

Surah al-Furqan

This is a Makkan surah consisting of 77 ayaat. It starts with mention of the greatness of the Quran, regarding which, the mushrikeen would put forward different objections. It then mentions the Prophet sal Allahu alaihi was salaam and the objection of the mushrikeen regarding his prophethood. They claimed that prophethood should not be given to a human, and if it were given to a human, then it should be given to a human who is wealthy and possesses a high status in society, instead of a man who is a poor orphan.

The mushrikeen would demand to see Allah or an angel, in order for them to believe. In reply Allah says:

"The day they see the angels - no good tidings will there be that day for the criminals, and [the angels] will say, "Prevented and inaccessible." (Ayat 22).

"And We will regard what they have done of deeds and make them as dust dispersed." (Ayat 23).

"And the Day the wrongdoer will bite on his hands [in regret] he will say, "Oh, I wish I had taken with the Messenger a way." (Ayat 28).

"Oh, woe to me! I wish I had not taken that one as a friend. He led me away from the remembrance after it had come to me. And ever is Satan, to man, a deserter." (Ayat 29).

On that day, the Prophet sal Allahu alaihi wa sallam will also complain:

"And the Messenger has said, "O my Lord, indeed my people have taken this Quran as [a thing] abandoned." (Ayat 30).

Imam Ibn al Qayyim rahimahullah says that 'abandoning the Quran' may take many forms:

- a. Not to listen to it, or believe in it.
- b. To believe in it and recite it, but to not act upon it.
- c. To not make it the final criteria and judge in any disputes.
- d. To not contemplate (tadab'bur) its message and meaning.
- e. To not seek the cure to the diseases of the heart, through it.

The mushrikeen also objected as to why the whole Quran is not revealed in one single episode, like the Torah and Injeel. There are many wisdoms behind the Qur'an being revealed in parts, over a period of 23 years:

- For it to be memorised and hence be preserved in the hearts and minds of people.
- For it to be understood properly.
- For its followers to act in accordance with its instructions in a progressive and gradual manner.

However, in this instance Allah has highlighted the main reason behind this 'piece-meal' approach to the revelation of the Quran as follows:

"And those who disbelieve say, "Why was the Quran not revealed to him all at once?" Thus [it is] that We may strengthen thereby your heart. And We have spaced it distinctly." (Ayat 32).

Similarly, if we recite, study, act upon, teach, and reflect on the Qur'an, 'bit-by-bit', then inshaAllah we can also hope that it will strengthen our hearts. (ameen).

Every intelligent person can appreciate that heavy rainfall for a short intense period can destroy crops and vegetation. In contrast, if the rain falls in a gradual manner, over a period of time, then it is fully absorbed by the soil and benefits the plants fully.

The surah then mentions the prophets Musa, Haron, Nuh, Hud, and Saleh alaihim us salaam, in order to console the Prophet sal Allahu alaihi wa sallam in light of the objections raised against him and his message. This is followed by some proofs of Allah's Oneness and Power.

The surah then highlights 12 characteristics of the true 'servants of the Most Gracious':

- Walk on the earth with humility.
- When the ignorant address them (harshly), they reply with words of peace.
- Spend part of the night prostrating and standing in front of their Lord.
- Ask Allah to save them from the hell fire.
- Spend in a balanced manner, being neither extravagant nor miserly.
- Do not invoke any other deity along with Allah.
- Do not kill a soul, except for just cause.
- Do not commit 'zina'.
- Do not testify or witness falsehood.
- Pass by futile activities with dignity, without indulging in them.
- When reminded of the verses of their Lord, they do not fall upon them as if they were deaf, dumb and blind.
- Pray to Allah: ""Our Lord, grant us from among our wives and offspring comfort to our eyes and make us an example for the righteous."

About such servants Allah promises:

"Those will be awarded the Chamber for what they patiently endured, and they will be received therein with greetings and [words of] peace." (Ayat 75).

Surah ash-Shu'araa

This is a Makkan surah consisting of 227 ayaat. It starts with the 'huroof muqath'ath' (broken letters) and as is the usual case, after these 'huroof muqath'aath', there is mention of the greatest favour of Allah on mankind i.e. the Quran.

The surah then mentions the attitude of the Prophet sal Allahu alaihi wa sallam and the fact that he was very concerned about the welfare of people, and would worry himself to death, regarding their misguidance. In contrast, the mushrikeen would make it their objective to oppose and reject everything they were invited to.

The surah then gives the stories of a number of prophets:

The Story of Prophet Musa alaihis salaam

The surah then mentions the story of Musa alaihis salaam in great detail. It gives an account of his conversation with Firaun and the challenge with the magicians. It then mentions Musa alaihis salaam's journey with his people and the drowning of Firaun and his army.

Lesson: Arrogance and pride are guarantors for destruction.

The Story of Prophet Ibraheem alaihis salaam

The second story is of Ibraheem alaihis salaam and the proofs that he presented to his people in order to prove the oneness of Allah:

- Allah is my Creator and Guide.
- He is the provider of sustenance.
- He is the One who cures every illness.
- He will cause the death of every soul, and He will bring them back to life.
- He is the One who can forgive sins.

The prophet Ibraheem alaihis salaam then also made 5 duaas. Which are an indication of his emaan and conviction:

- O Allah! Grant me knowledge and understanding.
- Make people mention me in a good way.
- Grant me a place in jannah.
- Forgive my father.
- Do not humiliate me in the hereafter.

Lesson: This story teaches us that we should always turn to Allah in every situation.

The Story of Nuh alaihis salaam

The third story is about Nuh alaihis salaam who invited his nation for over 950 years, but they did not respond. Hence, they were all drowned, except a very few who believed.

Lesson: Only those people are guided whom Allah wills.

The Story of Prophet Hud alaihis salaam

The fourth story about the Prophet Hud alaihis salaam who was sent to the nation of Aad. These people were very strong, lived very long lives, and were extremely wealthy. They had built unnecessary palaces, for show and pomp. They were invited to accept emaan, but they rejected it. As a result they received the punishment of Allah.

Lesson: Extravagance, show off, unnecessary construction of buildings and monuments, and arrogance always lead to destruction.

The Story of Saleh alaihis salaam

The fifth story regarding the nation of prophet Saleh alaihis salaam who were granted material resources, abundant provisions, and peace and harmony. They had an abundance of green pastures and fields. But, they did not thank Allah for His provisions. Ultimately they were destroyed by an earthquake.

Lesson: Ungratefulness leads to a nation's destruction.

The Story of Lut alaihis salaam

The sixth story mentions Lut alaihis salaam whose nation crossed all limits with regards to sin, indecency and desire-worship. They indulged in sins which no people had indulged in before them. They perform acts which even animals would not do. They rejected the admonition and reminders of Lut alaihis salaam and as a result they were annihilated through a storm of stones that fell from the sky.

Lesson: People who transgress the limits in order to satisfy their desires, meet with destruction.

The Story of Shuaib alaihis salaam

The seventh story is of Shuaib alaihis salaam, whose nations were granted fruitful orchards, dense vegetations, and fountains of sweet water. They disobeyed Allah and would neglect the rights of their fellow humans, and would be unfair in their dealings. Despite many warnings and reminders, they continued to persist in their wrong doings. They experienced extremely hot weather for a few days, and when the clouds appeared they gathered under them to find some comfort. The clouds started to rain fire and the earth started to quake, and in no time they were burnt to cinders.

Lesson: People who do not fulfil people's rights and are unfair in their dealings, have to meet with destruction.

Surah an-Naml

This is a Makkan surah consisting of 93 ayaat. The exceptional feature of this surah is that it is one of three suras which are present in the Quran in the order in which they were revealed i.e. Shu'araa, Naml and Qasas. This also starts with mentioning the greatness of the book; it stresses that this book is guidance for people with emaan. The surah then mentions overviews of the stories of prophets Musa, Saleh and Lut. These are then followed by detailed accounts of the stories of prophets Daud and Sulaiman alaihim as salaam. Allah had granted them control over jinns, humans and birds, and they could understand the speech of the birds.

The main points are as follows:

1. "And gathered for Solomon were his soldiers of the jinn and men and birds, and they were [marching] in rows. Until, when they came upon the valley of the ants, an ant said, "O ants, enter your dwellings that you not be crushed by Solomon and his soldiers while they perceive not. So [Solomon] smiled, amused at her speech." (Ayat 17-19)
2. The prophet Sulaiman had a hoopoe who gave him news of a queen named Saba who worshipped the sun. Sulaiman wrote her a letter and invited her to his courtyard. Queen Saba was very proud of her material strength and resources, however when she saw the superiority of Sulaiman's palace and his advanced technology she realised her real position. She accepted the truth and embraced Islam.

Following this story, there is brief mention of the stories of prophets Saleh and Lut.

3. The people of Saleh alaihis salaam became divided into the believers and the kuffar as a result of his invitation. Among the kuffar, were nine leaders who made a pact that they would kill the prophet Saleh. However Allah's punishment overtook them and there remained no one to remember them.

4. The nation of Lut alaihis salaam were totally blind to the fact that they were committing such heinous crimes. They would in fact consider the people who would advise them against such crimes, as criminals and would consider the proper who were immersed in this crime as clever and honourable. As a result, they were eventually targetted by the wrath of Allah and they were first, turned upside down and then they were showered with stones from the sky. This attitude is very similar to today, because when a group of people enjoin what is right and forbid what is evil, they are labelled as narrow minded or backward, while people who openly sin are considered to be broadminded and enlightened.