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Surah 23: An-Noor (The Light)

Name

This Surah takes its name, An Noor, 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 6 A. 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-Noor, 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 Al Madinah 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, Umamah, 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 Muraisi, 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 Bani al 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 Aishah 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 honour 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 rumours 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 mischiefs 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.

Surah 49: Al-Hujarat (The Private Apartments)

Name

The Surah takes its name from verse 4 in which the word *hujurat* has occurred.

Period of Revelation

Traditions show and the subject matter of the Surah also supports the same that this Surah is a collection of the commandments and instructions sent down on different occasions, which have been put together because of the relevancy of the theme. Moreover, the traditions also show that most of these commandments were sent down during the final stage of the Holy Prophet's life at Madinah. For instance, about verse 4 the commentators state that it was sent down concerning the Bani Tamim whose deputation had arrived in Madinah and started calling out to the Holy Prophet from outside the apartments (*hujurat*) of his wives, and according to all biographical books on the Holy Prophet's life this deputation had visited Madinah in A. H. 9. Likewise, about verse 6 a large number of the traditions of *Hadith* confirm that it was sent down concerning Walid bin Uqbah whom the Holy Prophet had sent to collect the zakat from the Bani al-Mustaliq, and it is well known that Walid bin Uqbah had become a Muslim on the conquest of Makkah.

Subject Matter and Topics

The subject matter of this Surah is to teach the Muslims the manners worthy of true believers.

In the first five verses they have been taught the manners they should observe with regard to Allah and His Messenger.

Then, they have been given the instruction that it is not right to believe in every news blindly and to act according to it, without due thought. If information is received about a person, a group or a community, it should be seen carefully whether the means of the information is reliable or not. If the means is not reliable, it should be tested and examined to see whether the news is authentic or not before taking any action on it.

Then, it has been told what attitude should the other Muslims adopt in case two groups of the Muslims fall to mutual fighting.

Then the Muslims have been exhorted to safeguard against the evils that corrupt collective life and spoil mutual relationships. Mocking and taunting each other, calling others by nicknames, creating suspicions, prying into other people's affairs and back biting are the evils which are not only sins in themselves but they also corrupt society. Allah has mentioned all these evils separately and forbidden them as unlawful.

After this, the national and racial distinctions that cause universal corruption in the world have been condemned. Nations and tribes and families pride of Ancestry and their looking down upon others as inferior to themselves and their pulling down others only for the sake of establishing their own superiority is an important factor that has filled the world with injustices and tyranny. Allah in a brief verse has cut at the root of this evil by stating that all men are descendants of the same one pair and their division into tribes and communities is only for the sake of recognition, not for boasting and pride, and there is no lawful basis of one man's superiority over the other except on the basis of moral excellence.

In conclusion, the people have been told that the real thing is not the verbal Profession of the Faith but to believe in Allah and His messenger truly, to obey them in practical life and to exert sincerely with one's self and wealth in the cause of Allah. True believers are only those who adopt this attitude. As for those who profess Islam merely orally without affirmation by the heart and then adopt an attitude as if they had done someone a favor by accepting Islam, may be counted among the Muslims in the world, may even be treated as Muslims in society, but they cannot be counted as believers in the sight of Allah.

Surah 33: Al-Ahzab (The Clans)

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 beat 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 Bani an-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-Riqqa. 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."

This news spread among the Muslims and caused great consternation among them, for they had been encircled and their city had been endangered on the side where there existed no defensive arrangement and where they had also sent their families to take shelter in the forts. This further increased the activities of the hypocrites and they started making psychological attacks to break the morale of the Muslims. One said, "How strange! We were being foretold that the lands of Caesar and Chosroes would fall to us, but here we are that not one of us can go out even to relieve himself." Another one asked for permission to leave his post at the Trench so that he could go and protect his own house which was in danger. Another one started making secret propaganda to the effect: "Settle your affair with the invaders yourselves and hand over Muhammad to them." This was a highly critical hour of trial, which exposed every person who harbored any hypocrisy in his heart. Only the true and sincere Muslims remained firm and steadfast in their resolve and devotion.

Surah 40: Al-Muminoon (The Believers)

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 succour 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.

Surah 68: Al-Qalam (The Pen)

Name

This Surah is called *Nun* as well as *Al-Qalam*, the words with which it begins.

Period of Revelation

This too is one of the earliest Surahs to be revealed at Makkah, but its subject matter shows that it was sent down at the time when opposition to the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) had grown very harsh and tyrannical.

Theme and Subject Matter

It consists of three themes: Replies to the opponents' objections, administration of warning and admonition to them, and exhortation to the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) to patience and constancy.

At the outset, the Holy Prophet has been addressed, to the effect: "The disbelievers call you a madman whereas the Book that you are presenting and the sublime conduct that you practice, are by themselves sufficient to refute their false accusations. Soon they will see as to who was mad and who was sane; therefore, do not at all yield to the din of opposition being kicked up against you, for all this is actually meant to cow you and make you resort to a compromise with them."

Then, in order to enlighten the common people the character of a prominent man from among the opponents, whom the people of Makkah fully well recognized, has been presented, without naming him: At that time, the Holy Prophet's pure and sublime conduct was before them, and every discerning eye could also see what sort of character and morals were possessed by the chiefs of Makkah, who were leading the opposition against him.

Then, in vv. 17-33, the parable of the owners of a garden has been presented, who after having been blessed by Allah turned ungrateful to Him, and did not heed the admonition of the best man among them when it was given to them. Consequently, they were deprived of the blessing and they realized this, when all they had lay devastated. With this parable the people of Makkah have been warned to the effect: "With the appointment of the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) to Prophethood, you, O people of Makkah, too, have been put to a test similar to the one to which the owners of the garden had been put. If you do not listen to him, you too will be afflicted with a punishment in the world, and the punishment of the Hereafter is far greater."

Then, in vv. 34-47 continuously, the disbelievers have been admonished, in which the address sometimes turns to them directly and sometimes they are warned through the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace). A summary of what has been said in this regard, is this: Well being in the Hereafter inevitably belongs to those who spend their lives in the world in full consciousness of God. It is utterly against reason that the obedient servants should meet in the Hereafter the same fate as the guilty. There is absolutely no basis of the disbelievers misunderstanding that God will treat them in the manner they choose for themselves, whereas they have no guarantee for this. Those who are being called upon to bow before God in the world and they refuse to do so, would be unable to prostrate themselves on the Day of Resurrection even if they wanted to do so, and thus would stand disgraced and condemned. Having denied the Qur'an they cannot escape Divine punishment. The rein they are being given,

has deluded them. They think that since they are not being punished in spite of their denial, they must be on the right path, whereas they are following the path of ruin. They have no reasonable ground for opposing the Messenger, for he is a preacher without any vested interest: he is not asking any reward of them for himself, and they cannot either make the claim that they know with certainty that he is not a true Messenger, nor that what he says is false.

In conclusion, the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) has been exhorted to the effect: "Bear with patience the hardships that you may have to face in the way of preaching the Faith till Allah's judgment arrives, and avoid the impatience which caused suffering and affliction to the Prophet Jonah (peace be on him)."

Surah 31: Luqman

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."

Surah 25: Al-Furqan (The Criterion)

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 Dahhak bin 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 Prophethood 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 28: Al-Qassas (The Story)

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, Prophethood 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 Prophethood 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 Prophethood.

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 Prophethood 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.

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.