

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 مَّنْشُورٍ ، 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.