



Tafseer

2012

Family: Reconnecting our Hearts to Home

Tafseer Test
Packet

Table of Contents

Surah Maryam	2
Surah Noor.....	4
Surah Furqan.....	8
Surah al Qasas.....	12
Surah al Room.....	14
Surah Luqman	17
Surah Abasa	18
Surah Lahab	18

Surah Maryam

Period of Revelation

This Surah was revealed during the later stage of the Prophet's residence at Makkah before several companions of the Prophet Muhammad (saaw) migrated to Habasha (Abyssinia, present-day Ethiopia).

Major Lessons and Divine Guidance

Surah Maryam's Unique Place in Islamic History

There are some indications that this Surah was revealed at a time when many Muslims, being persecuted and oppressed by the Makkans, were migrating to Habasha, a country predominantly populated by Christians. It was necessary for the Muslims especially at that time to be educated about the correct status of many of the Biblical figures whom the Muslims also held in very high regard, including Isa (as), Maryam (as), Zakariyya (as), and Yahya (as). The Surah has narrated their stories in detail as well as many other prophets and messengers including Ibrahim (as), Musa (as), Isma'eel (as), Idris (as), Adam (as), Nuh (as), and others.

The migration to Habasha was due to the worsening condition of the Muslims in Makkah. The Muslims were no longer paid for their labor and professional work (economic boycott), and were beaten, imprisoned, kept thirsty and hungry, and were even dragged on burning sand. The situation became so unbearable that in the fifth year of the Prophet's mission, he advised his followers with the following words: "You may migrate to Habasha, for there is a king who does not allow injustice to anyone. You should remain there till Allah provides a remedy for your affliction."

The Quraish, the tribe mainly responsible for the persecution, suppression, and physical torture, toward the Muslims in Makkah, learned that a group from among the Muslims had fled to Habasha. In an effort to extradite them, the Quraish sent Abdullah bin Abi Rabee'ah and Amr bin 'Aas with gifts to persuade the leadership of Habasha to send the Muslims back in their custody. However, authentic traditions indicate that one of the companions of the Holy Prophet (saaw) named Ja'far bin Abi Talib (r) recited the beginning forty verses of Surah Maryam in the court of the Negus, the Christian king. The Negus was so deeply touched by the beautiful manner in which this Surah portrayed Isa (as) and his virgin mother Maryam (as) that his beard became soaked in tears. The king picked up a straw from the ground and said: "By God, Jesus was no different (even as much as this straw) than what you have said about him...you are welcome in my country and you can stay here in peace."

Children and their Parents in the Qur'an

This Surah is unique in that it not only discusses the stories of various prophets and messengers but also their relationships with their parents. The Surah begins with the prayer of Zakariyya (as) stating: "*Kaaf-Haa-YAA 'Ayn-Saad*¹ *This is a narration of your Lord's mercy to His slave Zakariyya. When he called his*

¹ Disjointed Arabic Letters of which none know the meaning except Allah Himself

Lord in a low voice. He said, "My Lord, I am in a state that bones in my body have turned feeble, and the hair of my head glisten with gray and I never remained, my Lord, unanswered in my prayer to you. I fear my relatives after me and my wife is barren, so bless me, especially from you, an heir. Who inherits me and inherits the house of Ya'qub, and make him, my Lord, a desirable person. O Zakariyya, We give you the good news of a boy whose name is Yahya, We did not create any one before him of the same name. He [Zakariyya] said: "my Lord, how shall there be a boy for me while my wife is barren, and I have reached the extreme of old age?" He [Allah] said: "So it is, your Lord said 'it is easy for Me, and I did create you before, when you were nothing.'" He [Zakariyya] said: "My Lord, make for me a sign." He [Allah] said, "Your sign is that you will not (be able to) speak to the people for three (consecutive) nights, even though you will be sound in health." Then he came out to this people from the place of prayer, and directed them by gestures to proclaim the purity of Allah at morning and evening."

(When the child was born, Allah said to him) "O Yahya, hold on to the book firmly, and We gave him wisdom, while he was still a child. And blessed him with love especially from us and purity, and he was God-fearing. And he was good to his parents, and he was not oppressive or disobedient. Peace on him the day he was born, the day he dies and the day he will be raised alive"

Surah Maryam, Verses 1-15

Immediately thereafter, the surah transitions to a discussion regarding Isa (as) and his mother Maryam (as). "And mention in the Book (the story of) Maryam, when she secluded herself from her people to a place facing East. Then she used a barrier to hide herself from them, then We sent to her Our Spirit [Angel Gabriel] and he took before her the form of a perfect human being. She said: "I seek refuge with the All Merciful against you, if you are God-fearing." He said: "I am but a messenger of your Lord (sent) to give you a boy, purified." She said: "How shall I have a boy while no human has ever touched me, nor have I ever been unchaste?" He said: "So it is, your Lord said, 'it is easy for Me, and so that We make it a sign for people and mercy from Us, and this is a matter already decreed."

"So she conceived him, and went in seclusion with him to a remote place. The labor pains brought her to the trunk of a palm-tree. She said: "O that I would have died before this, and would have been something gone, forgotten." Then he [Angel Gabriel] called from beneath her: "Do not grieve, your Lord has placed a stream beneath you. Shake the trunk of the palm-tree towards yourself, and it will drop upon you ripe, fresh, dates. So eat, drink, and cool your eyes. Then if you see any human being, say "I have vowed a fast (of silence) for the All Merciful and therefore I shall never speak to any human today."

"Then she came to her people carrying him [the baby]. They said: "O Maryam, you have committed something grave indeed. O sister of Harun², neither your father was a man of evil nor was your mother unchaste." So she pointed towards him [the baby]. They said: "How shall we speak to someone who is still a child in the cradle?" [The baby spoke] He said: "Verily I am the slave of Allah. He has given me the Book, and made me a prophet, and He has made me blessed wherever I may be, and has enjoined Prayer and Charity upon me as long as I am alive. And [He has made me] good to my mother, and he did not

² Harun, the brother of Musa (as) is most probably not meant by the reference. Rather, Maryam had a biological relative with the same name

make me oppressive [or] ill-fated. And peace is upon me the day I was born, the day I shall die, and the day I shall be raised alive again.”

Surah Maryam, Verses 27-31

The Surah then transitions to the story of Ibrahim (as) and his relationship with his father: *“And mention in the book, Ibrahim. Indeed he was a man of truth, a prophet. When he said to his father, “My dear father, why do you worship something that does neither hear nor see, nor help you in any way? My dear father, indeed there has come to me a knowledge that has not come to you, so follow me, and I shall lead you to a straight path. My dear father, do not worship Satan, The Satan is surely rebellious to the All Merciful. My dear father, I fear lest a punishment from the all Merciful should afflict you, and you become a companion of Satan.” He [his father] said: “Are you averse to my gods O Ibrahim? Should you not stop, I will definitely stone you. And leave me for good.” He [Ibrahim] said: “Peace on you. I shall ask forgiveness for you from my Lord. He has always been gracious to me...”*

Surah Maryam, Verses 41-47

Notice the constant repetition of ‘my dear father’ by Ibrahim (as). The Arabic word which was used to denote the manner in which Ibrahim (as) spoke to his father conveys deep respect and intense love. In addition to addressing his father with continuous love and respect, he does not use derogatory language or say anything that might hurt the feelings of his father, rather he merely invites his father’s attention so that he may himself realize the fallacy of his beliefs.

Additionally, it may be the case that one is guided to Islam but one’s parents have yet to accept. The case of Ibrahim (as) is an extreme example of a father who not only disapproved of his son’s journey but was such a vehement enemy that he threatened to stone Ibrahim (as). The response of Ibrahim (as) in saying “peace on you” is extremely important. The commentators of Qur’an have interpreted this statement in two ways: (1) The word ‘peace’ is used to signify severance of relations in the most polite of manners so as to not cause hurt to his father, or (2) The word ‘peace’ has been used in the conventional sense as a supplication for the other’s peace and tranquility.

Surah Noor

Period of Revelation

There is consensus among the commentators of the Qur’an that this Surah was sent down 6 years after the Prophetic Migration to Madinah after the campaign of Bani al Mustaliq and the Battle of the Trench.

Major Lessons and Divine Guidance

This Surah was revealed after slander had become widespread concerning the wife of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw), whose name was ‘Aisha (ra). Verses eleven thru twenty are dedicated to clearing her

good name and pure character. As a result of this historical context, this Surah clarified several rulings regarding unchaste behavior and indecent attitudes in society.

Family is at the core of a wholesome human experience and is the foundation of a healthy community and society. Consequently this Surah outlines the desire for young males and females to get married and start families. Additionally, divine regulations have been revealed in this Surah dealing with the sanctity of marriage and the preservation of the household.

Sanctity of Marriage

This Surah reveals many social injunctions regarding the respectful interactions that one should have with the opposite gender. At the time of this revelation the objectifying of women and the mistreatment of young girls was rampant in pre-modern Arab society, this Surah revealed the method by which to keep chaste and respectful before marriage.

“Enjoin the believing men to lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that is more pure for them. Surely, Allah is well aware of their actions. Likewise, enjoin the believing women to lower their gaze and guard their modesty; not to display their beauty and ornaments except what normally appears thereof...”

Surah Noor, Verses 30-31

After addressing the respectful manner with which to view and interact with the opposite gender, the Surah immediately addresses the need for young men and women to get married.

“Get the unmarried youth among you married as well as those who are fit for marriage among your male slaves and female slaves. If they are poor, Allah will make them free of want out of His grace, for Allah is All Encompassing, All Knowing. And let those who do not find means to marry keep themselves chaste until Allah enriches them out of His bounty.”

Surah Noor, Verse 32

These verses highlight another social reality of the time. Being a remnant of the pre-Islamic period, slavery was still widely practiced in 6th Century Arabia. The next set of verses is dedicated to those who were still at that time engaged in the practice of slavery. Not only were the owners advised that they should allow their subjects to marry if they so desire but that they should also arrange for their freedom. The religion of Islam, in the Arabian Peninsula, became one of the first vehicles of positive change to open up the doors of freedom for the people who had been trapped in the institution of slavery for years. This is an example of but one such instruction which points toward the underlying objective of Islamic legal thought of freedom and autonomy. One can find countless verses in the Holy Qur’an as well as Prophetic Traditions by Prophet Muhammad (saw) encouraging the freeing of slaves. Believers were motivated towards this action by a promise of generous blessings from Allah. This particular discussion ends with the verse:

“Give them [the slaves] out of the wealth of Allah that He has given you.”

Surah Noor, Verse 33

This address is directed towards Muslims in general, and to the owners of slaves in particular. When the freedom of a slave is dependent on a fixed amount to be given to his owner, then it is incumbent upon Muslims to help him or her collect that money. One of the foundational pillars of the Islamic faith is paying an obligatory charity known as Zakat. Muslim jurists have commented on this verse by stating that freedom of a slave can be intrinsically tied to worship by using money from Zakat to contribute to a man or a women’s freedom. It was also a very well known practice of the companions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) that they would reduce the amount needed to set a slave free by one third, or one fourth, depending upon their capacity. (Tafseer Mazhari)

Other social measures which have been divinely instructed in this Surah include the manners and etiquette associated with visiting each other’s homes. In order to protect the privacy and sanctity of one’s home, it is stated in this Surah that one is forbidden to enter houses without seeking permission.

“O Believers! Do not enter houses other than your own until you have sought permission and said greetings of peace to the occupants; this is better for you, so that you may be mindful. If you do not find anybody therein, still, do not enter until permission is given to you, and if you are asked to go back, then go back; this is more fitting for you; and Allah is cognizant of what you do. There is no blame on you if you enter houses which are not used for dwelling and in which you have rightful benefit [public places where all people have rightful access at all times], and Allah knows what you reveal and what you conceal.”

Surah Noor, Verses 27-29

Social Reforms of Societal Ills

The very beginning of this Surah makes clear that rape, adultery, and fornication (which had already been declared to be social crimes in Surah Ahzab, Verses 15-16) disrupt the sanctity of marriage, thereby destroy homes and societies. This Surah makes these actions criminal offenses. Also, the severity of falsely accusing another of such crimes is also established as very serious as this Surah makes clear that relations in the Muslim and greater community should be based on good faith and not on suspicion. Everyone is innocent until and unless he or she is proven guilty. This Surah takes a strong stance against those who spread evil rumors and propagate wickedness in the community.

The Muslims in particular are reminded in verses eleven thru twenty of the incident regarding the slander against ‘Aisha (ra), the wife of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw).

The word “ifk” is used in the Holy Qur’an in reference to the situation regarding ‘Aisha (ra). The word ‘ifk’ means the worst type of lie or slander. The slander that took place regarding ‘Aisha (ra) is as follows:

When the Holy Prophet (saw) went for the battle of Bani Mustaliq (also referred to as the Battle of Muraisi') in the year 6 AH, 'Aisha (ra) accompanied the Muslim army. After the battle, the caravan stopped to rest the night on its return to Madinah. Towards the end of the night however an announcement was made that the caravan would soon be departing, so the people should get ready after completing their respective necessities. 'Aisha (ra) went to relieve herself at some distance from the camp to assure some privacy. It was there that the string of her necklace broke and fell into the desert sand. It took her quite some time to locate it, as a result of which she became late and the army caravan departed without her.

Before departing, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw), as was customary at the time, assigned Safwan bin Mu'attal (r) to stay behind to collect any of the belongings the caravan had left behind. He recognized 'Aisha (ra) and became surprised, uttering the words "To Allah we belong, and to Him is our return." (Holy Qur'an 2: 156) Safwan and 'Aisha then made their way together back toward the city of Madinah.

Abdullah bin Ubayy, an enemy of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) and the most famous of the hypocrites of Madinah, got hold of the news that Safwan (r) and 'Aisha (ra) returned from the Battle of Bani Mustaliq together, unaccompanied by the rest of the army. He then fabricated a shameless rumor against her which spread for about a month among the Muslim community. When the slander was publicized the Holy Prophet (saw) was very hurt and the remaining Muslim community was deeply troubled by the rhetoric that was spreading throughout the people. Finally, verses were revealed in this Surah exonerating her and establishing very important principles regarding the false accusations of innocent people, as it creates mistrust and enmity and tears at the fabric of an honest and cohesive society. (Bayan al Qur'an)

The Surah ends the discussion of the slander against 'Aisha (ra) with the following words:

"O Believers! Do not follow the footsteps of Satan, anyone who follows the footsteps of Satan is seduced by him to commit acts of indecency and wickedness. If there had not been the grace and mercy of Allah upon you, none of you would have ever been purified (from that sin), for it is Allah Alone who purifies whom He pleases, and Allah is All Hearing, All Knowing. Let not those among you who are endowed with grace and wealth swear to withhold their help from their relatives, the indigent and those who migrated for the cause of Allah – rather let them forgive and overlook – do you not wish that Allah Should forgive you? Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. Those who accuse chaste and believing women who are, in good faith, unaware(of what is plotted against them) are cursed in this life, and in the hereafter they shall have a grievous punishment. (Such people should not forget) that Day when their own tongues, their own hands, and their own feet will testify against their misdeeds. On that Day, Allah will give them the full reward they deserve, then they will realize that it is Allah who is the Manifest Truth (perfect in justice). Impure women are for impure men, and impure men are for impure women, pure women are for pure men, and pure men are for pure women. They are free from accusations, for them there shall be forgiveness and honorable provision."

Surah al Furqan

Period of Revelation

This Surah was revealed in the late Makkan period during the last third stage of the Holy Prophet Muhammad's (saw) residence in Makkah. However there are a few scholars from among the generation of the Companions (Abdullah bin Abbas and Qataadah) who contend that part of the Surah was revealed in Madinah and yet others (namely Imam Qurtubi, among others) who maintain that the Surah was entirely revealed in Madinah.

Major Lessons and Divine Guidance

The basic theme of this Surah is Makkan in nature as it appears to be revealed to establish the fundamental articles of the Islamic faith, to remind mankind of Allah's bounties and favors, to refute idolatry in all its forms, and to remove the doubts of the disbelievers against the prophet-hood of Muhammad (saw).

The Surah begins with the following two verses:

"Blessed is the One who has revealed 'Al Furqan' to His slave, that he may be one who warns to the worlds. The One to whom belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and who did neither have a son, nor is there any partner for him in the kingdom, and who has created everything and designed it in a perfect measure"

Surah al Furqan, Verses 1-2

The word al Furqan is one of the titles and distinguishing names of the Holy Qur'an and is normally translated as 'The Criterion.' That is to say, the Qur'an plays a central role in a believer's life in distinguishing between right and wrong.

Special Wisdom in Every Creation

It is important to value and respect all of Allah's creation as He has stated in the previous verse that He has "created everything" and then "designed it in a perfect measure." Note how "Taqdeer" (designing everything in a perfect measure) is mentioned after "Takhleeq" (to create something out of nothing). This is to highlight the importance of recognizing that whatever has been created, its components, appearance, and properties are made to suit the purpose of its creation. The form of the sky, its constituents and its shape are in conformity to that purpose for which Allah has created it. Similarly, the stars and planets possess those qualities for which they are created. Whatever we see on the earth is absolutely perfect in its form, shape, and construction to suit the purpose and requirement of its creation. For instance, earth is not made in such a liquid form, that anything put on it is drowned, nor is it made too hard like steel or concrete to be dug. It is made in the solid form and given a hardness that it could be dug to take out underground water or to place foundations for buildings. Water is given the liquid form which again is full of Divine Wisdom and helps meet the multifarious needs of the creatures

spread all over the earth. Water does not reach on its own at all the places where it is needed. Man has to put in some skill and labor to take it to places where it is required. On the other hand air is a compulsory gift which reaches every place without any labor or an active role from human beings. Even if someone wants to avoid it, he has to exert extra labor. It is not the place to describe Divine creations and their characteristics as it needs volumes for the purpose. Each and every creation of Allah (swt) is perfect in its purpose and has its own peculiar properties and traits. In acknowledgment and awe of this, many Muslim scholars, including the likes of Imam Ghazzali have written extensively about the wisdom in the creations of Allah. (Ma'ariful Qur'an, Mufti Muhammad Shafi')

You Are the Company You Keep

In the middle of this Surah, a vivid description of the Day of Judgment is given and the regret of those who followed their friends or associates despite knowing what they were doing was wrong will be highlighted.

"On that Day when the heavens shall burst asunder with clouds and angels will be sent down ranks after ranks, the real Kingdom on that Day will belong only to the Most Compassionate, a hard Day shall it be for the unbelievers. On that Day the wrongdoer will bite his hands saying: "Oh! Would that I had only taken a path alongside the messenger! Oh! Would that I had never chosen so-and-so as my friend. He was the one who led me astray from the admonition even after it had reached me." Satan is ever treacherous to man. The Messenger will say: "O my Lord, Surely my people deserted this Qur'an (neither learned nor acted upon its guidance)."

Surah al Furqan, Verses 25-30

The verse "Oh! Would that I had not taken so-and-so for my friend" was revealed following a specific incident regarding a man named 'Uqbah bin Abi Mu'ait, one of the nobility of Makkah. It was customary with him that whenever he would return after an expedition, he used to invite the eminent members of society to a dinner at his residence. He also used to call on the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) frequently. The Prophet, staying true to his mission, called 'Uqbah to Islam during the course of the dinner, and 'Uqbah uttered the Testimony of Faith and accepted Islam. 'Ubayy bin Khalaf, a close friend of 'Uqbah learned of these developments and threatened to cut ties with him if he did not recant his actions. In order to demonstrate that he was serious, 'Ubayy ordered 'Uqbah to also spit on the face of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw). 'Uqbah obliged his depraved friend and did as he said. The fear and regret that 'Uqbah will face on the Day of Judgement is depicted in these verses, that when he will see the torment before him, he will bite his fingers in distress and repentance and say "would that he had not made 'Ubayy bin Khalaf his friend." (Tafsir Qurtubi)

Although these verses were revealed with respect to that particular situation, the moral of the verse is universal. This can be noticed by the use of the word "fulaan" (so-and-so) in the verse. When friends get together in acts of immorality and sin and help each other in performing forbidden deeds, then the same will apply to them and they will be remorseful and feel sorry for their friendship in the Hereafter. (Tafseer Mazhari)

It is narrated by Abu Hurairah (r) that the Holy Prophet (saw) stated that “Every person is on the way of life of his friend, therefore one must be very mindful when selecting his friends.” (Reported by al Bukhari). Similarly, Ibn Abbas (r) reported that the Holy Prophet (saw) was asked what sort of friends should we keep in our company. To this he replied: “The one who reminds you of Allah when you see him, and adds to your knowledge when he speaks, and reminds you of the Hereafter when he acts.” (Reported by Al Bazaar) (Tafsir Qurtubi)

The end of the Surah transitions to discussing the special servants of Allah who firmly believe in the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw), his mission and message, and whose beliefs, deeds, and dealings are all in conformity with the will of Allah and His Messenger. Allah (swt) calls these select group of people “Ibadur Rahman” (Slaves of the Most Merciful). This title is special in that highlights their desire to do voluntary worship by free will, to be free yet still desire to be slaves of Allah. They surrender completely before Allah and make their deeds and desires conform to His pleasure. Also, the term Ar-Rahman (The Most Merciful) is selected out of Allah’s Most Beautiful Names to allude that these select group of people should reflect and demonstrate the quality of mercy through their behavior with people.

Characteristics of the Believers

The Surah then provides thirteen different noble characteristics of these people which have been outlined below:

- (1) They are slaves. The heart of the Islamic belief is that we are all slaves of God, all of our deeds and prerogatives are dedicated to follow the command and will of the Master.
- (2) *“they walk on the earth humbly”* Here the believers are being commanded to walk with humbleness, modesty, and decorum. One should not walk or behave with pride or arrogance
- (3) *“when ignorant people speak to them, they reply peacefully”* What is meant here is that in response ignorance they keep composed and answer with calmness so that others are not offended. The intended meaning is that they do not avenge from those who talk to them like ignorant people
- (4) *“those who pass the night prostrating and standing before their Lord”* Special mention of night worship is made here firstly, because this time being a time of rest, requires extra effort, and secondly because it rules out the possibility of showing one’s worship to others. The idea is to express that they spend their day and night in submission before Allah during the day by teaching and spreading religious tenets and struggling in the way of Allah and at night by praying before Him. The sayings of the Holy Prophet (saw) have extolled the voluntary night prayers. Tirmidhi has reported on the authority of Abu Umaamah (r) that the Holy Prophet (saw) said: “Remain steadfast to your night prayers as this has been the practice of all righteous people before your time, and this will bring you closer to Allah and will expiate the evils and keep you away from sins” (Tafsir Mazhari). Ibn Abbas (r) has said that one who offered two or more units of prayer after ‘Isha Prayers is also covered by the verse (reported by Bayhaqi). Uthman (r) is reported to have observed that the Holy Prophet (saw) has said that one who has offered his ‘Isha prayer with congregation would be regarded as having worshipped half the night and the

one who has offered Fajr prayer with congregation would be regarded as having offered the other half of the night in prayers (reported by Imam Ahmad and Muslim)

- (5) *“those who say “Our Lord, avert from us the punishment of Hell-Fire”*” This is included to highlight that despite their constant prayers throughout the day and night, these people do not sit content, rather they keep alive the righteous deeds as well as supplications before Allah
- (6) *“those who, when they spend, are neither extravagant or miserly”* The message of this characteristic is one of balance and taking the middle path in how and where one spends money
- (7) *“those who do not invoke any other god along with Allah”* This verse discusses the concept of ‘Shirk’ (associating anyone with Allah in worship)
- (8) *“they do not kill a person whom Allah has given sanctity”* Here taking another sanctified human life is deemed a major offense
- (9) *“nor do they commit fornication/adultery”* Once again we are reminded of the seriousness of extramarital relationships as this characteristic is mentioned as a continuation of the eight characteristic
- (10) *“those who do not witness falsehood”* This verse has been interpreted in many ways, primarily, it has been understood to mean that they do not participate in gatherings where lewd or destructive behavior take place. It has also been suggested that this verse could mean that they do not give false testimony as evidence (i.e. lie in a solemn testimony in a court of law)
- (11) *“when they pass vain talk, they pass by with dignity”* In other words, they do not attend such gatherings intentionally, if they happen to pass by them by chance they respectfully leave in a dignified manner. It is important to note here that it is clear from the language of the verse that these select servants of Allah walk away with dignity, grace, and respect, it is not proper for them to take pride or regard themselves superior for not indulging in such activities. Abdullah bin Mas’ud (r) happened to pass such a gathering, so he did not stop there but simply walked away. When the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) learnt about this incidence he remarked “Ibn Mas’ud has become dignified” and then recited this verse wherein it is enjoined to walk away from dissolute gatherings with dignity” (Tafsir Ibn Kathir)
- (12) *“those who, when they are reminded of the verses of their Lord, do not fall at them as deaf and blind”* That is to say that when the Holy Qur’an is recited to the believers, they do not behave as if they have not seen or listened (i.e. pretend to not have understood the message)
- (13) *“those who say “Our Lord, give us, from our spouses and our children, coolness of eyes and make us leaders of the God-fearing”* The final of these noble characteristics and attributes return the subject to the family. This verse contains a prayer for one’s spouses and children. One can draw solace from his wife and children and they are to be a means for each other’s refuge and comfort.

Surah al Qasas

Period of Revelation

According to Abdullah bin 'Abbas (r), this Surah was revealed immediately after Surah al Naml (which is also where it is placed in the text of the Qur'an). It also appears from different reports that it was the last Surah revealed in Makkah, interestingly, its 85th verse was revealed during the journey from Makkah to Madinah stating *"Surely the One who has enjoined the Qur'an upon you will surely bring you back to a place of return. Say "My Lord best knows the one who has come with guidance and the one who is in manifest error."*

Major Lessons and Divine Guidance

The Story of Musa (as)

The beginning of the Surah is dedicated almost entirely to the story of Musa (as). The Surah discusses how Allah saved Musa (as) and arranged for him to be brought up in the Pharaoh's household.

Once again, the Holy Qur'an relates the story of a major prophet in addition to mentioning several details regarding many of his family members. There is mention of not only Musa (as) but also his mother who was forced to give him up shortly after birth, and his sister who followed his basket along the riverbank, and later on his brother, who joined him in his mission.

"Ta-Seen-Meem.³ These are verses of the clear Book. We recite to you a part of the story of Musa and Pharaoh with truth for a people who believe. Indeed, Pharaoh had elevated himself in the land, and had divided its people into different groups, he used to persecute a group of them, slaughtering their sons and keeping their women alive. Indeed he was one of the mischief-makers, while we intended to favor those who were held as weak in the land, and to make them leaders and make them inheritors, and give them power in the land, and to show Pharaoh, Haman, and their armies the very thing they were fearing from them.

We inspired the mother of Musa saying "Suckle him. Then once you fear in regards to him, cast him in the river, and do not fear, and do not grieve. Surely We are going to bring him back to you and appoint him one of Our messengers." So the family of Pharaoh picked him up, so that he becomes for them an enemy and a (cause of) grief. Indeed Pharaoh, Haman, and their armies were mistaken. And the wife of Pharaoh said [regarding Musa] "He may be the delight of the eyes for me and you. Do not kill him. It is hoped that he will be of benefit to us, or we will adopt him as a son." And they were not aware

And the heart of the mother of Musa became restless; indeed she was about to disclose this, had We not strengthened her heart to remain among those who have firm belief. She said to his sister: "Keep track of him." So she watched him from a distance, while they were not aware. And We had already barred him [Musa] from accepting any suckling women, so she [his sister] said: "Shall I point out to you a family

³ See Footnote 1

who will nurse him for you, and they will be his well-wishers?" Thus We brought him back to his mother, so that her eye might have comfort and she might not grieve, and so that she might know that Allah's promise is true, but most of them do not know."

Surah Qasas, Verses 1-13

One of the functions of this Surah was to remove the doubts and objections that were being raised against the Prophethood of Prophet Muhammad (saw). The story of Musa (as) is related to emphasize that Allah is All Powerful and can provide the means for whatever He wills to do. He arranged for the child (Musa), through whom the Pharaoh was to be removed from power, to be brought up in the Pharaoh's own house and he did not know whom he was fostering. The disbelievers of Makkah wondering about the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) and used to say "how could he be blessed with Prophethood all of a sudden, as opposed to those who were of higher nobility and power than him?" This is explained through the example of Musa (as) who was given Prophethood seemingly unexpectedly during a journey, while he himself did not know what he was going to be blessed with. In fact, he had gone to bring a piece of fire (for light and warmth for his family), but returned with the gift of Prophethood. The disbelievers of Makkah were wondering why Allah would assign the Prophet Muhammad (saw) this mission without any special help or supernatural forces to aide him. Again, the example of the Prophet Musa (as) is used to explain that a person from whom Allah wants to take some service always appears without any apparent helper or force behind him, yet he can put up with much stronger and better equipped opponents. The contrast between the strengths of Musa (as) and that of Pharaoh is far more extreme than that between Muhammad (saw) and the Tribe of Quraish of Makkah. The disbelievers of Makkah were also referring to the Prophet Musa (as) repeatedly, saying: "Why was Muhammad not given the same which was given to Musa (as)?" They were referring to the well known God-given miracles performed by Musa (as) like his staff becoming a snake or his hand glowing in front of the people. The Quraish would speak about this miracles as if to suggest that they would readily believe if only they were shown the kind of miracles that Musa (as) showed the Pharaoh. The disbelievers were admonished, that those who were shown those miracles did not believe even after seeing the miracles. Instead they said: "This is nothing but magic," for they were full of stubbornness and hostility to the truth, which were the real problems of the people of Makkah. In summary, the background against which the story of the Prophet Musa (as) was narrated and a perfect analogy is made in every detail between the conditions then prevailing in Makkah and those which were existing at the time of Prophet Musa (as).

Additionally, the disbelievers of Makkah are admonished for mistreating the Christian community. Abu Jahl, a staunch enemy of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) publicly humiliated several Christians in Makkah, especially after a large segment of their population turned toward Islam after hearing the verses of the Holy Qur'an from the Prophet Muhammad (saw). The real reason for the hostility of the disbelievers at the time became exposed. The disbelievers of Makkah were thinking that if they gave up the polytheistic creed of the ancient Arabs and accept the doctrine of Tawheed (oneness and centrality of God), it will be an end to their supremacy in the religious, political, and economic fields. As a result, their position as the most influential tribe of Arabia will be destroyed. This was the real motive of the

leaders of the Quraish for their antagonism towards the truth, and their doubts and objections were only a pretense invented to deceive the people.

Surah Al Room

Period of Revelation

This Surah was revealed in 615 CE, the year when the Romans were completely overpowered by the Persians in war.

Major Lessons and Divine Guidance

The Persian-Roman War

The first issue this Surah addresses is the war between the Persians and the Romans. The Romans had very slim chances of winning as the Persians had advanced right up to the walls of Constantinople, the capital of the Roman Empire. Heraclius, the emperor of Rome was begging for a compromise with the Persian emperor. The Surah begins by making a bold prophecy, that the Romans, despite being defeated would once again overpower the Persians. Edward Gibbon, the famous historian of the Roman Empire has commented on this prophecy in the following words: "At the time when this prediction is said to have been delivered, no prophecy could be more distant from its accomplishment, since the first twelve years of Heraclius announced the approaching dissolution of the empire."⁴ Had it not been a divine prophecy mentioned in the Holy Qur'an, nobody could have dared to predict such an unlikely event. In particular, it was impossible from a claimant to prophet-hood that he would put his future and credibility at stake by predicting an event that was so improbable.

The Signs of Allah

After narrating the incident of the war between the Romans and Persia in the beginning of the Surah, the subject matter transitions to discussing the causes of misguidance and heedlessness toward the truth. The Surah states that one should firstly look into the self, then ponder about the generations that have come before. Further one should consider certain manifestations of the Divine Omnipotence of Allah. The Surah refers to these as 'signs' and six of them are mentioned.

- (1) *"it is among is signs that He created you from dust, then soon you are human beings scattered around"* Mankind, the most distinguished among all creatures is created from earth, the most inferior element among all the constituting elements of nature. Among the four well-known elements, that is water, fire, air, and earth, the last named does not have the slightest sense, sensation, or movement. All other elements have at least the slightest fluidity or movement, but the earth is devoid of that. However, this element was selected by Allah for the creation of humans. Satan was misled by his arrogance as he regarded himself superior to man, since he is

⁴ Gibbon, The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, chapter 46, vol.2, p.125, Great Books, v.38, University of Chicago, 1990

made of fire. What he failed to understand was that greatness and superiority is awarded by Allah. He is free to award it to any one He chooses.

- (2) *“among His signs is that He created for you wives from among yourselves, so that you may find tranquility in them, and He has created love and mercy between you.”* This verse directs our attention back to the family and discusses the goals and higher objectives of married life. This verse indicates that the total outcome of marriage is peace of mind and comfort. The couple that enjoys it is successful in the object of its creation, while the family that is deprived of peace of mind and tranquility unsuccessful in its married life. This verse also highlights the importance of marriage as a concept as opposed to fulfilling one’s desires in ways that are unlawful. It may provide temporary pleasure, but not the lasting peace, contentment and comfort one draws from a lifelong partner.

The present verse has declared that the object of married life of man and woman is peace of mind. This could be achieved only when there is a mutual recognition of each other’s rights and sincere effort to fulfill them. Otherwise the demand for meeting one’s own rights only will lead to domestic fighting and shattering of peace. One course for the fulfillment of these rights could have been to lay stress only on legislation and imposing laws, as has been done in the case of other rights of the people, where it is prohibited to usurp the rights of others. However it is a common experience that people cannot be corrected by only giving them a set of laws, unless they are accompanied by nurturing God-consciousness in the hearts of people. That is why whenever the Holy Qur’an gives any injunctions regarding the social life of mankind, it comes with directions of “fear Allah / be conscious of Allah” as a complement to those injunctions.

Mutual relations between man and woman are of such a delicate and sensitive nature that neither a law can ensure the fulfillment of their respective rights completely, nor can any court do full justice to it. It is for this reason that the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) has selected those verses of the Qur’an for the sermon of marriage in which stress is laid on piety, fear of Allah and the Hereafter. Only these qualities in the spouses could stand as guarantor for the fulfillment of mutual rights.

In addition to this, Allah has not made the conjugal rights merely a matter of rules and regulations, but also a natural and emotional requirement of every man and woman. It is on the same pattern as the mutual rights of parents and children are safeguarded by the natural love they have for each other. Allah has filled the hearts of parents with such a natural love that they are compelled to protect their children more than their own selves. Similarly, a degree of natural love is put in the hearts of children for their parents. The same thing is done in the case of spouses, for which it is said “and He has created love and mercy between you” that is, Allah has not restricted the relationship between spouses to a legal and religious relationship, but has filled their hearts with love and compassion. It is possible that love is mentioned first, referring

to young age when spouses are attracted towards each other with love and affection, while mercy could refer to old age when passions subside and compassion for each other takes over. (Tafseer Qurtubi)

- (3) *“and among His signs is the creation of the heavens and earth and the difference of your tongues and colors”* The people living on earth are divided into many races, having different physical features and colors. Some are white, while others are black, brown, and yellow. They speak different languages with many different dialects.
- (4) *“among His signs is your sleep by night and day, and your search for His grace”* This verse highlights the day and night and associates human sleep as well as economic activity. It is evident from this verse that sleeping at night and working at daytime is made a natural habit for humans. It is not something that one has to cultivate or earn, but is a natural gift bestowed by Allah to all His creatures. The point can be illustrated by the fact that one cannot sleep at times despite making all possible arrangements for the comfort. Sometimes even sleeping pills become ineffective. On the other hand, when Allah wills, people go to sleep even on hard floors amidst severe heat or noise when they are tired enough.

The same principle applies to earning one’s sustenance, this is why they have been mentioned together. It is a common scenario that two individuals having equal opportunities, knowledge, and intellect, and putting in equal efforts and skill for earning their livelihood, do not necessarily succeed equally. One may earn more than the other because it is decreed as such by Allah’s wisdom. Therefore, one should try to earn a living through all the means available to him, but should not ignore the reality that the outcome of his endeavors depends on the will of Allah, as He is the real provider.

- (5) *“and it is among His signs that He shows you the lightening which causes fear and hope, and the He sends down water from the sky”* Allah shows the flash of lightening to people in which there is risk of its striking, thus destruction. At the same time, there is hope for rain following the lightening. The rain does follow with His will and give rise to numerous types of vegetation
- (6) *“and it is among His signs that the sky and earth stand firm with His command”* This verse is a reminder of the beautiful creation of Allah and actually also a reference to Judgment Day. Existence of the sky and earth is by the command of Allah. When He will command the breakup of this system, this strong arrangement, which was intact for thousands of years perfectly without a slight depreciation, will end.

Surah Luqman

Period of Revelation

This Surah was revealed during the Holy Prophet Muhammad's (saw) residence in Makkah.

Major Issues and Divine Guidance

This Surah discusses two very important things: (1) The story of Luqman, a Qur'anic figure known to the ancient Arabs as being a very wise role model of the past, and (2) The rights of parents, in particular the mother. Once again, the story of a man of piety, wisdom, and righteousness is related (i.e. Luqman, there is near consensus that Luqman was technically not a prophet - Tafsir Mazhari) as well as a member of his family (his son). Luqman's extensive advice to his son is recorded in this surah, it also serves beneficial to note an authenticated incident regarding Luqman when he was addressing a large gathering of people. He advised them with the following points: (1) Lower your gaze and hold your tongue, (2) Stay content with lawful sustenance, (3) Guard your private parts, (4) Tell the truth and uphold it, (5) Fulfill the pledge, (6) Honor the guest, (7) Protect the neighbor, (8) Observe silence against wasteful speech and leave off all useless indulgences. (Tafsir Ibn Kathir)

Luqman's Advice to His Son

"We gave wisdom to Luqman saying: "Give thanks to Allah," and the one who pays thanks, does so for his own good, and the one who denies His favors, [should know that] Allah is certainly free of all wants, worthy of praise. When Luqman, while advising his son, said to him: "O my son! Do not ever commit shirk (associating anything with Allah in worship), surely, committing shirk is a great injustice"

"We have enjoined mankind concerning his parents – his mother carries him in her womb while suffering weakness upon weakness and then weans him in two years- (this is why we command him) "Give thanks to Me and to your parents, and to Me is your final destination. If they argue with you to commit shirk, of which you have knowledge, then do not obey them; however you should still treat them kindly in this world, but follow the way of that individual who has turned to Me. To Me is your return then I will inform you about the reality of all that you have done"

"(Luqman further said: "O my son! Allah will bring all things to light, be they small as a grain of a mustard seed, be they hidden inside a rock or high above in the heavens or deep down in the earth. Allah knows the finest mysteries and is well aware of all things. O my son! Establish Prayer, enjoin good and forbid evil. Endure with patience whatever befalls you, surely all that is of the matters requiring determination. Do not speak to the people with your face turned away (with pride), nor walk proudly on earth; for Allah does not love any conceited boaster..."

Surah Abasa

Period of Revelation

There is consensus that this Surah was revealed during the early stages of the Prophet's residence at Makkah.

Major Issues and Divine Guidance

Though there is much that can be said regarding the subject-matter of Surah Abasa, it is relevant to focus on the latter part of the Surah. Allah (swt), depicting a scene on Judgment Day, states:

“When there will come the deafening blast, on that Day each man shall flee from his own brother, his mother, and his father, his wife and his children. For each one of them, on that Day, shall have enough concern of his own to make him indifferent to the others. Some faces on that Day shall be shining, smiling and joyful. And some faces on that Day shall be dusty, veiled with darkness. These shall be the faces of the disbelieving, rebellious”

Surah Abasa, Verses 33-42

This Surah portrays a vivid description of the Day of Judgment when people will flee from their brothers, from their mothers and fathers, from their spouses and their children. No one will help another on that Day despite the natural attachment they may have had in the world, and each person will come before Allah as an individual.

Surah al Lahab

Period of Revelation

This Surah was revealed at Makkah during the period when Abu Lahab had transgressed all limits in his hostility toward the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw).

Major Issues and Divine Guidance

This Surah is dedicated entirely to Abu Lahab, the uncle of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw). Abu Lahab was a staunch enemy of Islam and especially of his nephew and despite the fact that the Holy Qur'an mentions many nations of the past and their struggles, and despite the many struggles of the Messenger (saw) throughout his 23-year prophet-hood, no one is cursed or made to perish in the Qur'anic text by name, save Abu Lahab.

This Surah is critical in appreciating the devastation that the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) must have felt when he received such vehement opposition from none other than his own family member. Understanding the message of this Surah also helps in putting into perspective the various difficulties

and trials that one may have to face (often from one's own family) for believing and acting upon one's principles.

Who was Abu Lahab?

This is the only place in the Holy Qur'an where a person from among the enemies of Islam has been condemned by name, even though in Makkah, as well as later on in Madinah, there were many people who were in no way less harmful to Islam and the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) than Abu Lahab. The question is, what was the special trait of the character of this person, which became the basis of this condemnation by name? To understand this, it is necessary that one understands the Arabian society of that time and the role that Abu Lahab played in it.

In ancient desert societies, one's family or tribe played an important role in keeping one safe from the chaos, confusion, bloodshed, and plunder that regularly occurred in the desert. The condition of Arabia in particular for centuries was that a person could have no guarantee of the protection of life, honor, and property except with the help and support of his clansmen and blood relations. Therefore good treatment of kindred was esteemed most highly among the moral values of the Arabian society and the breaking off of connections with kindred was regarded as a great sin. Under the influence of this Arabian tradition, Prophet Muhammad (saw) began to preach the message of Islam. The other clans of Quraish and their chiefs resisted and opposed him tooth and nail, but the Bani Hashim tribe and the Bani Al Mutallib Tribe (brother of Hashim) were the family of Muhammad (saw). They not only did not oppose him but continued to support him openly, even though most of them had not yet believed in his message. The other clans of Quraish regarded this support by the Prophet's blood relations as perfectly in accordance with the moral traditions of Arabia. That is why they never taunted the Bani Hashim and the Bani Al Mutallib tribes even though they seemingly had betrayed their ancestral faith by supporting a person who was preaching what they considered to be a new faith altogether. They knew and believed that they could in no case hand over an individual of their clan to his enemies, and their support and aid of a clansman was perfectly natural in the sight of the Quraish and the people of Arabia.

This moral principle, which the Arabs in the pre-Islamic days of ignorance, regarded as worthy of respect and inviolable was broken only by one man, Abu Lahab, son of Abdul Muttalib, a paternal uncle of the Holy Prophet (saw). In Arabia, an uncle represented the father, especially when the nephew was fatherless (as was the case with Muhammad). The uncle was expected to look after the nephew as one of his own children. However his hostility to Islam outweighed his respect and decency.

Before the proclamation of Muhammad's (saw) message, two of the Prophet's daughters were married to two of Abu Lahab's sons. When the Prophet (saw) began inviting people to Islam, Abu Lahab said to both of his sons: "I forbid myself from seeing and meeting you until you divorce the daughters of Muhammad!" Both of them subsequently divorced their wives, and upon his request, two of the Prophet's daughters became widowed.

Whenever the Prophet (saw) went to preach the message of Islam, Abu Lahab followed him and forbade the people to listen to him. Tariq bin Abdullah al-Muharibi says: "I saw in the fair of Dhul Majaz, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) exhorting the people saying: 'O people, say none has the right to be

worshipped Allah, and you will attain success.’ Behind him there was a man who was casting stones at him until his heels bled and he was telling the people: ‘Do not listen to him, he is a liar.’ I asked the people who he was. They said he was his uncle, Abu Lahab.” (Reported by Tirmidhi)

In the 7th year of Prophet-hood, when all of the clans of Quraish socially and economically boycotted the Bani Hashim and the Bani Al Mutallib tribes, both of these clans, who remained steadfast in the Prophet’s support, were besieged. Abu Lahab was the only person who sided with the disbelieving Quraish against his own clan. This boycott continued for three years, so much so that the Bani Hashim and the Bani Al Mutallib tribes began to starve. This, however, did not move Abu Lahab. When a trade caravan came to Makkah and a man from the boycotted tribes approached to buy some food, Abu Lahab shouted out to the merchants to demand an extremely high price, telling them that he would make up for any loss that they incurred. Thus, they would demand exorbitant rates and the poor customer would return empty handed to his starving children. Then Abu Lahab would purchase the same articles from them at the market rates. (Reported by Ibn Sa’d and Ibn Hishaam)

On account of opposing the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) without just cause, pelting stones until he bled, continuously publicly bringing false and outlandish accusations against his character and many more misdeeds Abu Lahab was condemned in this Surah by name. After this Surah was revealed, Abu Lahab, filled with rage, started uttering nonsense, the people realized that what he was saying was not reliable and only due to hatred and contempt.

When the Prophet’s own uncle was condemned by name, the people’s expectation that the Messenger could treat some relative leniently in the matter of religion was made clear. When the Prophet’s own uncle was taken to task publicly, the people understood that there was no room for preference or partiality in matters of faith. We will all return to Allah as individuals, answering about each and every single thing we did.