

Surah al-Isra / Bani Israeel

This is a Makkan surah consisting of 111 ayaat. 'Isra' refers to the night journey that the Prophet sal Allahu alaihi wa sallam took between Makkah and Jerusalem. This was a great miracle and a great honour. This journey took place while the Prophet sal Allahu alaihi wa sallam was awake, hence it was mentioned as an extraordinary event. In addition to the Isra and Mi'raaj, the other main topics in this surah are as follows:

1. The bani Israeel are foretold that they will spread mischief in the land of 'As-Shaam' and then they will be persecuted on two separate occasions.

Hence, firstly, when they opposed the Torah and killed the Prophet Shuaib alaihis salaam, the army of Nebokednezr attacked them and spread from one end of the land to the other. They killed their scholars and leaders, burnt the Torah, demolished the Masjid of al-Aqsa, and captured numerous people from the bani Israeel.

The second time, the bani Israeel reached their peak in terms of spreading mischief, was when they martyred Prophets Zakariyyah and Yahya alaihim as salaam. They also increased in their sinning. As a result, the Babylonians were set against them under the leadership of Bardos or Cordos. Similarly, at the time of the Prophet sal Allahu alaihi wa sallam, they persisted in their wrongdoing and as a result, they were expelled from the Arabian Peninsula. Then again, they were persecuted at the hands of Hitler in the 20th Century.

2. There is mention of the greatness of the Qur'an, the hasty nature of man, and the fact that every person's account is tied to him/her. Then 13 principles of communal life have been given. The truth of the matter is that a nation can only reach its pinnacle if it adheres to such moral principles:

- To worship Allah alone, without any partners.
- To treat parents with kindness.
- To give relatives, needy and travellers their rights.
- Not to be extravagant in spending.
- Not to be miserly.
- Not to kill children out of fear of poverty.
- Not to kill any living being.
- Not to misuse the wealth of the orphans.
- To fulfil the trusts.
- To give full measure.
- Not to pursue things of which you have no knowledge.
- Not to walk arrogantly on the earth.
- Not to associate partners with Allah.

We are being told that the mushrikeen would associate daughters to Allah. They would deny the life hereafter, and would say in astonishment, 'will we be resurrected after we become rotten bones?'

The mushrikeen would ask the Prophet sal Allahu alaihi wa sallam for the following miracles, before they would believe:

- a. Bring forth a fountain of water from the earth.
- b. Bring forth a garden of dates and grapes.
- c. Cause a part of the sky to fall upon us.
- d. Bring Allah and his angels in front of us so we may see them.
- e. Make a house of gold for yourself.
- f. Ascend into the sky and bring a written book.

Other than this, this surah mentions:

- i. The greatness and truth of the Qur'an, and the wisdom behind its piecemeal revelation, its miracles, and it being an honour for mankind.
- ii. The commandment of the night prayer (tahajjud) for the Prophet sal Allahu alaihi wa sallam.
- iii. The story of Musa and Firaun.

The surah ends with a great Ayat, regarding the Oneness of Allah:

"And say, "Praise to Allah, who has not taken a son and has had no partner in [His] dominion and has no [need of a] protector out of weakness; and glorify Him with [great] glorification."

Surah al-Kahf

This is a Makkan surah consisting of 110 ayaat. 'Kahf' refers to 'cave'.

There are many ahaadeeth regarding this surah and its importance. Imam Ahmad, Muslim and Nisai, have reported on the authority of Abu Darda radhi Allahu anhu: " Whoever, recites the last ten ayaat of this surah, then he would be protected from the Dajjal." The people of knowledge have said that it is sunnah to recite this surah on Friday, as the Prophet sal Allahu alaihi wa sallam said: " Whoever recites surah al Kahf on Friday, then the time between the two Fridays will be filled with light."

Surah al-Kahf contains three stories and three similes:

3 Stories:

The first story is about a few believers who the king Decius tried to force to worship idols. He would kill everyone who would reject his call. These young believers were offered money, positions and luxuries, and threatened to be killed. They preferred emaan to all this, and set off outside the town until they came to a cave, where they decided to take refuge. Upon entering the cave, Allah sent them to sleep for 309 years.

When they were woken up, they began to worry and sent one of them to fetch some food. This person was recognised by the local people in the market. The area was now ruled by a believing leader, and the people regarded these sleepers as their heroes.

Lesson: A believer should always give priority to preserving his emaan instead of worldly benefits.

The second story is about Musa and Khidr alaihim as salaam. When Musa found out that there was someone more knowledgable than he, he embarked on a journey to find him and seek knowledge. When he came to the sea shore he met Khidr, who allowed him to accompany him as long as he would not ask him any questions. Then three interesting incidences took place:

The first incident involved Khidr damaging a boat that allowed them on board free of charge. The second incident involved Khidr killing a young boy. While the third incident involved Khidr repairing a damaged wall for inhabitants of a town, that were not at all hospitable or welcoming. On all three occasions, Musa alaihis salaam could not remain silent and each time he asked, "Why have you done so?". Khidr replied by saying, "Had I not told you that you will not be able to remain silent if you accompany me?" He then explained why he had done what he had.

As far as the first incident, he explained that an unjust king would confiscate any new and good boats, so he damaged it to save the boat owner from losing his means of livelihood. He killed the young boy, because he would have been a trial for his parents, eventually leading them to disbelief. So Allah decided to replace him with a righteous, loving and obedient offspring. Finally, there was a secret treasure beneath the damaged wall, which belonged to two orphaned children from two righteous parents. If the wall was left without repair, the people would eventually find the treasure and deprive the orphans of their wealth.

Lesson: We learn that everything we observe or experience in our daily lives, e.g. a young death, loss of wealth, loss of business etc, all have great wisdoms behind them, which we do not comprehend. We are often too engrossed in the apparent universe, and forget about the hidden truths. This also rejects the materialistic mindset, which limits itself to the physical world.

The third story revolves around Dhul Qarnayn, which will be covered in Part 16 (inshaAllah).

3 Similes:

The first simile is about a person who owned very rich and fruit bearing orchards, and was very wealthy. As a result he had become boastful and proud, which led him to make great claims. He felt that this wealth would never end, and if there was a day of resurrection, then he would be granted these things there, too. His friend, who was a true believer, advises him not to raise the material means to the level of Allah and the fact that Allah is the cause and the giver of these abilities in the first place. But his vision was blinded by his indulgence and he did not take any heed, Allah then destroys his orchards and his wealth. He ends up regretful, saying, "Only if I had not associated partners with Allah" i.e. by raising the means to the level of Allah.

Lesson: This is 'shirk fil asbaab' i.e. associating partners with Allah in terms of relying on the means. We should believe that Allah is 'musabbab ul asbaab' i.e. He is the only Who brings about the means by His will. It should be noted that this does not mean that we should not take to any means and not make any effort. It is however, a form of shirk to think that material means are 'in themselves' able to do anything.

The second simile is mentioned by Allah as:

"And present to them the example of the life of this world, [its being] like rain which We send down from the sky, and the vegetation of the earth mingles with it and [then] it becomes dry remnants, scattered by the winds. And Allah is ever, over all things, Perfect in Ability." (Ayat 45).

This is observed in our daily lives in the form of sowing seeds, rain water irrigating the cultivation, the crops growing, being harvested, leaving the soil bare after being harvested, and then the process repeating itself.

Lesson: This shows us that the blessings in this world such as health, wealth, youth, life, livelihood, etc all come to an end as they are temporary. Only the foolish are deluded by these blessings. The only thing that is everlasting is a person's good deeds.

The third simile is given in the story of Adam alaihis salaam and Iblees, who refused to obey Allah due to his arrogance and pride. He thought he was superior to Adam alaihis salaam.

Lesson: We should obey Allah in all circumstances and not try and challenge His authority and wisdom, using our limited and defected logic and intellect.