

Introduction to Surat Yaasin

Learning Objectives:

- To provide an introduction to Surat Yaasin
- To provide an overview of the major themes in this surah
- To become acquainted with some of the many benefits of reciting this surah

In this academic year, Surat Yaasin will be the surah of the year for Class 9. We will attempt to briefly study the meaning of its verses, as well as memorise this surah by the end of the academic year, inshaAllah.

The commentators (*mufasssiran*) of the Qur'an are unanimous in their opinion that Surat Yaasin is a Makkan surah. It contains 83 verses and takes its name from its first verse – "Yaa-sin". This surah is also commonly known as the "heart of the Qur'an". This is based upon a hadith from the Holy Prophet (S):

"Everything has a heart (or a core), and the heart of the Qur'an is Yaasin."

In another hadith, the 6th Holy Imam – Imam al-Sadiq (A), says:

"Everything has a heart (or a core), and the heart of the Qur'an is Yaasin. Whoever recites Surat Yaasin before sunset, during the whole day he will be protected; and whoever recites it at night before sleeping, one thousand angels will protect him from any accursed Satan and any impediment."

The comparison of Surat Yaasin with the heart in this narration conveys the importance of this surah. One of the possible reasons this chapter has been referred to as the "heart of the Qur'an" is because it addresses the major themes of the entire Qur'an – teachings regarding Allah (SWT), prophethood and the Hereafter:

1. The surah begins with an address to the Holy Prophet (S) that clarifies both his mission and the nature of revelation (**verses 1 – 12**).
2. This is followed by a parable regarding those who reject prophets (**verses 13-30**).
3. This leads into a discussion of the Resurrection and the signs of it in the world around us (**verses 31-44**).
4. This is followed by responses to various objections commonly raised by disbelievers and the consequences of them (**verses 45-52**).
5. This then leads into a discussion of the contrasting ends of the believers and the disbelievers (**verses 53-68**), which concludes with another reflection on the nature of the Holy Prophet (S)'s prophethood (**verses 69-70**).
6. The final section returns to a discussions of the signs of the created order that serve to inform one of Allah (SWT)'s creative Power and ability to resurrect (**verses 71-81**) and concludes with an affirmation of Allah (SWT)'s Omnipotence (**verses 82-83**).

Seen as the heart of the Qur'an, this surah is one of the few longer chapters of the Qur'an that is oft-recited and also memorised by many Muslim.

In another famous hadith, the Holy Prophet (S) says:

"Recite Yaasin over your dead."

This surah is thus recited for those who are close to death, those who have just died, and at the graves of the loved ones. It is also recited for those who are sick, for another hadith states:

"Verily in the Qur'an there is a surah that intercedes through its recitation and forgives through its being heard – indeed, that is Surat Yaasin."

Likewise, the Holy Prophet (S) has said:

"Whoever enters a cemetery and recites Surat Yaasin, the burden of the people buried in the cemetery will be reduced."

Surat Yaasin verses 1 -2

Learning objectives:

- To provide an explanation of the various possible meanings of Yaa=Sin
- To provide an explanation of the first two verses of Surat Yaasin

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

يس

Yaa-Sin [1]

وَالْقُرْآنِ الْحَكِيمِ

(I swear) by the Quran full of wisdom, [2]

إِنَّكَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ

you are indeed one of the messengers, [3]

عَلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ

on a straight path. [4]

Verse 1:

The commentators of the Qur'an have explained the first verse of this chapter, "Yaa-Sin", in one of three ways:

1) These two letters are from the "Disjointed Letters" (*al-huruf al-muqatta'at*) found in the beginning of 29 chapters of the Qur'an. Some of these include: "Alif, Lam, Mim" (Surat Baqarah) and "Kaaf, Haa, Yaa, Ayn, Saad" (Surat Maryam).

Many different speculations have been made by scholars as to the meaning of these letters, but it suffices for this lesson, to understand these letters as a secret communication between Allah (SWT) and his chosen servants, the Ma'sumin (A), which we have no knowledge about.

2) Yaa=Sin is an abbreviation of the statement "Oh human being" (*Yaa Insaan*). In this interpretation, the *yaa* is the Arabic vocative particle "Oh", used in many Qur'anic verses like "Oh you who believe" (*yaa ayyuhal ladheena aamanu*), and the *sin* is an abbreviation for *insaan* = "human being".

3) Yaa=Sin is one of the names of the Holy Prophet (S), whose exact meaning is unknown to us. Hence, the sentence flows with the following verses of the chapter – "Yaa-Sin, by the wise Qur'an, you are indeed one of the messengers"

In one hadith attributed to Imam Ali (A), we are told that the Holy Prophet (S) has been referred to by seven different names in the Qur'an, Yaa-Sin being one of them. Hence, the Imams are sometimes referred to as "Aal Yaasin" (the progeny of Yaasin). The rest of the names of the Holy Prophet (S) in the Qur'an are:

1) **Muhammad** [3:144; 33:40; 47:2; 48:29]. Here's one example:

مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَا أَحَدٍ مِّن رِّجَالِكُمْ وَلَكِن رَّسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ ۗ وَكَانَ
اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا

Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the seal of the Prophets. Allah has full knowledge of everything. [33:40]

2) Ahmad [61:6]:

وَإِذْ قَالَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ مُّصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ
يَدَيَّ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ وَمُبَشِّرًا بِرَسُولٍ يَأْتِي مِن بَعْدِي اسْمُهُ أَحْمَدُ ۗ فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ
بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ قَالُوا هَذَا سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ

And call to mind when Jesus, son of Mary, said: "O Children of Israel, I am Allah's Messenger to you, I verify the Torah which has come before me, and I give you the glad tiding of a Messenger who shall come after me, his name being Ahmad." Yet when he came to them with Clear Signs they said: "This is sheer trickery." [61:6]

3) TaHa [20:1]:

طه ، مَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ لِتَشْقَىٰ

Ta Ha! We did not reveal the Qur'an to you to cause you distress; [20:1-2]

4) Muzzammil [73:1]:

يَا أَيُّهَا الْمُزَّمِّلُ

O you wrapped up in your mantle! [73:1]

5) Muddaththir [74:1]:

يَا أَيُّهَا الْمُدَّثِّرُ

O you wrapped up in your mantle! [74:1]

6) Abdullah [72:19]:

وَأَنَّهُ لَمَّا قَامَ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ يَدْعُوهُ كَادُوا يَكُونُونَ عَلَيْهِ لِبَدًا

When the servant of Allah rose to pray to Him, they almost crowded around him. [72:19]

Verse 2:

وَالْقُرْآنِ الْحَكِيمِ

(I swear) by the Quran full of wisdom

Why does Allah (SWT) swear by various things in the Qur'an?

Of course, Allah (SWT) does not need to take any oath, but the oaths of the Qur'an have always two important usages. The first is an emphasis on the concerning matter, and the second is the statement of the greatness of the thing by which is sworn, for nobody takes an oath to the worthless things.

In other words, a very important message is about to be revealed and Allah (SWT) wants us to humble ourselves, empty our minds and hearts of all other concerns and pay full attention to what is about to be revealed.

Why does Allah (SWT) describe the Qur'an as "Hakeem" in this verse as opposed to the many other descriptions of the Qur'an used in other verses?

It is interesting that the characteristic of the Qur'an used here by Allah (SWT) is "Hakeem" (wise), because this description is usually used for someone who is alive and possesses the rare and extremely valuable quality of being insightful. It is as if Allah (SWT) wants us to recognise the Qur'an as a wise and living leader, which has the ability to open the doors of wisdom to human beings, as well as guide us along the fastest and safest path to success in this world and the Hereafter. As mentioned in another verse of the Qur'an:

إِنَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ يَهْدِي لِلَّتِي هِيَ أَقْوَمُ وَيُبَشِّرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ الَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ
الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ أَجْرًا كَبِيرًا

Surely this Quran guides to that which is most upright and gives good news to the believers who do good that they shall have a great reward. [17:9]

Further explanation of this verse, as well as at following verses will inshaAllah be studied in the next class.

HOMEWORK:

- 1) Complete the reflections you started in class today.
- 2) Memorise the first 2 verses of Surat Yaasin studied today.

Surat Yaasin verses 2 - 5

Learning objectives:

- To provide an explanation for the first 5 verses of Surat Yaasin
- To memorise verses 1-5
- To explain the stages of the revelation of the Qur'an

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

يس ، وَالْقُرْآنِ الْحَكِيمِ ،

Yaa-Sin (1), (I swear) by the Quran full of wisdom (2),

إِنَّكَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ، عَلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ

you are indeed one of the messengers (3), on a straight path. (4)

تَنْزِيلَ الْعَزِيزِ الرَّحِيمِ

[It is a scripture] sent down gradually from the All-mighty, the All-merciful (5)

In order to understand these verses, we need to understand the context of their revelation. These verses were revealed in the Makkah period of the Holy Prophet (S)'s life. When the Holy Prophet declared his prophethood and his message reached the masses, the response from the majority of the Quraysh was disbelief and rejection. Due to his love and concern for his community, the Holy Prophet (S) was deeply hurt by this rejection. He would really like for his people to find success in this life and achieve salvation, but the people were not willing to accept his message. Allah (SWT) communicates with his beloved servant in these verses to reassure him that he is indeed from the divinely appointed messengers and that he is fulfilling his responsibilities of conveying the divine message perfectly well.

It is interesting that Allah (SWT) swears by the Qur'an to argue for the messengership of the Holy Prophet (S). Normally, in order to convince someone that what we are saying is truthful, we swear by those things that the people we are addressing regard as significant. Allah (SWT) swears by the Qur'an to affirm the messengership of the prophet, despite the fact that the Quraysh did not believe in the Qur'an in the first place. Why do you think this is the case?

One of the reasons for this is because the Qur'an itself is the greatest miracle of the Prophet and the best proof for the truthfulness of his claim. When the Quraysh would hear the Qur'an being recited, they would be astonished by the eloquence and deep meanings of the verses. The unique thing about this miracle of the Prophet, as compared to the miracles of previous prophets, is that it is available to us even today as a living proof for the messengership of the Holy Prophet (S).

Moving on, in verse 5, Allah (SWT) refers to the revelation of the Qur'an as "*tanzil*", which refers to the gradual revelation of the Qur'an to the Holy Prophet (S) over the 23 years of his prophethood. In other places in the Qur'an, such as in Surat al-Qadr (below), the word "*anzala*" is used to describe revelation:

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ

Surely We revealed it on the grand night. [97:1]

The word “anzala” comes from the word “inzaal”, which refers to the revelation of the entire Qur’an in one go. These 2 terms (i.e. *tanzil* and *inzaal*) refer to the various stages of the revelation of the Qur’an, which we will now briefly discuss.

The Qur’anic reality in its greatest form is contained in the “guarded tablet” (*al-lawh al-mahfuz*):

بَلْ هُوَ قُرْآنٌ مَّجِيدٌ ، فِي لَوْحٍ مَّحْفُوظٍ

Indeed it is a glorious Quran, In a guarded tablet. [85:21-2]

At this lofty level of the Qur’an, it is not in the form of words and verses. It contains only the deepest meanings of the Qur’an in an abstract form. Little is known about the nature of the tablet. Some traditions mention that this is the tablet upon which all the things that will happen until the end of time are written.

At the second level of revelation, the endless meanings of the Qur’an that is contained in the “guarded tablet” is diluted to a secondary level of reality, known as the “abode of immortality” (*al-bayt al-ma’mur*). Reference is made to the *lawh al-mahfuz* and *al-bayt al-ma’mur* in the following verses:

وَالطُّورِ ، وَكِتَابٍ مَّسْطُورٍ ، فِي رَقٍّ مَّنشُورٍ ، وَالْبَيْتِ الْمَعْمُورِ

By the Mount [Sinai], by the Book inscribed on an unrolled parchment; by the House greatly frequented; [52:1-4]

According to traditions of the Ma’sumin (A), *al-bayt al-ma’mur* is an earthly heaven situated directly above the Ka’bah, where thousands of angels come every day to perform *tawaaf*.

In the third stage of revelation, the meanings of the entire Qur’an was revealed to the heart of the Holy Prophet (S) on the “night of power” (*laylat al-qadr*) in the month of Ramadhan:

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ

Surely We revealed it on the grand night. [97:1]

Finally, in the fourth stage of revelation, the entire Qur’an was gradually revealed to the Holy Prophet (S) over the 23 years of his prophethood. It is at this level of revelation where the lofty meanings of the Qur’an in the *lawh al-mahfuz* take on the form of words and verses in the Arabic language. This level of the Qur’an is what we have today and is a diluted form of the original Qur’an, such that mankind is able to access and comprehend the meanings. It is this form of revelation that verse 5 of Surat Yaasin is referring to.

When the disbelievers questioned the Holy Prophet (S) why the Qur’an was not revealed all in one go, the following verse was revealed:

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الْقُرْآنُ جُمْلَةً وَاحِدَةً ۚ كَذَلِكَ لِنُثَبِّتَ بِهِ
فُؤَادَكَ ۚ وَرَتَّلْنَاهُ تَرْتِيلًا

The faithless say, 'Why has not the Quran been sent down to him all at once?' So it was, that We may strengthen your heart with it, and We have revealed it [to you in gradual], well-arranged stages. [25:32]

Many reasons have been suggested by scholars for the benefits of this gradual revelation of the Qur'an over 23 years. Below are some of these reasons:

1. To give the Muslims constant guidance in step with the situations they faced
2. To facilitate ease in recording, memorisation and understanding of the Qur'an by the companions of the Prophet (S)
3. To prove the messengership of the Prophet (S) by providing responses to the objectives raised by disbelievers
4. As a testament to the miracle of the Qur'an, in that despite having over 6000 verses revealed over 23 years, there are no contractions in its content. As the Qur'an itself highlights:

أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ ۚ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا
كَثِيرًا

Do they not then meditate on the Quran? And if it were from any other than Allah, they would have found in it many a discrepancy. [4:82]

5. To present the teachings of Islam to the newly converted Muslims in a gradual manner, such that they could understand and practice without being over-burdened.

HOMEWORK:

- 1) Complete the reflections you started in class today.
- 2) Memorise Surat Yaasin up to verse 5.