknowledge these rational and reasonable things and do not abandon your false gods, and wish to continue living only as irresponsible people in the world, the Prophet will not lose anything. It is you yourselves only who will suffer the consequences. The Prophet's only responsibility was to make the truth plain to you, which he has done".

In this connection, the Holy Prophet has been consoled again and again, as if to say: "When you are doing full justice to the preaching of your mission, you do not incur any responsibility for those who persist in their error and do not accept and follow the right way". Furthermore, he has also been consoled to the effect "You should neither grieve on account of those who do not want to believe, nor consume yourself with the thought of how to bring them to the right path. Instead of this, you should pay your full attention to those who are inclined to listen to you".

The believers also, in this connection, have been given the good news so that they may feel strengthened and encouraged and remain steadfast on the path of the truth with full faith in the promises made by Allah.

Surah Ya-Sin

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

Name

The Surah takes its name from the two letters of the alphabet with which it begins.

Period of Revelation

A study of the style shows that it was either sent down during the last stage of the middle Makkan period, or it is one of those Surahs, which were sent down during the last stage of the Holy Prophet's stay at Makkah.

Subject Matter and Theme

The object of the discourse is to warn the Quraish of the consequences of not believing in the Prophethood of Muhammad (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) and of resisting and opposing it with tyranny, ridicule and mockery. The aspect of the warning is dominant and conspicuous although along with repeatedly giving the warnings, arguments also have been given for the correct understanding by the people.

Arguments have been given for three things: (1) For Tauhid, from the signs of the universe and from common sense; (2) for the Hereafter, from the signs of the universe, from common sense and from man's own existence itself; and (3) for the Prophethood of the Prophet Muhammad, from the fact that he was facing all kinds of hardships in the preaching of his message without any selfish motive, and from this that whatever he was inviting the

people to was rational and reasonable, accepting which was in the people's own interest.

On the strength of these arguments, themes of reprobation, reproof and warning have been presented repeatedly in a highly forceful manner, so that hearts are shaken up and those which have any capacity for accepting the truth left in them should not remain unmoved.

Imam Ahmad, Abu Daud, Nasai, Ibn Majah and Tabarani have related on the authority of Hadrat Ma'qil bin Yasar that the Holy Prophet said: "Surah Ya Sin is the heart of the Qur'an." This is similar to describing the Surah Al Fatiha as the Umm al Qur'an Umm al Qur'an (the essence or core of the Qur'an), because Al Fatiha contains the sum and substance of the teaching of the whole Quran. The Surah Ya Sin has been called the throbbing heart of the Qur'an because it presents the message of the Qur'an in a most forceful manner, which breaks the inertness and stirs the spirit of man to action.

Again Imam Ahmad, Aba Da'ud and Ibn Majah have related from the same Ma'qil bin Yasar that the Holy Prophet said: "Recite Surah Ya Sin to the dying ones among you." The object is not only to revive and refresh the whole Islamic creed in the mind of the dying person but also bring before him, in particular, a complete picture of the Hereafter so that he may know what stages he would have to pass through after crossing the stage of this worldly life. In view of this, it would be desirable that along with the recitation of the Surah YaSin its translation also is made for the benefit of the person who does not know Arabic so that the purpose of the admonition is duly fulfilled.

Surah As-Saffat

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

Name

The name is derived from the word 'was saaffat' with which the Surah begins.

Period of Revelation

The subject matter and the style show that this Surah probably was sent down in the middle of the Makkan period, or perhaps in the last stage of the middle Makkan period. The style clearly indicates that antagonism is raging strong in the background and the Holy Prophet and his Companions are passing through very difficult and discouraging circumstances.

Subject Matter and Theme

The disbelievers of Makkah have been severely warned for their attitude of mockery and derision with which they were responding to the Holy Prophet's message of Tauhid and the Hereafter and for their utter refusal to accept and acknowledge his claim to Prophethood. In the end, they have been plainly warned that the Prophet whom they are mocking and ridiculing will overwhelm them in spite of their power and self and they will find the army of Allah encamping in the very courtyards of their houses (vv. 171-179). This notice was given at a time when there appeared no chance whatever of the Holy Prophet's success and triumph. The Muslims (who have been called Allah's army in these verses) were being made the target of severe persecution. Three-fourth of their population had already emigrated and hardly 40 to 50 of the Companions were left with the Holy Prophet in Makkah who were experiencing all sorts of the excesses with

utter helplessness. Under such circumstances, in view of the apparent conditions, no one could believe that the Holy Prophet and the handful of his ill equipped Companions would ultimately attain dominance. The people rather thought that the new movement would end and be buried in the ravines of Makkah. But hardly 15 to 16 years had passed when on the conquest of Makkah precisely the same thing happened of which the disbelievers had been forewarned.

Along with administering warnings, Allah in this Surah has done full justice also to the theme of inducement and instruction in a balanced way. Brief but impressive arguments have been given about the validity of the doctrines of Tauhid and the Hereafter. Criticism has been made of the creed of the mushrikin to show the absurdity of their beliefs; they have been informed of the evil consequences of their deviations, which have been contrasted with the splendid results of the faith and righteous acts. Then, in continuation of the same, Precedents from past history have been cited to show how Allah had been treating His Prophets and their followers: how He has been favoring His faithful servants and punishing their deniers and rejecters.

The most instructive of the historical narratives presented in this Surah is the important event of the pious life of the Prophet Abraham, who became ready to sacrifice his only son as soon as he received an inspiration from Allah. In this there was a lesson not only for the disbelieving Quraish, who waxed proud of their blood relationship with him, but also for the Muslims who had believed in Allah and His Messenger. By narrating this event they were told what is the essence and the real spirit of Islam, and how a true believer should be ready to sacrifice his all for the pleasure and approval of Allah after he has adopted it as his Faith and Creed.

The last verses of the Surah were not only a warning for the disbelievers but also a good news for the believers who were passing through highly unfavorable and discouraging conditions on account of their supporting and

following the Holy Prophet. In these verses they were given the good news that they should not be disheartened at the hardships and difficulties they had to encounter in the beginning, for in the end they alone would attain dominance, and the standard bearers of falsehood, who appeared to be dominant at the time would be overwhelmed and vanquished at their hands. A few years later the turn the events took, proved that it was not an empty consolation but an inevitable reality of which they had been foretold in order to strengthen their hearts.



Taraveeh: Twentieth Night

Surah Sad

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

Name

The Surah takes its name from the alphabetic letter Saud with which it begins.

Period of Revelation

As will be explained below, according to some traditions this Surah was sent down in the period when the Holy Prophet had started calling the people openly to Islam in Makkah, and this had caused great alarm among the chiefs of the Quraish. If this be true, its period of revelation would be about the 4th year of the Prophethood. According to some other traditions, it was sent down after Hadrat Umar's embracing Islam, and this happened, as is well known, after the migration to Habash. Another chain of the

traditions shows that the event which occasioned the revelation of this Surah took place during the last illness of Abu Talib. If this be correct, the period of its revelation would be the 10th or 11th year of the Prophethood .

Historical Background

Here is a resume of the traditions related by Imam Ahmad, Nasa'i, Tirmidhi, Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Shaibah, Ibn Abu Hatim, Muhammad bin Ishaq and others:

When Abu Talib fell ill, and the Quraish chiefs knew that his end was near, they held consultations and decided to approach the old chief with the request that he should solve the dispute between them and his nephew. For they feared that if Abu Talib died and then they subjected Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) to a harsh treatment, after his death, the Arabs would taunt them, saying, "They were afraid of the old chief as long as he lived now that he is dead they have started maltreating his nephew." At least 25 of the Quraish chiefs including Abu Jahl, Abu Sufyan, Umayyah bin Khalaf, Asbin Wa'il, Aswad bin al-Muttalib, 'Uqbah bin Abi Mu'ait, Utbah and Shaibah went to Abu Talib. First, they put before him their complaints against the Holy Prophet as usual, then said, "We have come to present before you a just request and it is this : let your nephew leave us to our religion, and we shall leave him to his. He may worship whomever he may please: we shall not stand in his way in this matter; but he should not condemn our gods, and should not try to force us to give them up. Please tell him to make terms with us on this condition". Abu Talib called the Holy Prophet and said, "Dear nephew, these people of your tribe have come to me with a request. They want you to agree with them on a just matter so as to put an end to your dispute with them." Then he told him about the request of the chiefs of the Quraish. The Holy Prophet replied, "Dear uncle: I shall request them to agree upon a thing which, if they accept, will enable them to conquer the whole of Arabia and subject the non-Arab world to their domination. "Hearing this the people were first confounded; they did not

know how they should turn down such a proposal. Then, after they had considered the matter, they replied: "You speak of one word: we are prepared to repeat ten others like it, but please tell us what it is." The Holy Prophet said: La ilaha ill-Allah. At this they got up all together and left the place saying what Allah has narrated in the initial part of this Surah.

Ibn Sa'd in his Tabaqat has related this event just as cited above, but, according to him, this did not happen during Abu Talib's last illness but at the time when the Holy Prophet had started preaching Islam openly, and the news of the conversion of one person or the other was being heard almost daily in Makkah. In those days the Quraish chiefs had led several deputations to Abu Talib and had asked him to stop Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) from preaching his message, and it was with one of those deputations that this conversation had taken place.

Zamakhshari, Razi, Nisaburi and some other commentators say that this deputation went to Abu Talib at the time then the chiefs of the Quraish had been upset at Hadrat Umar's embracing Islam; but no reference to its basis is available in any book of the traditions, nor have these commentators cited the source of their this information. However, if it be true, it is understandable. For the unbelieving Quraish had already been bewildered to see that the person who had arisen from among themselves with the message of Islam had no parallel in the entire tribe as regarded nobility, purity of character, wisdom and seriousness. Moreover, his right hand man and chief supporter was a man like Abu-Bakr, who was well known in and around Makkah as a gentle, righteous and brilliant man. Now when they might have seen that a brave and resolute man like Umar also had joined them, they must have felt that the danger was growing and becoming intolerable.

Subject Matter and Topics

The Surah begins with a review of the aforesaid meeting. Making the dialogue between the Holy Prophet and the disbelievers the basis, Allah says that the actual reason with those people for their denial is not any defect in the message of Islam but their own arrogance, jealousy and insistence on following the blind. They are not prepared to believe in a man from their own clan as a Prophet of God and follow him. They want to persist in the ideas of ignorance which they have found their ancestors following. And when a person exposes their this ignorance and presents the truth before them, they are alarmed and regard it as an oddity, rather as a novel and impossible thing. For them the concept of Tauhid and the Hereafter is not only an unacceptable creed but also a concept which only deserves to be ridiculed and mocked.

Then, Allah, both in the initial part of the Surah and in its last sentences, has precisely warned the disbelievers, as if to say, "The man whom you are ridiculing today and whose guidance you reject will soon overpower you, and the time is not far when in this very city of Makkah, where you are persecuting him, he will overwhelm you completely."

Then describing nine of the Prophets, one after the other, with greater details of the story of the Prophets David and Solomon; Allah has emphasized the point that His Law of Justice is impartial and objective, that only the right attitude of man is acceptable to Him, that He calls to account and punishes every wrong doer who. ever he be, and that He likes only those people who do not persist in wrongdoing but repent as soon as they are warned of it, and pass their life in the world keeping in mind their accountability in the Hereafter.

After this, the final end that the obedient servants and the disobedient people will meet in the Hereafter, has been depicted, and two things have been especially impressed on the disbelievers:(1) That the leaders and

guides whom the ignorant people are following blindly in the world, on the way of deviation, will have reached Hell even before their followers in the Hereafter, and the two groups will be cursing each other there; and (2) that the disbelievers will be amazed to see that there is no trace whatever in Hell of the believers whom they used to regard as contemptible in the world and will themselves be involved in its torment.

In conclusion, mention has been made of the story of Adam and Iblis (Satan), which is meant to tell the disbelieving Quraish that the same arrogance and vanity which was preventing them from bowing before Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) had prevented Iblis also from bowing before Adam. Iblis felt jealous of the high rank God had given to Adam and became accursed when he disobeyed His Command. Likewise, "You, O people of Quraish, are feeling jealous of the high rank God has bestowed on Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) and are not prepared to obey him whom God has appointed His messenger. Therefore, you will be doomed ultimately to the same fate as will be met by Satan."

Surah Az-Zumar

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

Name

The Surah derives its name from verse 71 and 73 in which the word zumar has occurred.

Period of Revelation

In verse 10 (wa ardullah-i-wasi atun): and Allah's earth is vast) there is abundant evidence that this Surah was sent down before the migration to Habash. Some traditions provide the explanation that this verse was sent down in respect of Hadrat Ja'far bin Abi Talib and his companions when they made up their mind to emigrate to Habash. (Ruh al-Maani, vol. XXII, p. 226).

Theme and Subject matter

The entire Surah is a most eloquent and effective address which was given some time before the emigration to Habash, in an environment filled with tyranny and persecution, ill-will and antagonism, at Makkah. It is a sermon whose addressees mainly are the unbelieving Quraish, although here and there the believers also have been addressed. In it the real aim of the invitation of Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) had been enunciated, which is this: Man should adopt Allah's servitude sincerely, and should not pollute his God worship with the service of any other. Presenting this cardinal principle in different ways over and over again, the truth of Tauhid and the excellent results of accepting it, and the falsehood of shirk and the evil consequences of following it, have been explained in a most forceful way, and the people exhorted to give up their wrong way of life and return to the mercy of their Lord. In this very connection, the believers have been instructed, as if to say: "If a place has become narrow for the worship and service of Allah, His earth is vast: you may emigrate to some other place in order to save your faith: Allah will reward you for your patience." On the other hand, the Holy Prophet has been encouraged, so as to say: "Tell the disbelievers plainly that they may do whatever they like, but their persecutions and tyrannies will never deter you from the way of Islam; that they may go on doing their worst to obstruct

your way, but you will continue to perform your mission in spite of the adverse conditions and circumstances."

Surah Al-Mu'min

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

Name

The Surah takes its name Al Mu'min from verse 28, implying thereby, that it is a Surah in which Al Mu'min (the Believer of Pharaoh's people) has been mentioned.

Period of Revelation

According to Ibn 'Abbas and Jabir bin Zaid, this Surah was sent down consecutively after Surah Az-Zumar, and its present position in the order of the Surahs in the Quran is the same as its chronological order.

Background of Revelation

There are clear indications in the subject matter of this Surah to the conditions in which it was revealed. The disbelievers of Makkah at that time were engaged in two kinds of the activities against the Holy Prophet. First, they were creating every kind of suspicion and misgiving in the minds of the people about the teaching of the Quran and the message of Islam and about the Holy Prophet himself by starting many disputes and discussions, raising irrelevant objections and bringing ever new accusations so that the Holy Prophet and the believers were sick of trying to answer them. Second, they were preparing the ground for putting an end to the Holy Prophet himself. They were devising one plot after the other, and on one occasion

had even taken the practical steps to execute a plot. Bukhari has related a tradition on the authority of Hadrat Abdullah bin Amr bin 'As saying that one day when the Holy Prophet was offering his Prayer in the precinct's of the Kabbah, suddenly 'Uqbah bin Abi Mu'ait, rushed forward and putting a piece of cloth round his neck started twisting it so as to strangle him to death. Hadrat Abu Bakr, who happened to go there in time, pushed him away. Hadrat Abdullah says that when Abu-Bakr was struggling with the cruel man, he was saying words to the effect: "Would you kill a man only because he says: Allah is my Lord?" With a little variation this event has also been mentioned in Ibn Hisham, Nasa'i and Ibn Abi Hatim.

Theme and Topics

Both aspects of this have been clearly stated at the very outset, and then the whole following discourse is a most effective and instructive review of them.

As an answer to the conspiracies of murder, the story of the Believer of the people of Pharaoh has been narrated (vv. 23 - 55) and through this story three different lessons have been taught to the three groups:

1. The disbelievers have been admonished: "Whatever you intend to do against Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace), the same did the Pharaoh with his might intend against the Prophet Moses. Now, would you like to meet with the same fate with which he met by plotting such conspiracies?"
2. The Prophet Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) and his followers have been taught the lesson: "These wicked people may apparently be very strong and powerful and you very weak and helpless against them, yet you should rest assured that the might of that God Whose Word you are trying to raise high is superior to every other power. Therefore, you should only seek Allah's refuge in response to every and any dreadful threat that they utter against you, and then busy yourself after this in fearlessly performing your

mission. The God-worshipper has only one answer to every threat of the tyrant: 'I have taken refuge in my Lord and your Lord against every arrogant person who does not believe in the Day of Reckoning.' (v. 27) Thus, if you go on performing your mission fearless of every danger and with full trust in God, His succor will ultimately reach you, and the Pharaohs of today shall be doomed just as the Pharaohs of yesterday. Till that time you will have to face and bear patiently every wave of persecution and tyranny that may be directed against you."

3. Besides these two, there was a third group of the people also in the society, who had been convinced in their hearts that the Truth was only on the side of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace), and that the disbelieving Quraish were being unjust and cruel. But in spite of the conviction they were watching quietly and unconcerned the conflict between the Truth and falsehood. Allah here has aroused their conscience as if to say: "When the enemies of the Truth have openly plotted, in front of your very eyes, it would be a sad reflection on you if you still remained indifferent. Under such conditions, unless a person's conscience has wholly become dead, he should rise and perform the duty, which a righteous man from among the courtiers of Pharaoh himself had performed at a time when the Pharaoh had made up his mind to kill the Prophet Moses. The circumstances that prevent you from raising your voice had also obstructed the way of the Believer, but he had full faith in Allah and disregarded all expediency; then note that the Pharaoh was not able to do him any harm."

Now as for the conspiracies, which were continuing in Makkah day and night to defeat the Truth, on the one hand, arguments have been given to prove the doctrines of Tauhid and the Hereafter as true, which were the real basis of the dispute between the Holy Prophet and the disbelievers, and it has been stated plainly and openly that the disbelievers are wrangling over those truths without any knowledge. On the other, the motives which were the real cause of the Quraishite chiefs' conflict against the Holy Prophet have been exposed. Apparently they were trying to have the common people believe that they had some genuine objections against

the teaching of the Prophet and his claim to Prophethood; that is why they were not prepared to listen to him. But, in fact, this was their struggle for power. In verse 56, they have been openly warned, so as to say "The real cause of your denial is your arrogance and vanity. You think that if you acknowledge the Prophethood of Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace), your power and authority will come to an end. That is why you are straining every nerve to frustrate and defeat him."

In the same connection, the disbelievers have been warned again and again to the effect: "If you do not desist from wrangling against the Revelations of Allah, you will be doomed to the same fate as the nations of the past. Much worse torment awaits you in the Hereafter. Then you will repent, but it will be too late."

