

## Surah al-A'raaf (continued)

The juzz continues with the story of the prophet Shuaib alaihis salaam. When he tried to advise his people to stop their wrong practices and mischief, the arrogant leaders warned him that "We will surely evict you, O Shuaib, and those who have believed with you from our city, or you must return to our religion." (Ayat 89). He told them to do what they want, and that our trust and reliance is in Allah.

Allah then mentions his sunnah of warning the people by sending a prophet and trying to convince them, by testing them with poverty and distress, but when they do not pay any heed, they are suddenly overcome and seized by a torment, unaware.

The Prophet sal Allahu alaihi wa sallam is again being consoled by saying:

"Those cities - We relate to you, [O Muhammad], some of their news. And certainly did their messengers come to them with clear proofs, but they were not to believe in that which they had denied before. Thus does Allah seal over the hearts of the disbelievers." (Ayat 102).

Out of the six prophets that have been mentioned in this surah, the story of Musa alaihis salaam has been discussed at great length. The people of Firaun i.e. the Coptics had enslaved the Bani Israeel. The Bani Israeel had come to Egypt at a time when they had been devastated by severe famine. They resided in Egypt during the era of prophet Yusuf alaihis salaam and increased in number, to the extent that they became the second largest people in Egypt. Numerous Firaun kings subjugated them and persecuted them throughout time. Musa alaihis salaam wanted to free the Bani Israeel from this bondage and return them to the Holy Land, as stated:

"I have come to you with clear evidence from your Lord, so send with me the Children of Israel." (Ayat 105).

Firaun demanded Musa alaihis salaam to show him proof of his prophethood. Musa alaihis salaam showed him the two famous miracles of his staff transforming into a snake and his brightly radiant hand. Firaun was overcome with fear and anxiety, and after consulting with his ministers, they set up a competition between Musa alaihis salaam and the best magicians of the land. Upon realising the fact that Musa alaihis salaam was not a magician, the magicians submitted to him and his call and accepted his call, despite threats of persecution and death from Firaun. (SubhanAllah! If Allah gives a person the gift of steadfastness, then nothing can uproot a person.)

The people of Firaun were then shown many signs, in the form of the flood, locusts, lice, frogs and blood. Every time a sign would come, they would promise to believe, if it was removed from them. However, each time it was removed they went back to their old ways. Finally, Allah commanded Musa alaihis salaam to take the Bani Israeel and leave, and drowned Firaun and his army, to be a sign and a lesson for all times to come.

Musa alaihis salaam then went to speak to Allah on mount Toor for 40 days, where Allah gave him the Torah. In his absence, the Bani Israeel were deceived by Samuri and started to worship the calf. They were a weak nation, and would easily slip at every step. They refused from entering the holy land, broke the rule of the day of the sabbath, and failed to obey the commandments.

There is mention of the Bani Israeel breaking the promises that they made with Allah and Musa alaihis salaam. There is also mention of the covenant that Allah took from each soul regarding the fact that Allah is our Lord. However, the majority of humanity failed to fulfill this covenant.

The other main areas covered in the remaining part of this surah are as follows:

1. The story of Bal'aam bin Baa'oora who had been given knowledge and position, but he sold this for some worldly gain. The lesson here is that knowledge without action and good character is of no use.
2. The disbelievers have been compared to cattle, as they too, do not use their eyes, ears, and senses etc. to accept emaan. (Ayat 179).
3. The disbelievers are given respite, for a certain time, however there comes a time when they are seized in the midst of their disbelief and rebellion. This teaches us that man is sometimes deceived and carries on sinning. (Ayat 182).
4. The knowledge of the day of judgement is with Allah alone. (Ayat 187).
5. Allah commands the Prophet sal Allahu alaihi wa sallam to pardon and command people to do good deeds and to turn away from the ignorant. These are the characteristics needed for a da'ee.

Just as the surah started with the mention of the greatness of the Quran, it also ends with instructions on how to benefit from it and honour it, by remaining silent and listening/contemplating its ayaat when it is recited. When a person keeps in mind the greatness of this book, and listens to it attentively, contemplates its ayaat, the result is that the heart is affected, the skin starts to shiver and the eyes start to flow with tears. (May Allah grant us these qualities - aameen ).

### Surah Aal-Anfaal

This is a Madinan surah, consisting of 65 ayaat. Like other Madinan surahs it also deals with the commandments, with a particular focus on the commandments related to war and the battlefield. This surah was revealed after the Battle of Badr (2 AH), which is the first battle in the history of Islam. In this battle, everyone witnessed the 'Help of Allah' with their own eyes, by which a small number of unequipped Muslims struck a humiliating defeat to a much larger and well equipped enemy.

The surah begins with mention of the dispute regarding the distribution of the spoils of war (Anfaal). Then there is mention of the qualities of the true believers:

1. Their hearts tremble when Allah is mentioned to them.
2. Their emaan increases when the ayaat of the Quran are recited to them.
3. They rely on their Lord.
4. They establish prayer.
5. They spend out of which they have been provided.

The point to emphasise here is that Allah states that the owners of these qualities are 'mo'minoon huqq' i.e. real and true believers, about whose belief there is no doubt.

Another point worth mentioning is that this term "mo'minoon huqq" appears once again at the end of the surah (Ayat 74) where some further qualities of the true believers are given. (O Allah! Make us from amongst the true believers! Aameen!)

Another noteworthy point regarding this surah is that the mominoon have been addressed as 'O you who believe' on 6 occasions to guide them to be successful:

1. Do not turn your backs in flight. (Ayat 15).
2. Obey Allah and His Messenger and do not turn from him while you hear [his order]. (Ayat 20).
3. Respond to Allah and to the Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life. (Ayat 24).
4. Do not betray Allah and the Messenger or betray your trusts. (Ayat 27).
5. If you fear Allah, He will grant you a criterion and will remove from you your misdeeds and forgive you. (Ayat 29).
6. "O you who have believed, when you encounter a company [from the enemy forces], stand firm and remember Allah much that you may be successful. And obey Allah and His Messenger, and do not dispute and [thus] lose courage and [then] your strength would depart; and be patient". (Ayat 45 – 46).

Any group of people who has these qualities and follow these instructions are guaranteed success in this life and the hereafter. (Allahumma rabba ja'alnaa munhum - Ameen!).