



NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIAN

SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

COURSE CODE: ISL 213

COURSE TITLE: TEXTUAL STUDY OF THE QUR'AN

**COURSE
GUIDE**

**ISL 213
TEXTUAL STUDY OF THE *QUR'ĀN***

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INTRODUCTION

ISL 213 Textual Study of the *Qur'ān* 1, is a two-credit unit course for undergraduate students in Islamic Studies. This course textbook is developed against the background that the *Qur'ān* is a Book of guidance for every facet of human life. This course-guide is an overview of the entire course. You will also read about how it is structured out as well as its requirements.

COURSE AIMS

The aim of this course is to help you understand the *tajwīd* recitation, translation, exegeses and lessons of the *sūrahs* between *al'Alā* and *al-Humazah*. You will, in the course of this study be exposed to the following:

- i. Some *tajwīd* rules.
- ii. Background to the *sūrahs* of focus.
- iii. Reasons for revelation of some *sūrahs* or *āyahs*.
- iv. Detailed exegeses of the *sūrahs*.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

To achieve the above aims, overall objectives are set for ISL 213. This is exclusive of the specific objectives, which are stated for every unit. You are passionately advised to read them before venturing into the subject matters as it will prepare your mind for better grasping of the message.

It is expected that by the time you complete this course you will be able to:

- a) Identify and apply some *tajwīd* rules in the *sūrahs*.
- b) Discuss the causes of revelation of relevant verses and chapters.
- c) Explain the backgrounds to the *sūrahs*.
- d) Give detail exegesis of each *sūrah*.
- e) Enumerate the lessons in each *sūrah*.
- f) Apply the lessons to life situations.

WORKING THROUGH THIS COURSE

For you to complete this course, you must read and understand all the study units and all the related materials. You will be required to submit written assignments at the end of each unit for the purpose of assessment. You are also going to write a final examination at the end of the course.

COURSE MATERIALS

The following are the major materials you need for this course:

- i. Course guide.
- ii. Study Units.
- iii. Assignment File.
- iv. Relevant Textbooks including the ones listed in each unit.

STUDY UNITS

There are 14 units divided into three modules for this course. They are:

Module 1

- Unit 1 *Sūrah al-A`lā*
- Unit 2 *Sūrah al-Ghāshiyah*
- Unit 3 *Sūrah al-Fajr*
- Unit 4 *Sūrah al-Balad*

Module 2

- Unit 1 *Sūrah a`sh-Shams*
- Unit 2 *Sūrah al-Layl*
- Unit 3 *Sūrah a -`Duhā,*
- Unit 4 *Sūrah ash-Sharh*
- Unit 5 *Sūrah at `t-Tīn*

Module 3

- Unit 1 *Sūrahs al-`Alaq and al-Qadr*
- Unit 2 *Sūrah al-Bayyinah*
- Unit 3 *Sūrahs az-Zalzalah and al-Ādiyāt*
- Unit 4 *Sūrahs al-Qāriah and at-Takāthur*
- Unit 5 *Sūrahs al-`Aşr and al-Humazah*

TEXTBOOKS AND REFERENCES

Some books have been recommended for the course, they will assist you a lot if you purchase some of them for further reading. These among many others include:

Maududī, Abul A`lā (1979). *The Meaning of the Qur`ān*. Lahore, Pakistan: Islamic Publications Ltd.

- Qutb, S. (1981). *In the Shade of the Qur'ān* .(trans) London: MWH London Publishers, pp.150-156.
- Aṣ-Ṣābūnī, Muh. Ali (1402 A.H. – 1981 C.E.). Beirut, Daru `l-Qurāni `l-Karim.
- Khan, M. M.& M. T. al-Hilali (1985). *The Noble Qur'ān*, . Riyadh: Darussalam Publishers
- Ali, A. Y. (1991). *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'ān*, USA: Amana Corporation.
- Al-Marāghī, A. M. (2001). *Tafsīr al-Marāghī*, Beirut: Dār al-Fikr. vol.10, pp.303-309.
- Ibn Kathīr, Ismā'īl (2007) *Tafsīru `l-Qur'ān* (Abridged), Egypt: Dar Al-Manārah, pp.2499-2502.
- Jimoh, L. (2003). *Tajweed Made Easy*, Lagos: Al-Hayyul Qayyum Islamic Publishers.pp.16-19.

ASSESSMENT FILE

You will be given an assessment file and a marking scheme. The assessment file will contain details of the works to be submitted to your tutor for marking. You will be evaluated in two ways: the tutor marked assignments and the written examination. Your final marks depend on what you score in these two. You must submit your assignment to your tutor for formal assessment which necessarily followed the stipulated schedule and deadline. Your submitted work for assessment will be 30% of your total score.

TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS (TMAS)

You are expected to submit specified number of 'TMAs'. Each unit of this course has a TMA. You will be assessed on only four but the best three will represent your 30% grading. On completion of any assignment, you must send it with a TMA to your tutor. Ensure that the assignment reaches your tutor on or before the deadline for submissions. In the event of any logistics for incompleteness of any work to time, contact your tutor immediately for possible extension; for this shall not be granted after the due date unless for exceptional situations.

FINAL EXAMINATION AND GRADING

The final examination will last three hours. You will be tested on all aspects of the course. Endeavour to read the units again before the exam. 70% is the score for the final examination out of the total course grading. The questions will be similar to the ones you have treated in the TMAs.

COURSE MARKING SCHEME

This table represents the layout for the actual course mark:

Assessment	Marks
Best three Assignments	30%
Final Examination	70%
Total	100%

COURSE OVERVIEW AND PRESENTATION SCHEDULE

The dates for submission of all assignment will be communicated to you. You will also be told the date of completing the study units and dates for examinations.

Unit	Title of Work	Weeks Activity	Assignments
Module 1			
Unit 1	<i>Sūrah al-‘Alā</i>	Week 1	Assignment 1
Unit 2	<i>Sūrah al-Ghāshiyah</i>	Week 2	Assignment 2
Unit 3	<i>Sūrah al-Fajr</i>	Week 3	Assignment 3
Unit 4	<i>Sūrah al-Balad</i>	Week 4	Assignment 4
Module 2			
Unit 1	<i>Sūrah ash-Shams</i>	Week 5	Assignment 1
Unit 2	<i>Sūrah al-Layl</i>	Week 6	Assignment 2
Unit 3	<i>Sūrah a -`Duḥā</i>	Week 7	Assignment 3
Unit 4	<i>Sūrah ash-Sharh</i>	Week 8	Assignment 4
Unit 5	<i>Sūrah at `t-Tīn</i>	Week 9	Assignments
Module 3			
Unit 1	<i>Sūrahs al-‘Alaq and al-Qadr</i>	Week 10	Assignment 1
Unit 2	<i>Sūrah al-Bayyinah</i>	Week 11	Assignment 2
Unit 3	<i>Tafseer of sūrahs az-Zilzalah and al-‘Ādiyāt</i>	Week 12	Assignment 3
Unit 4	<i>Sūrahs al-Qāri‘ah and at-Takāthur</i>	Week 13	Assignment 4

Unit 5	<i>Sūrah al-‘Aşr and al-Humazah</i>	Week 14	Assignment 5
Revision 1			

Examination 1

Total

15

HOW TO GET THE MOST FROM THIS COURSE

In distance learning, the study units replace the university lecturer. The advantage is that you can read and work through the course materials at your pace, and at a time and place that suits you best. Think of it as reading the lecture instead of listening to a lecturer. Just as a lecturer might give you in-class exercise, your Study Units provide exercises for you to do at appropriate times.

Each of the study units has common features which are designed to aid your learning. The first feature is an introduction to the subject matter of the unit and how a particular unit is integrated with other units and the course as a whole. Next is a set of learning objectives. These objectives let you know what you should be able to do by the time you have completed the unit. You should use these objectives to guide your study.

When you have finished the unit, you should go back and check whether you have achieved the objectives. Self-assessment exercises are interspersed throughout each study unit and answers are given at the end of the course. These exercises are designed to help you recall what you have studied and to evaluate your learning by yourself. You should do each Self-assessment exercise as you come to it in the study unit. The summary at the end of each unit also helps you to recall all the main topics discussed in the main content of each unit. There are also tutor-marked questions at the end of each unit. Working on these questions will help you to achieve the objectives of the unit and prepare you for the assignments which you will submit and the final examination.

It should take you about three hours to complete a study unit, the exercises and assignments. When you have completed the first study unit take note of how long it took you and use this information to draw up a timetable to guide your study for the rest of your course. The wide margins on the left and right side of the pages of your course book are meant for you to make notes of main ideas or key points at which you can use when revising the course. If you make use of all these features, you will significantly increase your chances of passing the course.

COURSE DELIVERY

As an open and distance learner, you learn through several ways. You learn when you interact with the content in your course material in the same way as a student interacts with the teacher in a conventional institution. You also learn when you are guided through the course; however you are not taught the course. Instead, your course material is your teacher, and as such you will not be able to get answers to any questions which may arise from your study of the material. It is for this reason that, in addition to the course material which you have received, the delivery of this course is supported by tutorial, facilitation, and counselling support services. Although these services are not compulsory, you are encouraged to take maximum advantage of them.

TUTORIAL SESSIONS

The total number of tutorial hours for this course is eight hours. Tutorial sessions form a part of your learning process as you have an opportunity to receive face to face contact with your tutorial facilitator and to receive answers to questions or clarifications which you may have. Also you may contact your tutorial facilitator by phone or email.

On your part, you will be expected to prepare ahead of time by studying the relevant study units, write your questions so as to gain maximum benefit from tutorial sessions. Information about the location and time schedule for facilitation will be available at your study centre.

Tutorial sessions are a flexible arrangement between you and your tutorial facilitator. You will need to contact your study centre to arrange the time schedule for the sessions. You will also need to obtain your tutorial facilitator's phone number and email address.

Tutorial sessions are optional however; the benefits of participating in them provide you a forum for interaction and peer group discussions which will minimise the isolation you may experience as a distance learner.

FACILITATION

Facilitation is learning that takes place both within and outside of tutorial sessions. Your tutorial facilitator guides your learning by doing the following:

- provide answers to your questions during tutorial sessions, on phone or by email;
- coordinate group discussions;

- provide feedback on your assignments;
- pose questions to confirm learning outcomes;
- coordinate, mark and record your assignment/examination score; and
- monitor your progress.

The language of instruction for this course is English. The course material is available in print or CD formats, and also on the university website. On your part, you will be expected to prepare ahead of time by studying the relevant study units, write your questions so as to gain maximum benefit from facilitation. Information about the location and time schedule for facilitation will be available at your study centre. Time of facilitation is a flexible arrangement between you and your tutorial facilitator. You should contact your tutorial facilitator if:

- you do not understand any part of the Study Units.
- you have difficulty with the Self Assessment Exercises.
- you have a question or a problem with an assignment, with your tutorial facilitator's comments on an assignment or with the grading of an assignment.

COUNSELLING

Counselling forms a part of your learning because it is provided to make your learning experience easier. Counselling is available to you at two levels, academic and personal counselling. Student counsellors are available at the study centre to provide guidance for personal issues that may affect your studies. Your study centre manager and tutorial facilitators can assist you with questions on academic matters such as course materials, facilitation, grades and so on. Make sure that you have the phone numbers and email addresses of your study centre and the various individuals.

ASSESSMENT

There are three components of assessment for this course: self-assessment exercises and assignments at the end of each study unit; the tutor-marked assignments; and a written examination. In doing these assignments, you are expected to use the information gathered during your study of the course. Below are detailed explanations on how to do each assignment.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISES (SAES)

There are self-assessment exercises spread out through your course material. You should attempt each exercise immediately after reading the section that precedes it. Possible answers to the exercises are provided at the end of the course book, however, you should check the answers ONLY AFTER you must have attempted the exercises. The exercises are for you to evaluate your learning; they are not to be submitted. There are also questions spread through each study unit. You are required to attempt these questions after you have read a study unit. Again, the questions are to help you assess your knowledge of the contents of the unit. You are not required to submit the answers for SAEs.

GUIDELINES FOR WRITING TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. On the cover page of your assignment, write the course code and title, assignment number (TMA 1, TMA 2..), and date of submission, your name and matriculation number. It should look like this:

Course	Code	_____	Course	Title
_____			Tutor-Marked Assignment	_____
of			Submission_____	Date
_____			Name	_____
_____			Matriculation Number	_____
2. You should endeavour to be concise and to the point in your answers. Your answer should be based on your course material, further readings and experience. However, do not copy from any of these materials. If you do, you will be penalized. Remember to give relevant examples and illustrations.
3. Use ruled foolscap-sized paper for writing answers. Make and keep a copy of your assignments.
4. Your answers should be hand written by you. Leave a margin of about 1.5 inches of the left side and about 5 lines before the answer to the next question for your tutorial facilitator's comments.
5. When you have completed each assignment, make sure that each assignment reaches your tutorial facilitator on or before the deadline. If for any reason you cannot complete your work on time, contact your study centre manager and tutorial facilitator before the assignment is due to discuss the possibility of an extension. Extensions will not be granted after the due date unless under exceptional circumstances.

FINAL EXAMINATION AND GRADING

The final examination for ISL 213 will be of two hours duration, and will carry 70% of the total course grade. The examination will consist of questions which reflect the kinds of Self-Assessment Exercises and questions in the Tutor-Marked Assignments which you have previously encountered. All areas of the course will be assessed. You should use the time between finishing the last unit and taking the examination to revise the entire course. You will find it useful to review your answers to self-assessment exercises and tutor-marked assignments before the examination.

For you to be eligible to sit for the final examinations, you must have done the following:

1. You should have submitted all the four tutor-marked assignments for the course.
2. You should have registered to sit for the examination. The deadline for examination registration will be available at your study centre. Failure to submit your assignments or to register for the examination (even if you sit for the examination) means that you will not have a score for the course.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, **ISL 213: Textual Study of the *Qur'ān*** I provides you with the exegeses of 18 *sūrahs* upon which you are able to understand their broad meaning during recitation, prayers and apply accordingly while dealing with fellow men or any phenomenon. It is the aim of the course to expose you to the detail exegeses of these *sūrahs*. On its completion, you will definitely be able to explain their backgrounds and causes of revelation. You will also be able to read them while applying some simple *tajwīd* rules. Without any doubt, you will be able to discuss the themes and explain the content of each of the *sūrah* and even correlate their messages. In addition, you will be able to identify the features of Meccan *sūrahs* as evident in this segment. Most importantly, you will be able to apply their lessons to the society with respect to good human relationship and the concern for the hereafter.

SUMMARY

All the features of this course guide have been designed to facilitate your learning in order that you achieve the aims and objectives of the course. They include the aims and objectives, course summary, course overview, self-assessment exercises and study questions. You should

ensure that you make maximum use of them in your study to achieve maximum results.

Have a pleasant study and successful outcome in your examination.

**MAIN
COURSE**

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MODULE 1

Unit 1	Preliminary <i>Tajwīd</i> and <i>Sūrah al-A‘lā</i>
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UNIT 1 PRELIMINARY TAJWĪD AND SŪRAH AL-A‘LĀ

CONTENTS

1.0	Introduction
2.0	Objectives
3.0	Main Content
3.1	<i>Tajwīd</i> Case
3.2	Text and Translation
3.3	Commentary
4.0	Conclusion
5.0	Summary
6.0	Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0	References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit is designed to teach you some preliminary issues relating to *Tajwīd* and the accurate reading of *Sūrah al-A‘lā*. Likewise, you will learn the meaning of the *Sūrah* and be exposed to brief commentaries on it. The significance of the *Sūrah* cannot be over-emphasised. This will be clearer to you as we make progress. Therefore let us proceed.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- highlight the rules relating to ta ‘awwudh, basmalah, pursing on ha
- read *Sūrah al-A‘lā* correctly and recite it from memory
- translate *Sūrah al-A‘lā* into idiomatic English
- comment on *Sūrah al-A‘lā*
- highlight the significance of *Sūrah al-A‘lā* perfectly.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 *Tajwīd* Cases

Virtues of Learning and Teaching the Glorious Qur'ān

There are many virtues in learning and teaching the Glorious *Qur'ān*; and Allah has promised abundant reward to those who recite it.

(i) In one of his traditions, Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) says:

The best among you is one who learned to read the *Qur'ān* and taught others.

(ii) He is reported as saying in another tradition:

! "#\$% &' (% -
0_#*&/3 456 !!#)*+ , - ./01 2 &'

Learn *Qur'ān* and recite it. Indeed an example of a person who learns how to read the *Qur'ān*, recites it, and acts upon it, is like a bag full of musk, the fragrance of which spreads in the entire house.

Those are just two out of many examples of the virtues of learning and recitation of the *Qur'ān*. In addition we all know that learning to read at least a portion of it to be recited during *Ṣalāt* is *farḥān* 'ain is obligatory for every Muslim man and woman.

Definition of *Tajwīd*

The literal meaning of the word *Tajwīd* is betterment, decoration or perfection of an act. The skill and the rules whose application makes the perfect pronunciation of the Holy *Qur'ān* possible is the art of *Tajwīd* (783 9). This becomes possible in the terminology of the Phonetics of the Glorious *Qur'ān* through recitation of every letter of the Holy *Qur'ān* from its point of articulation, with its attributes: such as elevation (7: ; <=), depression (7>#6 <=) softness (7?), heaviness (7 @6), and other rules of phonetics such as clear pronunciation (74#ABC) assimilation (7#DE -c) change/ conversion (71;C) and suppressed pronunciation (.7:#6 C)

The Holy Prophet (ﷺ) has enjoined us to recite the Holy *Qur'ān* with *Tajwīd* and in a pleasing tone. A hadith related to him says:

This imparts beauty to the recitation and enhances its appeal. It must be remembered that one must not commit excesses in attempting to beautify the recitation of the Holy *Qur'ān*. Tone should always be subservient to the rules of *Tajwīd*, and not become difficult and unnatural. Mere pleasing tone does not constitute acceptable reading (*Qirā'ah*). Devoid of *Tajwīd*, it becomes singing and chanting, which is forbidden.

Seeking Refuge and Beginning in the Name of Allah MN# <=O)
(P+L)

Allah (SWT) has instructed:

And when you recite the *Qur'ān* seek refuge in Allah from *shaytān*, the accused. Nahl 16:98.

2 _#ST U#!Q <=#% _R\$N (%)

So anyone intending to read or recite ayahs (verses) from the *Qur'ān* should begin by saying : 2 _#ST U#!N (I seek refuge in Allah from *shaytān*, the accursed devil) whether starting from the beginning of a Surah or from any other point. Normally it is not said aloud except in circles of learning. If one is interrupted during reading by some necessity or speech not pertaining to *Qur'ānic* study, he should repeat the seeking of refuge in Allah before resuming recitation. After seeking refuge in Allah from *shaytān*, the reader, when beginning a new *sūrah*, utters: V V W +! except in *Sūrat a`-t-Tawbah* which does not begin with *Basmallah*. When starting from the middle of a *sūrah*, he may choose to recite it or not as he pleases, except in cases where the *āyah* he begins with contains some description of Allah (as in *āyah* 47 of *Sūrah Fussilat*) which should not be connected to the name of *shaytān*. After the *Basmallah* where appropriate, the actual recitation begins.

Rule of Lām

Lām (>) is normally a lightly articulated letter, the only exception being when it occurs in the divine name W If the divine name is preceded by a *kasrah* () or *yā sākinah* (), the *lām* is pronounced lightly (with *tarqīq*), as in U#!N... w = - -

U8/\$

But if it is preceded by *fathah* (), *dhammah* () or *wāw sākinah* () or the reader begins with the divine name, the *lām* is pronounced with *tafkhīm*, as in:

(W>#) (W8L) Z4[R+4Y W).

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISES 1

Try to write the texts of *at-Ta'awwudh* and *Basmallah*. Give their meaning and importance.

3.2 Text and Translation of *Sūrah al-A 'lā* (Chapter 87)

V V W + !

X\$^ Q {3}K8A%48^ Q {2}K+% ?^ Q {1}X
X6 @3#A93Y C W:#a# b C {6} X+F ;% ` F= {5}K V\$:#'D9% {4}
#ALF 9<3 {10} XT @3 Q= {9} KGQ c6Y_ C GQ% {8} K+ `G+Y {7}
] % \$ 8 {13} X /3 b#A % R3 b ÷ {12} KL* 4#FXd3^ Q {11} Xa [
X!\$7M i {16} #Yg8M# / _ ÷h&! {15} Xd% G!4=N {14} Xf
{18} X [j/gdk 6Ql _ C {17}
{19} X= ! C j/I

Chapter of the Most High (Revealed at Mecca)

In the name of Allah the Beneficent, the Merciful

- 1) Praise the name of your Lord, the Most High
- 2) Who has created, then disposed
- 3) Who has measured and granted guidance
- 4) Who brought forth the pasturage
- 5) Then turned it to russet stubble
- 6) By degrees shall We teach you (O Muhammad) so you shall not forget
- 7) Except as Allah wills: for He knows the manifest and what is hidden
- 8) And we shall ease thy way unto the state of ease
- 9) Therefore give admonition in case the admonition profits the (the hearer)
- 10) He will heed who fears
- 11) But the most unfortunate will flout it
- 12) He who will flung to the great fire
- 13) Wherein he will neither die nor live
- 14) He is successful who purifies himself
- 15) And remembers the name of his Lord, so prays

- 16) But ye prefer the life of this world
- 17) Although the Hereafter is better and more lasting
- 18) Lo! This is in the former scrolls
- 19) The Books of Abraham and Moses

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

- i) Recite *Sūratu 'l- A 'lā* from memory.
- ii) Attempt transcribing the text of the *Sūrah*.
- iii) Attempt a translation of the *Sūrah* into idiomatic English.

3.3 Commentary

In a very lucid and instructive tone, the *sūrah* opens by enjoining the Prophet and by implication all his followers, to glorify the name of the Lord. This means the sanctity of Allah's name should not be associated with any of His creatures in form of partners or sonship or things other than the way and manner He has described Himself.

Imam Ahmad reports that when the first verse of this *Sūrah* was revealed, the Prophet said, 'Say it in your prostration when you pray.'

Sayyid Qutb also reports that: "whenever the Prophet read this *Sūrah*, he used to stop promptly after the first verse to say: '*Subhāna Rabbiyal A 'lā*' (Glory be to my Lord, the Most High)."

The reason why the Lord should be glorified is immediately mentioned too. He is the most High in addition to being the *Rabbuka* (your Lord) which connotes three things:

- i. that Allah gives man life
- ii. He provides man's sustenance
- iii. He sustains humanity through procreation.

As the One Who does all these may not possibly be adequately compensated in any way one can only continue to appreciate and glorify Him.

The second and third verses add that Allah perfects, proportions and guides all His creations. All creations no matter how they look like have their nature and form suitably made so by Allah out of His wisdom. He however singles out Man to have been created in the best of form (Q95:4)

This is an indirect invitation for man to reflect over the creation - the heavenly bodies, insects, birds, animals and others. They all exist and live harmoniously in the universe. The wonders in animal world or other creatures for that matter can never end but because there is one Lord who creates, they remain as signs of the perfect Creator.

As the Lord who must be glorified, He also predestined what becomes of every creature. This predestination cannot be changed by any mortal. The wisdom behind this is beyond man's understanding. Qadar's is thus made to be part of basic element of faith in Islam.

Besides pre-decree, Allah also guides His creature to the right path.

Based on how other creatures beside man have been preordained, Allah guides them where applicable on how to sustain their existence and play their role in the universe. The life of immigration birds and honey-bee workers are good example. The guidance of man because of his special creation and vicegerency role is attached to divine revelations and models of the Prophet. In these revelations, man is shown the two paths of life – hell and paradise. Actions which lead to either are clearly stated. This is in addition to his special faculties of sight, hearing, reasoning and the like which are given to him to be able to identify truth from falsehood.

It is also part of His mercy and guidance that He brings forth all kinds of vegetations and crops for animals and men to avail of them. You will see this in how each animal is able to identify which green pasture is edible to it. Thereafter this pasture becomes dark stubble. The underlying message in these last two verses is the law of growth and decay. All creations, animals, plants, minerals and man are subjected to this law but the higher destiny of man makes him accountable for his deeds even after death or decay. You are to therefore see your existence beyond this world of green pastures and sweetness. Your life span will soon expire like the green plant becoming dark. Therefore, make hay while the sun shines.

Considering the role of Muhammad and his position as the final messenger and while also recalling what happened to previous scriptures by way of interpolation and adulteration, Allah promises He will reveal the Qur'ān to him, even though he is unlettered, but he will be able to recite and never forget except as He wills. Hitherto, whenever revelation comes to him, he was keen to capture it in his memory that he would hasten up to repeat after angel Jibiri. This he was doing because he thinks it was his responsibility to commit it into memory but Allah assures him that it is for Him to do that. This will be so done that he will never forget after memorisation. In this context, we are to realise the fact

that Allah alone has the knowledge of the manifest and the hidden and the wisdom behind them, He may decree that some things be forgotten and that will still fall within His perfect plan. It is even a mercy of Allah that "...we should forget some things of the past, lest our minds become confused and our development is retarded."

While explaining the eighth verse, Ibn Kathīr says "O Muhammad! We (Allah) will make doing the righteous deeds and statements easy for you, and that for you we will legislate law which is easy, tolerant, straight and just, wherein there is no crookedness, ambiguity or hardship."

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

The directive to glorify Allah negates polytheism, discuss.

Verses 9-15 (Obligation of Admonition)

The Prophet having been enjoined to glorify God for having made him to receive and preserve the message, he is directed to admonish people. This is the second instruction in this *Sūrah* around which its entire message revolves. The first tends to prepare the recipient to exemplify the message before he disseminates. The essence of admonition or warning is for the hearers to realise and glorify their most High Lord.

A condition is however attached to carrying out admonition (*tadhkīr*). It states 'in case the admonition profits'. Ibn Kathīr's comment in this wise is that, " this instruction shows the fact that knowledge must be esteemed highly as not to be exposed to those who would not appreciate it properly or those who are not worthy of it."

In Islam, the message of Allah must be disseminated to all human beings so that they will not have excuse on the Day of Judgment and as a concern for brotherhood. As there will be those who will accept and others who will turn deaf ears, these classes of people are identified in the next two verses. The first group is described as the God-fearing while the other is declared unfortunate because he turns away from the message of his Lord.

The one who distances himself from the true message is described as *al-Ashqā*. This means the most unfortunate and wretched. The consequence of this action is raised in the 12th and 13th verses. The fellow will not be consigned to just ordinary fire but a great one. The climax of this disaster is that he will not die therein which might have given him respite. His non-death will also not give him any ease and he will be subjected to all sorts of humiliations.

Conversely, those who distanced themselves from destructive vices like sin, polytheism, pride, arrogance and all that can conflict with the true glorification of Allah are confirmed as having prospered. The peak of which is that they will not enter hell fire. They will be rewarded with the pleasure of their Lord. In this world also, they will have peace of mind and comprehend the proper contexts of all things. Moreover, it is also part of the qualities of this prosperous group that they continuously glorify the name of Allah and observe their obligatory prayer regularly.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

Why is the task of admonition compulsory and what are the consequences of heeding to it or otherwise?

Verses 16 – 19 (Vanity of the World)

In the preceding verse, Allah mentions the actions which culminate in the success of the God fearing. In the sixteenth verse, preference for the life of this world is identified as a cause of wretchedness. As a merciful Lord who is not only omniscient but also a Guide, He tries, in the seventeenth verse, to exhort that the life in the Hereafter is not only better but lasting. In the case of this world, people live, suffer and die. There is nothing permanent therein; whereas the reward of Allah in the Hereafter is enduring.

The conclusion of this *sūrah* as drawn by the last two verses unfolds that the message of Islam is not new as it is also contained in the early scriptures like that of Ibrāhīm and Musa who were among the Prophets with firm resolution (*Ulu l-Azm*). They belong to strategic periods in the history of humanity and chain of prophethood. The mention of Prophet Ibrahim represents the central link in the lineage of Prophets. He is the father of Ismā‘īl and Ishaq and the duo represent the ancestral trio of the great religions of the world – Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Ibrahim is also referred to as the father of monotheism. Masa and Muhammad are his progenies through Ishaq and Ismā‘īl respectively.

Prophet Musa assumes leadership and leads a nation. So, he is mentioned as a case study to represent the middle period of facing serious oppositions in discharging his task. Prophet Ibrāhīm represents the first period when the actual seed of monotheism is nurtured with resoluteness and unprecedented sacrifice, which is universally commemorated by the Muslims every 10th of *Dhul-hijjah*. Prophet Muhammad, on his own part, represents the third and the last stage. Those two names are mentioned to establish the continuity of the message of Allah, the unity of their basics vis-à-vis monotheism,

righteousness and vanity of the world. On the other hand, it is a summon on all that believe in Prophets Ibrahim and Musa to also believe in Muhammad as his mission is a perfection of what has been introduced to the world earlier. The mention of these noble names also shows continuity in the mission of the prophets.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 5

How does the mention of the preference for this world correlate with the mention of the scriptures of Ibrahim and Musa?

4.0 CONCLUSION

Al-A'la is chapter 87 of the Holy *Qur'an*. It is a Meccan period chapter consisting of 19 verses. It links with *a'-ariq* (Q.86) in respect of the creation of man and plants. The mention of man's creation is however more explicit in *Surah a'-ariq* than in *al-'Ala* while that of the plant is more explicit in *al-A'la* than in *a'-ariq*. In addition, it is reported that whenever *salātu Jum'ah* and the *Eid* prayers coincided, the Prophet used to recite *Sūrah al-'Alā* and *al-Ghāshiyah* for the two Raka'hs.

The central theme of the *Sūrah* is the obligation of glorifying Allah in all respects. There are seven *Sūrahs* which open with this subject of '*Tasbīh*' (glorification) namely *al-Isrā'*, *al-Hadīd*, *al-Hashr*, *as-Saff*, *al-Juma'ah*, *at-Taghābun* and *al-'Ala*. It is only this chapter *al-'Alā* which opens in an imperative form. The title of the *Sūrah* therefore which is *al-'A'la* tends to emphasise the reason why Allah should be glorified; He is the Most High. The *Sūrah* thereafter proceeds to enumerate the powers and actions of Allah as it affects the whole universe. This includes creation, proportioning, determining, guidance, teaching, instructions and the like. Preference for the present life is pointed to as the cause of man's taking no heed of the warnings given to him. It is explained that since the present life is ephemeral and the life to come better in kind and duration, man should follow the path of the righteous and give preference to the life hereafter.

5.0 SUMMARY

At the onset in this unit, the rules of *tajwīd* relating to *ta'awwudh*, *basmallah* and *lafzu 'l-jalālah* were highlighted. The text and translation of the *Sūrah* under study, *al-'Ala*, is then presented. In the commentary, it is shown that the central theme of the chapter is the obligation of glorifying Allah in all respect. Creation, pre-determination, guidance, instruction and the like are enumerated as basis for Allah's right to the glorification. The concluding discourse is invitation of man to giving preference to seeking the bliss of the more enduring

life after death instead of the ephemeral and transient pleasure of the present life.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- i. Write the text and translation of *Sūrah al'Alā*.
- ii. Highlight the major components of the the contents of *Sūrah al'Alā*.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 2 SŪRAH AL-GHĀSHIYAH

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 *Tajwīd* Case
 - 3.2 Text and Translation
 - 3.3 Commentary
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 4.0 Summary
- 5.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 6.0 References/Further Reading

2.0 INTRODUCTION

The belief in judgement day is one of the six articles of faith in Islam. Due to its prominent position it has been given different names of which the title of this chapter is one. This unit will start by teaching you the mode of stopping on *tā marbūah* in Qur'anic recitation and other issues related to it. This case has been chosen because it is a very conspicuous phenomenon at the beginning of this *Sūrah al-Ghāshiyah*.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- utilise the *tajwīd* rule relating to stopping on *tā marbūah*
- recite *Sūrah al-Ghāshiyah* correctly from memory
- render *Sūrah al-Ghāshiyah* into idiomatic English
- comment on *Sūrah al-Ghāshiyah*
- list the significance of the Surah perfectly.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 *Tajwīd* Case

When stopping on *tā marbūah*, all vowels and *tanwīn* (including that of *fathah*) are omitted and the letter is pronounced as *hā* with *sukūn* ()

e. g. 7P a#0Q m372

)P #V)4#YXd 7PL I#Y 7P #

This does not apply, however, to *tā mabsūah* () which is pronounced as t with *sukūn*, e.g. R4G R48*Y cTY cV
SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Practice the *tajwīd* rule of stopping on *tā marbūāh* when reciting the *Qur'ān*.

3.2 Text and Translation

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V V W + !

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8V`#\$&l

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{11})P D b#A %p+ b{10}0P #9}7P q4#A + {8}7P
7P%6d u 4#Y{14} 7P{13} 7P{12} 7P3 4# 2 7

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{18} c %4 j:#+X C{17} c j & ! OX C _vF3 ;%\${16}7P'Lgk !4H
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{24}L [1Q W!GQ%{23}6X b C{22}0 Sd ! A
{26} \$ "# "{25}

The Overwhelming Event

Revealed in Mecca

In the name of Allah the Beneficent the Merciful:

- 1) Has the story come unto thee of the Overwhelming?
- 2) On that Day (many) faces will be down cast,
- 3) Toiling, weary,
- 4) Being roasted in blazing fire,
- 5) Drinking from a boiling spring.
- 6) No food for them save bitter thorn fruit
- 7) Which does not nourish nor relieve from hunger .
- 8) On that Day, other faces will be joyful,
- 9) Glad for their effort past,
- 10) In a high garden
- 11) Where they hear no idle speech
- 12) Wherein is a gushing spring,
- 13) Wherein are couches raised
- 14) And goblets set at hand
- 15) And cushions set in rows.
- 16) And silken carpets spread.
- 17) Will they not look at the camels how they are created?
- 18) And the heaven, how it is raised?
- 19) And the hills, how they are set up?

- 20 And the earth, how it is spread?
 21 Remind them, for thou art but a reminder,
 22 Thou are not at all a warder over them,
 23 But whoso is, averse and disbelieves,
 24 Allah will punish him with severest punishment.
 25 Lo! Unto Us is their return
 26 And Ours is their reckoning

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

- i. Attempt recitation of *Sūrah al-Ghāshiyah* from memory.
- ii. Transcribe the Arabic text of *Sūrah al-Ghāshiyah* in a note book.

3.3 Commentary

Verses 1-7 (Description of the People of Hell)

The subject matter of this *Sūrah* is introduced in the first verse with *hal*. It is an interrogative particle which is only used when the issue in question is not ambiguous.

Hence, it is a Quranic style which aims at stressing the reality of the message and raising the curiosity of the hearer about the certainty of *al-ghāshiyah*. The majority opinion understands this to mean the day of reckoning with its overwhelming fears and threats. However, Ibn Jubayr and Ibn Ka‘b holds the view that it refers to the fire that will overwhelm the face of unbelievers. Another view is that it is the fire that will overwhelm all creatures. It is also said that it refers to the second blowing of trumpet before resurrection as it will overwhelm all creatures. There is no discordance in these shades of opinions as they all refer to the frightening situation of the hereafter.

The story of the first group of people is presented clearly. “*Wujūhun*” which means some faces are used to classify people and their fate on this overwhelming day. This face is employed to represent the personality of men. The narration between verses two and seven is all about the group that will suffer on this day.

On this day, the sign of hard labour will be clear on their faces. This also depicts the vanity of all the laborious strivings the unbelievers have made in the world which are not accepted by Allah because they are not accompanied with faith in Him and His Messenger. Consequently and in addition to the humiliation and weariness, they will be cast into the blazing fire as a result of the evil they have committed in the world. As if the torture of burning in hell is not terrible enough, they will still be

made to suffer from within their body. Verses five and six describe the kind of drink and food they will be served.

Meanwhile, they will be made to suffer hunger. This will force them into demanding for food. The only food they will be served is *Dharri'* which neither nourishes nor satisfies hunger; and which is a bitter thorny plant that chokes the throat and will have to be swallowed with hot water.

The *Dharri'* according to Ibn Kathīr is a poisonous thorny plant. This drink or food is explained in human terms so as to grasp an iota of its perception but the actual meanings lies with Allah while the practical experience resides with the wicked who will experience it.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

How does this *sūrah* describe the fate of the inmate of hell fire?

Verses 8-16 (Description of the People of Paradise)

There is a contrast between this section and the previous one. This section shows the kind of end which righteous people will enjoy. As against the hard labour and fatigue which evil people will suffer, virtuous people will be pleased with their efforts and be relaxed. Contrary to the terrible home and food of the wicked, the righteous will dwell in paradise and enjoy endlessly.

This will be one out of many rewards for struggling for the cause of Allah. Appearing before Allah and seeing that their earthly efforts for His sake have not been in vain, they will be pleased and happy with series of rewards which Allah has put in place for them.

They will be ushered into high garden of paradise which the *Qur'ān* has described and several other details given in the *hadīth*. The *sūrah* mentions six verses between eleven and sixteen. The first is that they will be in a serene environment where they will never hear any falsehood, vain talk, vulgar language, shouting, abuses, curses, noises and the like. This is because they will be in the company of their Lord and His beloved.

Secondly, they shall be provided with a running fountain. This stands in sharp contrast to the boiling hot spring of evil doers. The flowing or movement of the spring cools the mind and makes it calm. The eyes which also sees it is soothed and human feelings is deeply touched. The central ideal therefore is that their faces will be joyful and in a perfect state of relaxation and comfort.

These inmates of Paradise will have raised couches or thrones upon which they will sit comfortably and enjoying the pleasure of Allah. Al-Marāghī says, when a believer sits on it he will be able to see all that Allah has given him and other people in paradise. In his own exegesis, Ibn Kathīr adds that these “lofty thrones are soft, delightly and thickly brocaded, upon which there will be seated wide eyed and beautiful maidens as in special occasions scenario when kings, special guests, celebrities used to be conspicuously seated on reserved and highly decorated seats.

In contrast to the inmates of hell who will be subjected to drink from boiling spring (Q88:5), believers will be readily and promptly provided with goblets around the bubbling spring for their use. They will also have cushions or pillows that are well arranged with one end touching the other such that if they wish they may sit, recline or do both simultaneously. The floor of their stay will be decorated with rich carpets that are well spread out.

This setting speaks in the language that can easily be understood based on how tyrants, corrupt leaders and the buoyant enjoy these things in their palaces, abodes or five star hotels. Ibn Abbās makes us understand that “There is nothing of the Hereafter in this world except by name.”

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Enumerate nine ways by which verses eight to 16 says the people of paradise will be honoured?

Verses 17-20 (Call to Reflection)

In this segment, Allah calls on the doubtful polemics to reflect over four things which are visible to them. These are the creation of the camel, raising of the skies, fixing of mountains and the spreading of the earth. These things, “are full of meaning, high design, and the goodness of Allah to man”. No man has ever claimed ownership of these things.

They are asked to first think about camel since their immediate users then were the Arabs in the desert. Their life and travels without camel known as the ship of the desert could only be imagined. The structure of this animal is wonderful. It has great power and strength but still obedient and lenient when heavily-burdened to carry the weak rider and transport his belongings to long distances. Besides, man eats its flesh and drinks its milk for nutritional purposes. Its skin and hair are also used for clothes and dwellings. Its shape is specially adapted to its

functions and it is the only animal that can endure hunger, thirst, hard work and poor conditions for days or months.

Secondly, they are called upon to look at how the majestic Lord raises the sky above them which serves as a kind of canopy for man. Man from time immemorial has been wondering about the planets. The sun, the moon and other planetary bodies determine day, night, seasons and other happenings. They are well arranged with each one moving in its orbit. This scenery of beauty is another thing which man appreciates. The sky which covers every where in the world has no visible pillar. The food and warmth which man enjoys has relationship with the sun in the sky. These days, man is already exploiting the use of solar energy. If man cannot deny all these, as being the handiworks of the wise, powerful and magnificent Creator, how could he then deny that this same Allah can provide enjoyment for the Righteous ones and disasters for the wicked in the Hereafter?

The mountain is the third issue which man is asked to contemplate upon. It is in many ways useful to man “in storing water, in moderating climate...” Standing beside mountain, you will appear so small and thus humbled; standing on it will detach you from the world and draw you nearer to God. Man is hereby called upon to reflect over the might which firmly fixes the mountain. He should be able to realise that the power that does this can even do more when it comes to other matters.

Finally, man is called upon to think about the earth. Out of the wisdom of Allah, He spreads it out in plains, valleys, hills, deserts and makes man to adapt to living on it. It is here he builds his high mansions. Rivers and seas also flow for his use. He has always been carrying out his activities on the earth having no other place to do them properly. Man is thus called upon to reflect over these so that he will appreciate the matters of the hereafter.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

Highlight the four objects of reflection of this segment and discuss their significance in the life of man.

Verses 21-26 (Task of *Tadhkīr*)

This last segment is aimed at explaining the mission and terms of reference to the Prophet. Expectedly, as it has always happened in history, there will be those who will deny the truth and not heed the warning of punishment in the hereafter. So, the Prophet or any other preacher is told that his task is to simply admonish, using wisdom and

best preaching. The 22nd verse explicitly says that he is not appointed as an overseer over the heart of man. In Q10:99, it says:

And had your Lord willed, those on earth would have believed, all of them together. So, will you (O Muhammad) then compel mankind, until they become believers?

This is an important message for all preachers that the heart of men lies in the hand of Allah. So, if some people do not heed their admonitions, they cannot compel or use force against them. It is natural to expect immediate acceptance of admonition but Allah may have His plan for such recipients.

In the next two verses, Allah mentioned that those who turn their back to His message and even contest the truth will be severely punished in the hereafter. This, according to al-Marāghī, may also include their wealth becoming booties in the cause of *Jihād* in the event of their taking the path of war by hindering the cause of truth.

The closing remarks of the *Sūrah* are very decisive and assertive. On one hand, it consoles the Prophet. It gives him a sort of relief from all the pains and persecution he might have suffered in the hands of his opponents. On the other hand, it warns that the deniers or unbelievers have no escape route when they return to Allah. It also shows that this return to Allah, which shall be after resurrection, will be for reckoning. It is then the two groups of people identified in the *Sūrah* will be rewarded accordingly.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 5

A Preacher is only a reminder, discuss.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Al-Ghashiyah is chapter 88 of the Holy *Qur'ān*. It was revealed in Mecca and contains 26 verses. The *sūrah* took its name from the word *Ghāshiyah* which is one of the names of day of resurrection and meaning the overwhelming event. While *al-A'lā* gives a brief on the final ends of the believer and unbeliever in paradise and hell fire, *al-Ghāshiyah* gives some details. Another correlation is the similar directive to give admonition in Q87:9 and Q88:21. On its central theme of the overwhelming phenomenon of the judgement day, the *Sūrah* describes two groups of people and their rewards i.e. the evil ones who will be humiliated by drinking and eating food of hell which neither satisfies hunger nor nourishes the body. In contrast, varieties of enjoyment are preserved for the believers in paradise and it raises their

hopes in Allah that their efforts will not be in vain even if they do not enjoy anything of the ephemeral pleasures of this world. As a way of warning man about the reality of this day, he is called upon to contemplate on four visible things which should make him realise the might of Allah on this great day. The *Sūrah* closes with the inevitability of accountability.

5.0 SUMMARY

At the beginning in this unit, the *tajwīd* rule of stopping on *tā' marbūah* is dealt with. The text and translation of the *Sūrah* under study is then presented. In the commentary, it is shown that the chapter describes the overwhelming event of resurrection and gives a description of the people of hell, and a description of people of paradise. The concluding discourse is on the importance of reflection over natural phenomena and the role of the preacher.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

How does the call to reflect over the four signs mentioned relate to the message of the *Sūrah*.

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UNIT 3 SŪRATU `L-FAJR

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 *Tajwīd* Case
 - 3.2 Text and Translation
 - 3.3 Commentary
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 7.0 Summary
- 8.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 9.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The *Sūrah al-Fajr* which you are going to study in this Unit opens with oaths, in the first four verses. This is one of the features of Meccan *Sūrahs* as you will see in Q.91 (*Wa`sh-Shams*), Q.92 (*Wa`l-Layl*), Q.93 (*Wa` -Duhā*) and Q.103 (*Wa`l-`Aşr*). Allah makes oaths by His marvelous creations to strengthen an argument or to dispel doubts in the mind of the listeners. Although, making an oath requires that you held its object in respect, the oath taken by Allah does not in any way mean that some things are above Him. He swears at times with Himself. In instances where He swears by his Prophet, it is just for the people to know his worth before Him. Oaths as used in the *Qur`ān* always have its substantive statements which are like the responses to why the oath is made. Its use for any object shows that the object so sworn by is of great importance and must be taken seriously.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- state the significance of oath in the *Qur`ān*
- narrate the story of the perished nations of Ad, Thamūd and Pharaohs
- explain the nature of man's trial
- portray the scenes of the last day.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Text and Translation

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Chapter of the Dawn Time

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent the Merciful:

- 1) By the Dawn
- 2) And the Ten Nights,
- 3) And the Even and the Odd,
- 4) And the Night when it departs.
- 5) There surely is an oath for the thinking one.
- 6) Do You not consider how thy Lord dealt with (the tribe of) 'Ād,
- 7) Of the (city) of Iram, with lofty pillars,
- 8) The like of which was not created in the lands;
- 9) And with (the tribe of) Thamūd, who clove the rocks in the valley;
- 10) And with Pharaoh, lord of Stakes?
- 11) Who (all) were rebellious (to Allah) in the lands,
- 12) And multiplied iniquity therein?
- 13) Therefore thy Lord poured on them the disaster of His punishment.
- 14) Lo! Thy Lord is ever watchful.
- 15) As for man, whenever his Lord tries him by honouring him, and is gracious unto him, he says: My Lord has honoured me.
- 16) But whenever He tries him by straitening his means of life, he says: My Lord humiliated me,
- 17) Nay, but ye (for your past) honour not the orphan
- 18) And urge not on the feeding of the poor,
- 19) And ye devour heritages with devouring greed

- 20) And love wealth with inordinate love.
- 21) Nay, but when the earth is ground to atoms, grinding, grinding,
- 22) And thy Lord shall come with angels, rank on rank,
- 23) And hell is brought near that Day; on that Day man will remember, but how will the remembrance (then avail him)?
- 24) He will say: Ah, would that I had sent before me (some provision) for my life!
- 25) None punishes as He will punish on that Day!
- 26) None binds as He then will bind.
- 27) But ah! Thou soul at peace!
- 28) Return unto thy Lord, content in His good pleasure!
- 29) Enter thou among My bondmen!
- 30) Enter thou My Garden!

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

- i. Attempt recitation of *Sūratu 'l-Fajr* from memory
- ii. Transcribe the Arabic text of *Sūratu 'l-Fajr* in a note book

3.2 Commentary

This *Sūrah* is given its first word as its name. It is one of the earliest *Sūrahs* to be revealed probably within the first ten in chronological order.

It opens with oaths by the Dawn, the Ten Nights, The Even and The Odd in the creation and the night when its darkness departs because of their significance. It implores these oaths and invites attention to history of some past nations to enforce the Faith in the Hereafter.

Fajr time is significant in mystery and in showing the power and glory of the Creator. It is the time when the first rays of light are succeeding the darkness of the night. It may also be interpreted as the emerging Islam indicating the dawn of new era. *Ṣalātu 'l-Fajr* has been fixed for the worship of Allah, the Creator during this period.

The ten Nights are those of the last days of Ramadan in which *Laylatu 'l-Qadr* is usually observed and there is increase in devotional exercises by the Faithful or the Ten Days of *Dhu 'l-Hijjah* in which occur Hajj rites and rituals of *Eidu 'l-Adhā*.

The even and the odd are also important. Numerically, they follow in regular succession. Every even number is a pair of odd ones. All things go in pairs 36:36. In the animal world pairs are but two individuals, and yet each is a complement of the other. Both abstract and concrete things are often understood in contrast with their opposites. In spiritual matters,

we must understand this life better with reference to the Hereafter. We must not disbelieve in the Hereafter simply because we cannot conceive of anything different from our present life.

The significance of the night cannot also be over-emphasised. After the activities, hustle and bustle of the day-light, the darkness of the night falls and people naturally take recourse to their resting abodes until the night starts departing again at dawn.

“The ten nights” (*layālin ‘ashrin*) is the second phenomenon Allah swears by. This has been interpreted severally. Some say it refers to the first ten days of the month of *Dhul-Hijjah*. There is another explanation which says they are in *Muharram*; another says they are the last ten days of Ramadan. Ibn Kathīr quotes from *Sahīh al-Bukhari* on the authority of Ibn Abbas that the Prophet said: “There are no days in which righteous deeds are more beloved to Allah than these ten days. They enquired, “Not even fighting in the cause of Allah, except for a man who goes out for *Jihād* with his own self and wealth, and he does not return with any of that.”

And of everything we have created pairs, that you may remember (the grace of Allah) (Q 51 : 49) In a *hadīth* reported by at-Tirmidhī, the Prophet said: “Some prayers are of even numbers and some are odd.” In another narration, the Prophet is reported to have said: “Allah is one and He loves oddity’. Some prayers also have odd number of *rak‘ahs*; these include *witr* and *maghrib*. This might be the reason why it is enjoined in Islamic supplications and even actions that one always makes odd. We see this in the shroud for the dead, recitation of glorifications after *Salāt*, etc. Specifically, however, in a *hadīth* recorded by Imām Ahmad, the Prophet said: “odd is the day of ‘Arafah while even is that of sacrifice.” If this is taken, it will mean swearing by the valuable day of the ninth day of *Dhul-Hijjah* on which ‘Arafah falls while the tenth is the day of slaughtering. In the case of ‘Arafah’, all pilgrims from over the world are gathered in the same place to serve Allah. Also, on the tenth (*yawm an-Nahr*), all capable Muslims in their multitudes are also slaughtering animals as sacrifice to Allah.

The last is ‘by the night when it departs’. The oath here is by when the night is giving way for the day. Qutb has explained that, “The harmony between this verse and the dawn, the ten nights and the even and the odd is perfect. These are not mere words and expressions: they provide a feeling of the breeze of dawn, and the morning dew diffusing the fragrance of flowers.”

After the series of the oaths, a question is raised in verse five that those with meditative mind should be able to deduce from all the objects of

the oath that they have marvelous wisdom embedded in them. The subject of the oath is not actually stated but this verse in its interrogative form aims at emphasising and establishing the subject of the oath.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Discuss the significance of the oaths in this chapter.

Secondly, *Suratu `l-Fajr* touches three subject-matters:

1. It makes reference
 - (i) to the ‘Ād tribe of the (city) of Iram, with lofty pillars, the like of which was not created in the lands;
 - (ii) the tribe of Thamūd, who clove the rocks in the valley;
 - (iii) And the Pharaohs, the lord of Stakes.

They all belied the messages of Allah, were rebellious (to Allah) in the lands, and committed multiple iniquity therein. Therefore thy Lord punished them with heavy disaster.

2. Man’s trial by both prosperity and adversity. In prosperity he is expected to show humility and kindness; and in adversity, patience and faith. On the contrary man becomes proud and self-conceited in prosperity and depressed in adversity; v.15-20
3. Verses 21 to 30 invited our attention to the Day of Reckoning. Whether we failed to respect the rights of the helpless here or actually suppress those rights in our crazy love for good things of this life, we shall have to give accounts.

This earth which we imagine to be so solid will crumble to powder like dust.

Retribution will at last come; all the illusions of his fleeting world having been swept away. Then we shall remember and wish we had repented. Why not repent now before it is too late?

That day, His chastisement will be such as none (else) can inflict, and His bonds will be such as none (other) can bind.

In Muslim Theology the human soul, that seeks its satisfaction in the lower earthly desires, is the *Ammārah bi s-Sū’i*.(Q.12:53); the self-reproaching soul that feels conscious of sin and resists it is the *Lawwāmah* (Q. 75: 2); the soul at rest, in peace, in a state of complete satisfaction is the *Mutmainnah*, mentioned in verse 27 of this Chapter. To this righteous soul will be said: “O (you) soul in rest and satisfaction!

Come back to your Lord, well pleased (with your-self), and well-pleasing unto Him! Enter among My Devotees! Enter My Heaven! This is the climax of reward of the Righteous.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Highlight the main points in the content of *Sūratu `l-Fajr*.

4.0 CONCLUSION

This is a Meccan *Sūrah* containing (30) āyahs. It relates to *Sūrah al-Ghāshiyah* where two kinds of faces are mentioned. Here, it is extensive on the different kinds of people across history whose faces will be down cast and those whose faces will be joyful. In *al-Ghāshiyah*, it is said in verse 25 that return shall be to Allah. Here also, in verse 25, the tranquil soul is asked to return to its Lord.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit provided you with the exegesis of *Sūrah al-fajr*. The background to the *Sūrah* was given. Thereafter, the essence of the five oaths which opened the chapter was also discussed as prelude to the inevitable punishments which awaited the unbelievers. Other areas addressed by the unit were story of the perished nations, trial of man and scene of the Last Day.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- Write the text and translation *Sūratu `l-Fajr*.
- Discuss significance of oaths as a characteristic of Meccan period chapter with particular reference to *Sūratu `l-Fajr*.
- Precis the messages in this chapter of the dawn time.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 4 SŪRATU ‘L-BALAD

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objective
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 *Tajwīd* Case
 - 3.2 Text and Translation
 - 3.3 Commentary
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit you will learn the exegesis of *Sūrah al-Balad*. Apart from the background which will intimate you with some peculiarities of the chapter, you will be taught about how man enjoys freewill but faces trial in this world when he becomes deceived by his God-given resources. You will also learn how he is exhorted to be humanitarian so that he will not end up in perdition in the hereafter.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you will be able:

- highlight the point of articulation of the *a`sh-Shamsiyyah* and *al-Qamariyyah*
- recite *Sūrah al-Balad* correctly; and from memory
- translate *Sūrah al-Balad* into idiomatic English
- comment on *Sūrah al-Balad*
- highlight the message of *Sūrah al-Balad*.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Tajwid Case

Idghām of *Lām* in the Definite Article: In the Arabic language, the indefinite article is indicated by *tanwīn* (nunation) at the end of a noun. The definite article, however, precedes the noun and is connected to it in the form of >, i.e., the connecting *hamzah* followed by *lām*. The word 71#< means a book, i. e. “any book” while 1#<* refers to a specific book, i. e. “the book”.

Although the > form does not change when written, the pronunciation of *lām* depends upon the letter following it, and it is subject to the rules of *idghām* and *iz-hār*.

When *lām* of the definite article is followed by any of the letters called “*shamsiyyah*” (*ash-Shams* sT means “the sun” and the word itself is an example of this rule), the *lām* is merged into the letter following it which takes on a *shaddah*. The *shamsiyyah* letters which cause *idghām* are 14:

_>BrZyz{H4NExR

The remaining letters of the Alphabet are also 14:

:“u|}t~5_1

They are called “*qamariyyah*” (*al-qamar* means the moon) and cause *iz-hār*, i.e. the clear pronunciation of the *lām*.

Examples showing *idghāmu lām*:

& - _L #< - R' - R#3 4Q -4#< - P - sT

Examples of *iz-hāru lām*:

cL -1#< * - # - &L 9 -+Y O -\ -

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Practice the proper articulation of *lām* of the definite article.

3.2 Text and Translation of Sūrah al-Balad

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08Lk % _#+Y O#F8 {3}8#08 {2} 8LQA !& V cY\$ {1} 8LQA ! +\$ b {4}

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 # {11}PL/< ;% {10} 38 9F#F38l {9} <6a#)Y#+ {8} F
 {15}OP!N#) <3 {14}OPLn+^ N0"3k %7"#r C\$ {13}OPL4g\% {12}PL# 4E\$
 {17} PV# !I Ld# !IF 3 Q _# {16}OP!<N#)F *+ \$

74#Y A {19} PJT 1#/I\$ 1 #F #3 ! 6 3 Q {18} PF 1#/I\$ \ m\$

{20}7M8Ihg

Chapter of the City

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful:

- 1) Nay, I swear by this City
- 2) And you are an inhabitant of this City
- 3) And the Begetter and that which he begot
- 4) We verily have created man in an affliction.
- 5) Does he think that none has power over him?
- 6) And he says (boastfully): I have squandered abundant wealth
- 7) Does he think that none beholds him?
- 8) Have we not made for him a pair of eyes
- 9) And a tongue and a pair of lips,
- 10) And guided him to the two highways?
- 11) But he hath not forcefully entered the path that is steep.
- 12) Ah, what will convey unto thee what the path that is steep is!
- 13) (it is) freeing a slave,
- 14) Or feeding, in the day of hunger
- 15) An orphan, near of kin,
- 16) Or some indigent down - trodden,
- 17) And to be of those who believe and exhort one another to patience and exhort one another to deeds of kindness and compassion.
- 18) Such are the Companions of the Right Hand.
- 19) But those who disbelieve Our revelations, they are the (sad) Companions of the Left Hand.
- 20) Fire will be made into a vault over them.

3.3 Commentary

Verses 1 – 4 (Trial of man in this world)

This *Sūrah* opens with an oath with the city. This city according to Ibn Kathīr is Makkah. It is in this place the Ka‘bah is located. Before the advent of Islam, the place was an abode of peace that whoever sought refuge therein was guaranteed security. It was a place where people sheath their swords and did not use to quarrel or fight. Other creatures like birds and animals also enjoyed this security as they were not killed while in the precinct of the Ka‘bah. Allah’s swearing is by the sanctity of the city and to remind the dwellers of this. The Prophet has said: “Verily, Allah made this city sacred on the day He created the heavens and the earth. Therefore, it is sacred by the sanctity of Allah until the Day of Judgement. Its trees should not be removed...”

The second verse emphasises the fact that Prophet Muhammad is a lawful dweller of the city. Explaining the purpose of this verse, Yusuf

Ali says: “The Prophet should have been honoured in his native city. He was actually being persecuted. He should have been loved, as a parent loves a child. Actually his life was being sought, and those who believed in him were under a ban...” As regards the third verse, there are different interpretations; one, it is said to refer to the one who bears children and the barren through whom no child is born. Two, it refers to Adam and his offspring. This is upheld by Ibn Kathīr. Third, al-Marāghī says it refers to all parents and children of men and the like. Fourth, Qutb says it refers to prophet Ibrahim and Ismā‘il and added saying “...Included in the oath are the prophet, the city where he lives, the founder of the House and his offspring. However, it does not preclude that the statement can be a general one, referring to the phenomenon of reproduction which preserves the human race.”

The fourth verse states the fact that man is created to struggle in every stage of his life. It starts from the point of its fertilisation in the womb till death. A newly born baby starts to breathe through its lung, empty its bowel and the like. Thereafter the rigour of learning to sit, crawl, stand and other things it has to do itself continue.

This verse also serves a sort of consolation for the Prophet. In a city that is a place of peace, of which he is a legitimate citizen, he is not spared from the persecution of his countrymen. Amidst all these travails, Allah let him realize that life is like that. He is not to get frustrated but must keep on struggling. In this case, he should keep on calling to the path of his Lord despite the stiff oppositions.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

- Examine the style and objects of oath in this chapter.
- Man is born to struggle, explain.

Verses 5-7 (Deceit of man by his physical power)

In the fifth verse, a practical case is brought to light of a man who forgot his nature of endless struggle and thought that nobody has power over him. According to al-Marāghī, it is said that the fifth and sixth verses were revealed in respect of Abu al-Ashad Asyad bn Kaldah al-Jumahī and Hārith Ibn Nawfal respectively. The former was beguiled by his strong physique and the latter said he has wasted much wealth for following Prophet Muhammad. The verses however have general application. It unveils the state of man’s mind in his self conceit and boastfulness. He arrogates power to himself, so he disdain with those who obey Allah. He feels he is the owner of resources, so, whenever he has cause to spend for the right cause, he feels it is a waste.

Then, Allah in the seventh verse says in question form that He sees the intention of man for any effort or spending he makes. This verse condemns those who do things for other than Allah and thinking that they can deceive Him.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

X-ray the deceit of man according to this chapter.

Verses 8-10 (Favours of Allah to Man)

Man, in the eighth and ninth verse is reminded of Allah's favour of the sight and power of expression. These are visible bounties man can never deny. His eyes help him to see while his tongue and lips help him to express his intentions. This has two implications. First, it shows that Allah is the provider of these abilities. So, the power drunkenness and vain gloriousness of man is unfounded as he is supposed to acknowledge the source of all he claims to possess. Second, the sight given to him is for him to be able to see the truth and follow it. His power of expression is to make him speak and call to the truth. In his own words, Yusuf Ali says "The eyes give us the faculty of seeing, and may be taken in both the literal and the metaphorical sense. In the same way the tongue gives us the faculty of tasting in both senses. Along with the lips, it also enables us to speak, to ask for information and seek guidance, and to celebrate the praises of Allah."

Apart from the gifts of sight and expression granted man he is also given the power of judgement to be able to differentiate between the path of virtue and vice. The former may appear difficult because of its obligations while the latter is easy because of its laxity. Allah shows man these paths by sending prophets, teachers and guides with revelations to guide. It is thus the deliberate choice of man to thread the path of paradise or hell.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

Enumerate the favours granted by Allah to man as mentioned in these verses and show man's attitude to such favours.

Verses 11-20 (Welfare Concern)

The word '*aqabah*' is used in the eleventh and twelfth verses to charge man to righteous action. It denotes a route that is hard to pass in a rock. Its use here aims at making man to strive against his desires. In his exegesis, Ibn Kathīr quotes Qatādah as saying: "Owing to their righteousness and obedience to Allah in the life of the world, they will

pass over such immensely blazing mountain in Hell.” Clarifying this verse and showing how important it is, Allah, in verse twelve asks man what will make him know about the steep path.

The first thing He mentions is the liberation of slaves from bondage. This was a period when slaves were not treated as human beings. They were terribly maltreated and even killed at will at times. The *Qur’ān* thus calls a stop to this act. This is because no man should be made a slave to another. The second thing enjoined is feeding the hungry or those starving. The orphans who are of near kin and the poverty ridden are specially mentioned. Imam Ahmad reported the Prophet as saying. “Charity offered to a poor person is counted as being one charity, while when it is offered to a relative, it is counted as being two: charity and something to maintain the ties of his kinship.”

The essence of the 17th verse is that the one, who will free the slave, feed the orphan or poor should be somebody who believes in the unity of Allah. This is because faith is the fountain of virtue. In addition to this they enjoin one another to persevere. This they exercise in the face of tribulations and persecution. In addition, they also show mercy on the servants of Allah and enjoin same.

The reward for those who free slaves from bondage and feed the poor is the subject matter of the 18th verse. They are described as people of the right hand who symbolise easy accountability. Their description is further given in Q56:27-34.

In contrast, the last two verses address those who contest the cosmic signs and revelations as the companions of the left hand. This also means a very terrible condemnation. Their description is also contained in Q56:41-48. Besides, this last set of people will also be enveloped by fire, out of which they can never get any escape route.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 5

Highlight the Islamic welfare package put in place here and its consequences.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Sūratu `l-Balad is so entitled because Allah swears by the sacred city in which the ancient Ka’bah is situated. It is a Meccan period chapter containing twenty verses. At its central point is the choice of man to determine his fortune and misfortune. Linking it with the previous *Sūrah*, we will realize that therein Allah talked about those who are obsessed in amassing wealth without concern for the needy. Here the

expected areas the rich must channel his wealth is stated. Also, the previous chapter ended with the explanation on the nature of the tranquil soul, here it describes pathway to it and warns against all that can impair that.

The chapter reminds that man's existence on the earth surface is for struggle. To succeed in this struggle, he has been bestowed with sight, speech, intelligence and memory. He is cautioned not to think that the fruits of these bounties are his making. He must thread the path of salvation by investing in social and communal endeavours that put smile on the faces of the less privileged. This will on a final note determine his fate in the Hereafter.

5.0 SUMMARY

At the onset in this unit, the rules of *tajwīd* relating to the Arabic definite article > were highlighted. The text and translation of the *Sūrah* under study, *al-Balad* is then presented. In the Commentary, it is shown that the central theme of the chapter is the trial of man in this world, deceit of man by his physical power, man's free will and welfare.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- i. Write the text of this chapter and give an idiomatic translation of it in English.
- ii. Highlight the themes of this chapter; relate your points to your society as much as possible.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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MODULE 2

Unit 1	<i>Sūrah a`sh-Shams</i>
Unit 2	<i>Sūrah al-Layl</i>
Unit 3	<i>Sūrah a -`Duhā,</i>
Unit 4	<i>Sūrah ash-Sharh</i>
Unit 5	<i>Sūrah at `t-Tīn</i>

UNIT 1 SŪRAH A`SH-SHAMS

CONTENTS

1.0	Introduction
2.0	Objective
3.0	Main Content
	3.1 <i>Tajwīd</i> Case
	3.2 Text and Translation
	3.3 Commentary
4.0	Conclusion
5.0	Summary
6.0	Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0	References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will learn a background to the *Sūrah* which give you an insight into the subject matter of the chapter. You will also be enlightened about the essence of oaths by different phenomena in the Qur'an. The unit will also address the issue of soul purification and the study case of the Thamūd People as a destroyed nation.

2.0 OBJECTIVE

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- highlight the *tajwīd* rule relating to the throat letters
- recite *Sūrah a`sh-Shams* correctly and from memory
- explain *Sūrah a`sh-Shams* in idiomatic English
- comment on *Sūrah a`sh-Shams*
- highlight the significance of *Sūrah a`sh-Shams* perfectly.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Tajwīd Case

The throat contains three points of articulation () for six letters:

- (i) The deepest part of the throat is the point of articulation of (*hamzah*), a glottal stop (pronounced in English at the beginning of words that start with vowels such as: eat, ate, out). It is a true written consonant in Arabic and must be pronounced clearly whether it occurs at the beginning, middle or end of a word.

From this section of the throat also, but slightly higher, ha' comes out.

- (ii) The mid-throat is the point of articulation of (‘ayn) and just above it, (hā), an h sound sharper than

- (iii) – The nearest part of the throat (to the mouth) is the of (*ghayn*) followed by (*khā*).

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Describe the point of articulation of the six throat letters.

3.2 Text and Translation

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%&'(!'(*+%, -

{4} "78 12 9&(_ {3} (0 4 12 5(6 {2} 0 12 !3 {1} ./ !(" \$.@.A 5!5BA {7} (\$ =>? {6} : ;< {5} 6- !(, 12 {11} \$7I- .\$.!J K-(LC {10} () GH F {9} (CD) E_A F {8} \$3 %5&_S TFFA .3OA .US.-(LVA {13} &3. (+ R? (+ .Q\$. %.5 Q3A {12} 3M NOP? {15} P3.S .X 8 Y{14} (\$,A %5P?L- %.5W-

Translation

Chapter of the Sun

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, and the Merciful:

- 1) By the Sun and his (glorious) splendour,
- 2) And the Moon as she follows him,
- 3) And the Day when it reveals him,
- 4) And the Night when it enshrouds him,
- 5) And the Heaven and Him Who built it,
- 6) And the Earth and Him Who spread it,
- 7) And a soul and Him Who perfected it,
- 8) And inspired it (with conscience of) what is wrong for it and (what is) right.
- 9) He is indeed successful who causes it to grow,
- 10) And he is indeed a failure who stunted it.
- 11) (The tribe of) Thamūd denied (The truth) in their rebellious pride.
- 12) When the most wicked of them rose up for (impiety).
- 13) And the Messenger of Allah said: it is the She-camel of Allah, so let are drink!
- 14) But they denied him, and they hamstrung her, so Allah doomed them by destroying their abode for their sin and made them equal in (the destruction).
- 15) He dreaded not the consequences (of events).

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

- i. Attempt memorisation of *Sūrah a`sh-Shams*.
- ii. Analyse its translation.

3.3 Commentary

Sūrah a`sh-Shams is chapter ninety-one of the holy Qur'an. It is a Meccan period chapter containing fifteen verses. Allah in His majesty swears by eleven things between the first and the eight verses. Looking at the *Sūrah* as a whole, it will interest you to note how it maintains a uniform 'hā' sound at the end of each verse. From this sound-end one will appreciate a kind of unity in the message as well as a unique reading.

In addition, all phenomena or issue raised in the *Sūrah* are contrasted in pairs; the sun and moon, day and night, heaven and earth, wickedness and piety of the soul, purification and corruption; success and ruin and Prophet Sāleh and his disobedient people. This strengthens the continuous struggle of the soul between the forces of virtue and vice.

Verses 1-8 (Oaths by Different Phenomena)

In the first verse, the sun and its brightness are sworn by. The sun is central to all that happen in the world. It is a very big creature but still smaller than many other stars. The entire globe has only one sun and yet the heat, warmth or brightness it brings is felt everywhere. No reasonable man can deny the great role of the sun in human life. Without it most living things in the plant kingdom cannot survive. Its use in human society is multifarious. As man shifts attention towards solar energy, the sun is the sole producer. As a sign also, the sun, on a regular basis, rises from the East and sets in the West. This has been its course from time immemorial. So, swearing by it impresses its great role on man, shows the magnificence of the Creator, and reminds regularity and orderliness in nature and the need for the soul of man to shine with the brightness of faith.

The third oath is by the moon when it follows the sun. The moon, unlike the sun has a soothing effect on man. It is always in the sky with the sun but overshadowed by it. It is especially during the 13th, 14th and 15th night that it displays its brightness most. It illuminates the entire earth from sunset till dawn when the sun takes over again. The difference in the light production of both the sun and the moon is very clear.

Yūsuf Ali notes that “The moon, when she is in the sky with the sun, is pale and inconspicuous; in the sun’s absence she shines with reflected light and may metaphorically be called the sun’s vicegerent”

In the next verse, Allah swears by the day when it makes the sun more manifest. The day is a sort of effect of the sun. It is the time when man pursues his livelihood. This is mentioned in Q78:11. Most activities of man are carried out during the day. The night succeeds the day by concealing the sun. It serves as a covering for man. It imposes a kind of rest for man from his tiring activities. In addition, it affords him a spiritual respite to be in communion with his Lord at a time when all eyes are sleeping. A Muslim is enjoined to observe *Tahajjid* and increase in the reading of the *Qur’ān*. Allah swears by both day and night bearing the varying values and opportunities they provide for man.

The oath in verse five and six is by the firmament and the earth. The former is above man while the latter is beneath his feet. The oath by the heavens also includes its construction. It is like a canopy on man perhaps, if there are no heavens above, man may not have been able to dwell safely on earth because there is a sea above the seven heavens. The magnificent structure of the heavens without pillars, its colour and limitlessness are reflections for man about the signs of Allah. Most of

the heavenly bodies we see appear as if they are fixed like bulbs to the ceiling.

Also, the oath by the earth also takes its spreading into consideration. Life of man is absolutely attached to the earth. The creation of man starts from the earth, his dwelling is on it, his food is derived from it, his water comes from it and his materials are got from it. The wonderful spread of this earth across the globe and that no man has been able to trace the beginning and end of the earth invites man to think about the magnificent creator. Man now becomes helpless as he lives between the heavens as a solid canopy and the earth as a flat carpet. This brings him under the full control of the creator whose throne is above the heavens.

The next contrast is the oath by the soul and its molding. This refers to the soul of man upon which all his actions are judged. This verse makes it evident that the soul is endowed with relative perfection. Each of the body and the soul is designed to play its roles. The body is for example formed to serve the soul through all its parts. In fact, their use or misuse determines the purity of the soul.

Confirming the divine ordering of the soul, the 8th verse says the soul is inspired to recognise vice and virtue. Ibn Kathīr explains this as: “Allah granted all and every soul the option to choose between either what is good and what is evil. The concern for the purification of the soul is through medium of worship in Islam. In this study alone, you will see references to this in Q87:14, Q89:27 and here too, Q91:7-10. The basic fact which this verse wants to stress is that every soul of man is granted the inner inspiration to be able to recognize when it is erring.

In addition, Qutb explains that this nature of man is so because of duality in his creation which he refers to as the spirit and clay component in man. The spirit is the one which draws him to his Lord while the clay glues him to the earth. The former gets stronger when man obeys Allah. The latter is empowered when he is obsessed in material pursuits that are inimical to the purpose of creation.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Relate the essence of the oaths in these first eight verses of *Sūrah a`sh-Shams*.

Verses 9-10 (Purification of Soul)

Verses nine and 10 contain matters that still concern the soul. The first says that success only lies with one who purifies his soul. In fact, this is the core of the *Sūrah*. All the phenomena earlier sworn by are instances

of perfect order in the universe. The purification of the soul is an obligation and a process. As man interacts with the society under the shade of great signs of Allah, he is to maintain the pristine nature of the soul. All acts of obedience are soul purifiers. This, among many others, will include sound belief in the unity of Allah, observance of the five daily prayers, fasting in the month of Ramadan, giving Zakat, going to pilgrimage, reading and reflecting over the *Qur'ān* and the like.

On the other hand, perdition becomes the lot of whoever corrupts his soul. This refers to a soul which turns away from the path of his Lord. Any act of sin or evil definitely stains the soul. The steeper one is in sin, the more corrupt the soul becomes. The consequence of such is very harsh on the society. The individual will become like an insane or intoxicated person. This we witness in our society today. The corrupt people, embezzlers, fornicators, thieves, liars and many others are all products of corrupt souls, their inner engine which is the soul has broken down and so, they have no moral code to obey Allah or restrain from inflicting harm on fellow men in whatever form.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

What is the significance of soul purification?

Verses 11-15 (The Thamud People)

Sūrah wa`sh-Shams closes with the story of the people of Prophet Ṣaleh. They are known as the tribe of Thamūd. It is the style of the *Qur'ān* to always narrate the story of the previous nations to teach their successors some lessons. The Thamūd people belied their Prophet. He invited them to the worship of Allah but they refused. They asked for a sign they thought would be impossible from their Prophet so as to prove that he is God-sent. They asked that a she - camel should emerge from the rock. This was fulfilled. So they had no choice than to accept for the while. Their prophet, however let them know that the camel is Allah's and thus will share their drinking water with them. Alternative days were assigned for the people and the camel. When the human soul which is the pivot of this *Sūrah*, got soiled they felt debased that they should be sharing water with an ordinary animal.

Verse 12 explains the sign as when Qudar Ibn Salif, the wicked in the tribe, hamstringed the she-camel. This man was said to be a man of authority, nobility and a leader who was respected by them. They all hailed and were happy with what he did. This showed their open denial of their Prophet.

The killing of the she-camel was even a disobedience to the earlier warning of prophet Ṣālih as narrated in the thirteenth verse. He told them that it is the she-camel of Allah and warned them not to bar it from its allocated drinking day but they disregarded this warning and killed the she-camel, This action annoyed Allah who reacted by destroying them without sparing anyone. Their extermination was in the form of a “destructive cry which tied their tongues up and the violent shaking which stuck them to the ground motionless.” The chapter closes with a categorical statement that Allah does not fear the consequence of whatever He does as He is just and powerful.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 5

Account for the cause and consequence for the woe of the Thamūd people.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The pattern in which the message of this *Sūrah* is presented is very impressive. It starts with the mentioning of some natural phenomena in their natural order. Then, the soul is mentioned as also having the potential of natural innocence but could be corrupted. Thereafter comes the story of the people of Thamūd who were so corrupt, and thus hamstrung the she-camel of Allah. The emphasis is on the need to maintain the purity of the soul by dedicating it to the obedience of Allah and reflecting over natural phenomena.

This chapter further correlates with *al-Balad* wherein the people of the right hand are contrasted with those of the left. *Ash-Shams* explains the fate of both as those of the former are successful and those of the latter in ruin. Another point of link is that the evil end of the unbeliever is mentioned in *al-Balad* while *as-Shams* narrated the evil end of a disobedient nation.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit took you through a detailed exegesis of *Sūrah as-Shams* by giving a concise background. It expounded the significance of the oaths which were used at the beginning of the chapter. It went further to dwell on the need to purify the soul. It drew a frightening conclusion from the story of the Thamūd when their soul got stained and they hamstrung the she-camel.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- i. Examine the significance of swearing an oath with natural phenomenon in *Sūrah as-Shams*.
- ii. Many people in our society today are like the Thamūds. Discuss this opinion.

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UNIT 2 SŪRAH AL-LAYL

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 *Tajwīd* Case
 - 3.2 Text and Translation
 - 3.3. Commentary
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

You are welcome to this special unit. It will introduce you to an important project which can make the society of man progress. You will learn about the reality of diverse struggle of men in the society and how their disposition to spend or withhold their resources affects development. You will also be enlightened on the great mercy of Allah in forewarning man from walking on the path of perdition.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- list some *tajwīd* rule of *Madd*
- recite *Sūrah a`l-Layl* correctly and from memory
- explain *Sūrah a`l-Layl* in idiomatic English
- comment on *Sūrah a`l-Layl*
- explain the significance of *Sūrah a`l-Layl* perfectly.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 *Tajwīd* Case – Some Rules of *Madd*

Madd means lengthening, extension, prolongation or elongation. Specifically in the art of *Tajwīd*, it means lengthening of the sound of a vowel. The letters of *madd* are three: *alif sākinah* preceded by *fat-hah* (z), *wāw sākinah* preceded by *dhammah* () *yā' sākinah* preceded by *kasrah* ([\]).

There are two main divisions of *madd*: basic, which is called original or normal *madd*, and derived, also known as additional *madd*. We shall here take an example for each of them.

Aṣṭī: (Original) or *abīṭī* normal *madd* O&P(I_)<WF!\ .

This *madd* is so called because all other forms of *madd* are derived from it. It is used naturally by the Arabic speaker to differentiate between meanings derived from the same root letters and is an essential part of Arabic speech or reading.

Original or normal *madd* is due simply to the presence in a given word of one of the *madd* letters (, or) as long as it is not followed by a *hamzah* or *sukūn*. The vowel sound must be lengthened to two counts during recitation and not doing so constitutes a serious mistake. Note the differences between *madd* letters and short vowels (*fat-hah*, *dhammah* and *kasrah*) in the following:

G\$_ - - Q - `C - ^_C - 5&'\$.?
 \$._H- 5"78 - (?2 - (2 - %_S - %S
 =Q!- 6?WF!. - F&4 A - a ?.6.8

Madd Far ṭī (Derived *Madd*) (S> WF!)

The second division of *madd* contains those types which exceed the two counts of original or normal *madd*. Thus it is called “additional” or “extra” *madd* ([F8b) or ‘derived’ (literally “branch”) *madd* (SA) since it is an off-shoot of original *madd*. In addition to the presence of a *madd* letter, derived *madd* occurs when that letter is followed by a *hamzah* or *sukūn*. These are few examples of various kinds of derived *madd*.

3.1.1 Lengthening (*Madd*) caused by *Hamzah*

(i) *Muttasil*: Connected *Madd* (9(_! WF!)

This *madd* is so named because the *hamzah* follows the *madd* letter with one word, as in:

fb 4 - 4 - Re&IH - d0cS - R>c:
 Y.h - rRVc g .f\$.

When this occurs, the *madd* letter must be held for either four or five counts. It is also called “obligatory *madd*” (9(_! .^4\$ WF!\) because it can never be held for less than four counts.

(ii) *Munfasil*: Separated *Madd* (9 36.! WF!)

If a *madd* letter occurs at the end of a word and the following word begins with *hamzah* (i.e. the vowel and *hamzah* are separated), lengthening beyond two counts is optional. One may hold the *madd* letter for either two, four or five counts, but must be consistent, making it the same length every time it appears. (For teaching purposes, the choice is often four counts.) It is also referred to as *optional madd*(WF!\ 9>_!.! .c@)

Some examples are as follows:

(6Z \$. - %.V.,3? \$. - %.V.,3? A - .i(6 5(8j8
\$. \ (Y2 12 m - =k\$.? 2 6&' !C -
a&2 6&' (?2

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

What are the *Tajwīd* rules of *Madd*. Mention and practice them.

3.2 Text of Sūrah al-Layl

98 \ (9 .#\$.

%&'(!)'(*+ %, -

{4} (_" %.V&O (2 {3} n?. < C(L {2} (_ @ 12 5(6 {1} "78 12 9&(_
9-) ({7} [.,&_ .U.p,&.6,A {6} 6,- o(F) {5} 3(IS) (BA
[(12 .1. .16S q 67.8 {10} [.,O_ .U.p,&.6,A {9} 6,- G(LC {8} 67_
y {14} (s_d? %.V.L?BA {13} . < #H r 6
(2 {12} [F.5_ 6&_S (2 {11}
.l qh.8 tL ({17} 3 < 5.P(6 @.& {16} (\$ G(LC tL({15} 3M < (Y2 08
X\$, {20} _S < lp- 1 4 7_- (Y2 {19} [b @. =R!Op?) .UF6S =F' < {18} (Cb_8
{21} /8

THE NIGHT (Revealed at Mecca)

In the name of Allah, the **Beneficent**, the **Merciful**:

- 1) By the Night when it is enshrouding
- 2) And the Day when it is splendid
- 3) And Him Who has created male and female,
- 4) Lo! Your effort is dispersed (toward diverse ends).
- 5) As for him who gives and is pious,
- 6) And believes in goodness;
- 7) Surely We will ease his way unto the state of ease.
- 8) But as for him who is miserly and deems himself independent
- 9) And disbelieves in goodness;
- 10) Surely We will ease his way unto adversity.

- 11) His riches will not save him when he perishes.
- 12) Lo! Ours it is (to give) the guidance
- 13) And Lo! Unto Us belong the latter portion and the former.
- 14) Therefore have I warned you of the flaming fire
- 15) Which will burn only the most wretched,
- 16) Who denies and turned away.
- 17) Far removed from it will be the righteous
- 18) Who gives his wealth that he may grow (in goodness),
- 19) And none has with him any favour for reward,
- 20) Except as seeking (to fulfill) the purpose of his Lord Most High.
- 21) He verily will be content.

3.3 Commentary

The first three verses of this chapter are also opened with oaths. It incorporates three subject matters namely night, day and gender. Allah swears by the night when its darkness envelops all creatures. It covers the entire earth and all that are on it. In some instances, darkness makes some people to unleash terror on fellow human beings. Some dangers also accompany the night. For example, some creeping creatures or insects may seize the opportunity to cause harm to man. Stillness of the night also places most active and moving creatures on a standstill in the sense that they are compelled to rest or sleep. The darkness symbolised by the night may also imply godlessness of man when he does not know his Creator. Furthermore, the period of the night provides the opportunity for some creatures to dwell and have their sustenance. For all these and more, Allah swears by the night to impress upon man that there is a might behind the coming and going of the night.

In the second verse, the oath is taken by the day when it appears with its light. It is a contrast to the night. While the night conceals all that is on the earth, the day with its splendor reveals them. It provides opportunity for man and other living creatures to move about and seek for sustenance. It has great impact on the plant to prepare their nutrients. Most social activities of man go on during the day. The day opens man's activities while the night closes it. Night and the day are two great signs of Allah with their distinct qualities and effects. The night represents resting while the day is for work.

Within these two contrasts, comes the third verse where Allah swears by the creation of men into males and females. This is another visible contrast in the life of men. Just as the night and the day have their distinctiveness so is that of the human beings as males and females. It shows the great handiwork of Allah as both are from the same origin. The difference in their creation is a clear factor that they are different in nature but that for a man to be born both must play specific roles teaches

that these roles are complimentary. So, Allah swears by this to emphasise the biological origin of man and the continuity of the human species through reproduction or procreation. It is the position of the *Qur'ān* that all creatures are in pairs. So one may philosophically say that the night and the day are pairs but with no defined reproductive function as in living creatures.

The fourth verse is the crux of the matter; that is the reason for the oath. It is that the strivings of men are diverse. This is basically in respect of the hereafter. There are those who exert effort in righteousness while there are also others who pursue the cause of evil. In practical life, men engage in different works and earn different results. Men have diverse temperaments, environments, ideas and concerns, so much so that every man seems to be a distinct world by himself living in his own, special planets.

Consequently, the remaining verses specify the activities of men as they strive in their own way. They are classified into two.

In the fifth verse, is the group which gives charity, fears Allah in all endeavours and believes in “the recompense for that which is done”. Al-Marāghī says the charity “is spending wealth in different obligations or on freeing slaves and empowering the Muslims over their enemies. His fearing Allah means he abstains from all that is blameworthy protects himself from open and secret indecency and fears causing injury to others.

In addition, the sixth verse says this fellow believes in *al-husna*. In the words of Ibn Kathīr, it means “he believes in the recompense for what is done; or that he believes in the fact that: “There is no deity worthy to be worshipped except Allah or that he is grateful to Allah for the favours with which He has endowed him”.

Hence, being charitable, God-fearing and upholding what is best in nature qualifies one to be favoured by Allah. He will ease his path to goodness as a special grace from Allah. Such an individual will naturally feel comfortable engaging in righteous deeds and get fulfilled in his heart that he is doing the right thing.

In contrast, according to verses eight and nine, as for the one who is miserly by refusing to spend on the obligatory and right causes, but lavishes his resources on worldly pleasures or even uses it to obstruct the cause of truth; he believes that he is self-sufficient and does not need anybody or that his achievements are his personal efforts and so he does not need anybody's help or need to help anybody; and also denies any possibility of recompense in the Hereafter for spending in whatever

righteous capacity; this fellow will suffer two consequences. The first is that the evil path which he treads will lead to his perdition in the Hereafter. The second is that like his wealth which he refused to spend to help the cause of humanity, it will not benefit him after death or it will cause his being cast into hellfire.

It is clear from the on-going that all mankind only have either of the two paths. Their colours, language and forms, notwithstanding, they either spend to promote the cause of Allah or damage it.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Discuss the significance of the oaths at the opening of this chapter. Comment on verses four to 11.

The twelfth verse states unequivocally that, it is Allah who solely provides guidance. In the third verse, we learn how Allah creates men into males and females. So, for genuine guidance, only Him can provide it. This places all men on equal opportunity to avail of it. He makes what is lawful and unlawful clear. He sends revelations and messengers to teach them and be exemplary by their characters. The various sense-organs provided men are further tools of guidance.

The thirteen verse states that, both the Hereafter where man will return and this world where he dwells, are within the control of Allah. So if man follows the guidance, it does not increase anything in His dominion and if there are those who act against the guidance, it is at their own peril as the consequence of their actions will fall back on them. This is why the *Qur'ān* keeps on re-echoing that “He who seeks guidance, it is for himself and he who strays, it is against his own soul”.

As a sign of mercy, Allah reminds man that He has forewarned of the blazing fire which burns fiercely. It is a timely warning that Allah tells man that there awaits him a blazing fire for failing to listen to the voice of guidance. He even adds, because He knows better the nature of this fire, that it is only the most wretched (*al-Ashqā*) that will enter it. He then proceeds in the fifteenth verse to state qualities of *al-Ashqā*. He is guilty of two basic evils. One, he regards the God-sent Messenger a liar by disregarding all he delivers as message from his Lord. Two, as a result of this he unrepentantly disobeys the law of Allah. If a man will fail to obey the guide and still turns deaf ears to acting righteously by his senses, then he cannot get guidance anywhere.

On the other hand, the seventeenth verse assures those who believe and shun sinfulness from this horrible fate. Describing what qualifies them for this, the eighteenth verse says they spend their wealth in avenues of

virtue so as to purify themselves from stinginess, selfishness and to get closer to their Lord. The next verse states that the purpose of their spending is not to seek favour in return from anybody. They are only seeking the pleasure of the most High Lord who sees all the inner intentions. The last verse says this kind of person who has clear goal about the object of worship will be pleased by Allah with marvelous reward. The peak of which is that he will enter paradise and enjoy all its pleasures. In respect of these last verses, Ibn Kathīr says that some Exegetes have said it was revealed in respect of Abu Bakr. Some claim a consensus on this although the statement is general.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Compare and contrast the two classes of men identified by this chapter.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Sūrah al-Layl is chapter 92 of the Holy *Qur'ān*. It is a Meccan period chapter which consists of 21 verses. In the chapter before it, those who purify their souls are said to be prosperous while those who tarnish it are said to be in loss. This chapter provides further details on these two classes of people by comparing those who are generous and pious with the miserly. The actions of both have different effects on the society. It is even argued that since the chapter was revealed in respect of the stingy, it opens with reference to the night which is a form of darkness concealing a lot of things. It is also a virtue of this chapter that the Prophet enjoined that Mu'adh observes prayer with *al-Alā*, *ash-Shams* and *al-Layl*.

The chapter further reveals the wisdom and mercy of Allah in placing before man all that can guide or destroy his life. The ultimate goal of man should be seeking the pleasure of Allah which will make him commit and channel all his resources to cause of virtue. The focus of the chapter is the generous and the miserly. While the former realizes the fact that Allah owns all and thus spends his wealth for His pleasure, the latter is beguiled by this same wealth as to arrogate it to himself and thus refuses to spend it rightly.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit opens with an explanation of some *tajwīd* rule of *Madd*. The text and translation of the *Sūrah* under study is then presented. The subject matters of the chapter may be divided into two parts namely the diverse striving of men and the mercy of Allah in forewarning man. The striving gave birth to two classes of men; one spends to seek the hereafter while the other spends to seek this world. The end result is that both were rewarded based on their actions.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- i. Highlight the various points made in this *Sūrah*.
- ii. Enumerate the various comparisons in this chapter.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 3 *SŪRAH AḌ- DUḤĀ*

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Text, Explanatory Notes and Meaning
 - 3.2 Commentary
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

At the onset of this unit, notes on some words from the text of *Sūrah a - Duḥā* shall be provided for you to simplify your understanding of the content of the *Sūrah*. Likewise, you will be expected to learn the correct reading and the meaning of the *Sūrah*. You will as well be exposed to brief commentaries on it. The significance of the *Sūrah* cannot be over-emphasised. This will be clearer to you as we make progress. Therefore, let us proceed.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- recite *Sūrah a - Duḥā* correctly from memory
- explain *Sūrah a - Duḥā* in idiomatic English
- comment on *Sūrah a - Duḥā*
- highlight the significance of the *Sūrah* perfectly.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Text, Explanatory Notes And Meaning Of Surah Ad-Duha

u # \$

%&'(!)'(*+ %,-

.<) a(f& H .#H r {3} _ aW- aS({2} @ 12 9&(_ {1} Wu

{7} [F5A d*Y/ vF 4 {6} [jA d!&_8 vF@8 % {5} /_A aW- a& IO.8 X\$, {4}

R!O6- ({10} 56 0A 9c(, ({9} 53 0A %&_&(BA {8} 6wBA d0cS vF 4

{11} xpF A ap-

Explanatory Notes:

د*u means the forenoon time when the Sun begins to shine gradually to bring about the brightness of the day.

@ : to become still and calm. Movements are minimized because of the darkness of the night.

to forsake, the verbal noun is فy8\$ to bid farewell is to hate

#Hm in this context, Ibn Kathīr interprets it to be life Hereafter and .< life in this world. The majority of the Exegetes however commenting on this Verse say that by #HZ is meant the latter state of the Prophet's Cause while by < is meant the beginning of it.

a&IO.8 X\$, certainly you will soon be given. The gift here has been interpreted in many ways e.g. (i) fully equipped palace in Paradise (ii) that more of his household will not be inmate of hell-fire. (iii) Intercession on the Day of Judgement etc

[Z to shelter or give protection ; dY/ wandering, perplexed unable to know the right cause ; d0cS someone in want, or a poor man dependent on others.

6w to enrich; 53 Y oppress not; 9c(, beggar or one who asks, 56 Y chide not or drive away not; R10? favour ; xF' proclaim

Translation Chapter of the Fore-Noon (Revealed at Mecca)

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful:

1. By the Forenoon
2. And the Night when it is still.
3. Thy Lord has not forsaken you nor is He displeased.
4. And surely the latter state is better for thee than the former.
5. And soon will thy Lord give thee so that thou will be well pleased.
6. Did He not find thee an Orphan and give (thee) shelter?
7. And find thee wandering, so He showed thee the Way.
8. And find thee in want, so He enriched thee.
9. Therefore, the Orphan, oppress not.
10. And him who asks, chide not.
11. And the favour of your Lord proclaim.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

- i. As a very significant chapter in the life of a Muslim, attempt reciting it from memory.
- ii. Render *Sūrah a-Ḍuhā* into idiomatic English.

3.2 Commentary

This *Sūrah* was revealed at Makkah after *Sūratu 'l-Fajr* (Chapter 89, The Dawn). Muhammad Ali suggests that the *Sūrah* was given the title of *A - ḍuhā* (the forenoon when the day starts to get brighter) in order to draw attention to the gradual spreading of the light of Islam.

Two stories are usually narrated in form of prophetic traditions about the occasion of revelation of this *Sūrah*. The summary of the first is that during the period of persecution the holy prophet was stoned in his hand and received injury which kept him indoors for about three days. The wife of Abu Lahab knew about this and went to mock him by saying “your devil has now forsaken you”; hence the revelation of the *Sūrah*.

Another tradition says: “When angel Jibril delayed in bringing revelation to the prophet, He was so anxious that Khadijah had to say: it seems your Lord is displeased with you”. Hence this chapter was revealed to comfort him; and to cheer him up from his anxiety.

In the first verse, Allah swears by the forenoon and in the second by the dark night. These two periods are symbolic of calmness and new life. The dawn comes after the night has turned away. Allah opens this chapter with these oaths to further stress the fact that man has already commenced his day and should therefore not turn back or feel alone if he has Allah in focus.

The messenger of Allah, Muhammad (S), is assured in the third verse that the pause in the revelation is not because Allah has forsaken or hated him. The pause could have been aimed at making him realise the importance of his first encounter at the cave and that he is not under any magical spell or insanity.

As a preliminary message aimed at giving him focus the 4th verse states clearly that the enjoyment in the Hereafter is better than the one in this world. This message had the greatest impact on his life. He began to cherish the pleasure with Allah over all worldly glittering. He patiently bore tribulations. He suffered want but was never hopeless. He lived a simple life, a simple home, lying down on straw mats, etc. Imam Ahmad through Ibn Mas‘ūd narrated that: The Messenger of Allah was lying down on a straw mat, which left marks on his side, and when he woke

up, I began rubbing his forehead saying; O Allah's Messenger! Will you allow us to spread something on this straw mat for you?' Then the Messenger of Allah said: 'I have nothing to do with the life of this world. The likeness of me and this world is the likeness of a rider who rests in the shade of a tree, and then he passes on and leaves it' (Trimidhi and Ibn Majah)

Verses four and five predict that as time passes by, his mission would go on gaining strength, and the latter state would always be better than the former. God would give him all he aspired for and he would be well pleased. Some exegetics suggest many things as the gift referred to in verse five such as fully equipped palace in Paradise, and intercession on the day of judgement.

To assure the prophet that his sufferings would soon be alleviated and that God could do that if He wished, three instances from his past experience were given him. These are contained in verses six, seven and eight. First the prophet is reminded of how he was born an orphan but given protection and sheltered. Abdullah, the holy prophet's father died about three months before he was born; his mother Aminah died when he was six years old only. His grandfather, Abdu `l-Muttalib who took care of him after his mother's death, died two years later and from that time he remained in the care of Abu Tālib, his uncle who was alive when the holy prophet receive the divine message and who gave him the necessary shelter and protection during the crucial days. He too died few years later but not to leave the prophet for privation for he was further sheltered by the Anṣārs. All these were done through the grace of God. In the general sense, each one of us is an orphan in one form or another, but always someone's protection and shelter come to us by the grace of God.

Secondly, the holy prophet was reminded of how he was born in the midst of the idolatry and polytheism of Makkah and how he was perplexed, wandering in search of the ultimate reality and guidance which he found also by the grace of God. From his part there is no implication whatsoever of sin or error. In the general sense, we may find ourselves in a gross of error, in thought, motive or understanding; if we ever pray for God's guidance He shall definitely give us.

Thirdly, the holy prophet inherited no wealth and was poor. The true, pure and sincere love of Khadijah not only raised him above want, but made him independent of worldly needs in his late life, enabling him to devote whole time to the service of God. So do we all find ourselves in some want or another, which if we work whole heartedly and sincerely is supplied to us by the grace of God?

Verses nine to 11 drive home the triple argument of verses six to eight as explained above. Verse nine says orphans or any other helpless creature who are unable to assert themselves either through age, sex, social rank, artificial condition or any other cause whatsoever should be treated as sacred trust, with tender affection and respect. History shows the Prophet sets an example for emulation.

Verse ten says there are petitioners who have to ask for something. They may be genuine beggars asking for financial help, or ignorant people asking for knowledge or timid people who need encouragement. It is wrong to scorn them or reject them or show no sympathy or love to them. We should not forget however that it is wrong as well to encourage idle professional beggary. Every petition should be examined and judged on merits.

The last verse suggests that if man is bountifully endowed by God, it is his duty to proclaim and share it out as the holy prophet always did.

Spiritually, we are all orphans and petitioners in one way or the other. We all receive God's grace in some degree or another. We all owe it a duty to our fellow men to be kind and helpful to those less endowed in any respect than ourselves.

Finally, apart from the above lessons, this chapter may be taken as words of solace in a general sense, the significance being that God will never forsake Islam and the Muslims. This significance could be inferred from verses four and five, when the words are considered prophetic, the prediction being that in history Islam or a Muslim may face setbacks which might give rise to speculations that God has forsaken them. The Prophet and his followers are therefore given an assurance that God will never forsake them.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Give an account of the occasion of revelation and a point by point exegesis of *Sūrah a -Duḥā*

4.0 CONCLUSION

This chapter like some others takes its name from a particular part of the day. It is Meccan and contains 11 verses.

On its occasion of revelation, one report by Ibn Kathīr says: "The Prophet suffered a kind of illness which prevented him from standing for prayer for a night or two. Then a woman came and said: 'O Muhammad! I think that your devil has finally forsaken you.' So, Allah

revealed this *Sūrah*. The second which is the general opinion says that it was revealed because of the incident of a brief pause in the revelation of the *Qur'ān* to Muhammad. He was very sad because he felt his Lord has stopped revealing things to him. He was said to have attempted several time to go to the mountains and commit suicide but often was called by an angel assuring him that he is a Prophet.

The opening oaths in the chapter marked a new dawn in the life of the prophet as revelations continued gradually. In a very concise manner, the story of the early life of the prophet is told. It assured him that the Lord who took control of affairs when he was nobody can never forsake him after being chosen as a prophet. The closing of the chapter intends to entrench on the followers of the *Qur'ān* that the welfare of the people is central to any work of Islam. Orphan and the beggar are singled out as people who deserve our sympathy.

5.0 SUMMARY

At the onset of this unit, explanatory notes of selected words from the Surah a`d_Duha are given to make your study of the Surah easy. The text and translation of the *Sūrah* ad-Duha, are then presented. The commentary contains two accounts of the circumstances surrounding the revelation of the Surah, its verse by verse exegesis with their significance in the life of the Prophet Muhammed and lessons to be learnt from them. It highlights the different favours of Allah on Prophet Muhammad to assure him that Allah is with him. It closed with three directives which focused human feeling; although the directives are specifically to the prophet, they are also of a general nature.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- i. Expatiate on the significance of the verses of Surah a`d-Duha.
- ii. Show how the directives in this chapter border on social setting.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 4 SŪRAH A`SH-SHARĤ

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Text, Explanatory Notes and Meaning
 - 3.2 Commentary
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Sūrah ash-Sharh, Inshirāh or *alam nashrah* is a Meccan Period chapter (*Makkiyyah*) consisting of only eight verses. There is a strong correlation between *ash-Sharh* and *ad-Āhā* in form and subject matter. It has been attributed to Tāwus and Umar bn Abdu `l-Azīz that they said both are one chapter to the extent that they recite both in one *rak`ah* without any *basmalah* to separate them. The consensus is however that both are separate *Sūrahs*.

In both *Sūrahs*, except in just two of their verses, the tone of the conversation is in the second form. This also shows a kind of intimacy of Prophet Muhammad to Allah. The two *Sūrahs* recount some favours of Allah on the Prophet and exhort him to be grateful. The first verse reminds the Prophet that, “Have we not opened your breast for you?” while the sixth verse of *ad-Āhā* says “Did He not find you an orphan and give you a refuge?”

As we proceed, more on issues relating to this another important Surah will unfold to you in the course of our study.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- recite *sūrah a`sh-sharĥ* correctly from memory
- explain *sūrah a`sh-sharĥ* in idiomatic English
- comment on *sūrah a`sh-sharĥ*
- highlight the significance of the *sūrah a`sh-sharĥ* perfectly.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Text, Explanatory Notes and Translation

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 ap- 2 {7} ^?A KwA 1|A {6} d,.8 ,.O y (^2 {5} d,.8 ,.O y (^|A {4}
 {8} ^wA

Explanatory Notes

.k(" is to cut open or to explain by expanding the meaning or making commentary; hence it means explanation, expansion or commentary.

F(.kM (a) to cut the chest open, as regards this, there is a report which says Angel Jibril opened the breast of the Holy Prophet Muhammad while he was yet a boy and removed something like a clot. The report adds that there were no traces of blood during the operation. When the part taken was returned it was as bright as silver. This can be interpreted as signifying the illumination of the Prophets heart with wisdom and vastness for the reception of what was to be revealed to him; (b) to expand one’s bosom to be able to bear greater responsibility gladly and joyfully.

_S y/ is to place on or to impose while)S y/ is to remove from or to unburden.

.D\$ the burden 5(s {3? to weigh down the back. The Prophet’s anxiety for raising humanity from darkness to light and from ignorance to knowledge is described as a burden which weighed down his back.

CpL yA to raise high the remembrance of something.

..o every difficulty while t,.8 means ease.

^?A Kw A 1|A The popular interpretation of this is “when you finish up prayer get set for supplication. Some say “when you are free from your mundane affairs get ready for worship.”

^wA ap- 2 means “and to thy Lord make thy request. A group says it means “and makes thy Lord your exclusive object”.

Meaning:

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful:

1. Have we not expanded for thee thy bosom?
2. And removed from thee thy burden
3. Which weighed down thy back?
4. And raised high for thee thy remembrance?
5. Surely with difficulty is ease.
6. With difficulty is surely ease.
7. So when you finish be steadfast.
8. And to thy Lord make thy request.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

- i. Recite *Sūratu `sh- Sharḥ* from memory.
- ii. Transcribe the text of the *Sūrah* in an exercise book.
- iii. Attempt a translation of the *Sūrah* into idiomatic English.

3.2 Commentary

As earlier indicated in the introduction to this unit, this chapter 94 is closely connected with, *Sūratu ` -Duḥā* (chapter 93) to which, apparently, it forms a supplement. Like a *-Duḥā*, it assures the prophet that his difficulties were not to continue.

This interrogatory expression at the opening of the *Surah, alam nashrah* does not really intend to ask Prophet Muhammad a question; it aims at informing and reminding him of what had been done to him. This style has the effect of reposing confidence in him and teaches that the event is a great one which must not be allowed to slip by without due notice. It reveals Allah's deep concern for His Prophet. In similar interrogative way, it inquires that "Have we not opened your breast for you?" This, in the real sense of the word, actually happened because he was greatly relieved at heart.

Some exegetes say it refers to how his heart was actually opened up while still a four year old boy at Sa'd by angel Jibril. Aṣ-Ṣābūnī says it is the filling of his heart with faith, guidance and the light of the *Qur'ān*. Ibn Kathīr's explanation of this is that, "we have bestowed your heart with light and thus made it large, merciful and wide". He adds further that, as the heart of the Prophet has been expanded, so the same has his laws been made broad, easy, simple and devoid of any crookedness. The incident which takes place while he was a boy is an early purification of his heart from all the whispering of shaytān. This prevents him from involving in any form of evil or sinful thing from his

childhood. This lofty background made his heart poised for divine guidance, faith, acceptance of the *Qur'ān*, human feeling, magnanimity and wisdom.

This portion recounts three great favours of Allah on him. The first is the expansion of his heart and filling it with wisdom and deep faith. The second is his cleansing from sins and other blemishes which were prevalent in his environment. The third is the elevation of his status and prestige in this world and the next. This recount was meant for no other purpose than to comfort and reassure the Prophet that he has been given ease. Allah has been following his efforts in propagating Islam and the stiff opposition he has been met with which weighed on him heavily that he desired an immediate assistance. Seeing his innermost heart, this *Sūrah* comes to give him solace.

The second and third verses talk about a burden weighing him down and how Allah has removed it from him. This burden in the exegesis of Ibn Kathīr is the past and future sins of the Prophet as alluded to in Q48:2 that Allah may forgive you your faults of the past and those to follow; fulfill His favour to you; and guide you on the straightway.

In *at-Tafseer al-Munīr*, it is said that Allah removes from him what he imagines and apprehends of the sins, errors and disobedience which has enveloped his people and thus burdening his mind. This applies to both his pre and post prophetic eras. There are no records that he participated in the *jāhilyyah* practices of his time or to have involved in sinful things. After prophethood, however, he did some things which did not befit his status as a prophet. Some examples are when he permitted the hypocrites without querying their excuses to stay behind from Tabūk expedition, accepting ransom from the war captives of Badr and frowning when Abdullah Ibn Umm Maktūm, the blind, came to him.

In their own exegeses, al-Marāghī and Qu b see it as his great task of shouldering the responsibility of prophethood and delivering it to humanity. This appears more suitable in the light of Q9:128

Now has come unto you a Messenger from amongst yourselves: it grieves Him that ye should perish: ardently anxious is He over you: to the believers is He Most kind and Merciful.

The relief takes different forms. One could be that Allah eases the task of delivering the message despite the stiff opposition of his countrymen and plots of the hypocrites and the Jews. He was actually troubled by the difficulties facing his mission but, “The relief took the form of lifting up your heart so that you might feel your mission easier and your burden not difficult to shoulder.” Sayyid Qu b further adds that, “Another

aspect of the relief was the guidance you received on how to discharge your mission and how to appeal to men's hearts. Furthermore, there is a relief for you in the revelation of the *Qur'ān* which explains the truth and helps you to drive it home to people easily and gently."

In addition to the relief, the fourth verse says he has been given fame. This, according to Ibn Kathīr, is the mentioning of the Prophet's name along with that of Allah in the word of testimony. This is unique as no other prophet or mortal enjoys such exaltation. This fame, al-Marāghī adds, includes his high status as a prophet and having multitudes of followers across the globe following his practice and refraining from his prohibitions. Wahbah az-Zahīlī in his *al-Munīr* also adds that the Prophet's fame has been exalted in this world and the next. He is made a prophet and the last in the chain of messengerhood. The Glorious *Qur'ān* was revealed to him. The Believers are enjoined to testify that he is Allah's Messenger during *Adhān*, *Tashahhud*, *Khutbah* and the like. They are also enjoined to ask for *Salāt* on him, obey him and that obedience to him is obedience to Allah.

Ibnu Abbas reported the Holy Prophet as saying: I asked my Lord a question I wished I never did! I said: Many prophets had been raised before me. You made the wind subservient to Sulayman while you made Isa (AS) to raise the dead to life. What did you give me? God Almighty answered: Didn't I find you an orphan and shelter you? I found you wandering and showed you the way? Found you poor and enriched you? Expounded your bosom for you and exalted thy remembrances.

The title of the Chapter *a`sh-Sharh* or *al-Inshirah* has two interpretations; to cut open by operation or to expand. As regards the former there is a Prophetic report which says while the Holy Prophet was yet a boy, two Angels held him in the desert, cut open his chest, removed a portion as reddish as clot of blood and returned it shining like silver. The report adds that in the operation there were no traces of blood or feeling of pain.

In the case of the latter interpretation the title only connotes that his chest was expanded to be able to bear a great responsibility which was to be imposed on him; i.e. divine mission. The possibility of reconciliation is not however remote by interpreting the word to mean that the Prophet experienced illumination (*kashf*) and his heart is made broader for the reception of the Divine revelation. This can be further understood by referring to Q.6:126 which says "So whomsoever Allah intends to guide aright He expands his breast for Islam and whomsoever He intends to live in error, He makes his breast straitened and narrow."

The great burden which almost broke his back referred to in verses two and three is his anxiety for humanity and perhaps for the delay in revelation which in any case had been relieved or removed by Divine revelation.

Verse 4 is a clear prophecy of the glorious eminence to which the holy prophet was to be raised., uttered at a time when he was unknown. This has materialized from the time he was alive till the present day. For his name has been made an inseparable part of the formula of testimony in Islam. Imagine the number of times the Muslims say this in their sermons, adhāns and tashahhud everyday.

Verse six reveals a general law of nature. There is no difficulty without a solution. This is repeated in verse seven, for extra emphasis on the fact that, whatever trouble encountered by man, God always provides a way which leads to ease and happiness if we only follow His guidance.

Verses seven and eight can also be taken as a general law that when man finishes with his mundane problems and affairs he should labour and struggle hard in his worship of God. And to his Lord only he should make his entire request and concentrate all his efforts.

In these last four verses, three issues are raised. The first is in form of a promise and in a way too, a glad tiding from Allah to the Prophet, that he will surmount his trying times and triumph over his enemies. The second issue is that he should be devoted to the worship of Allah after he has delivered the message as a way of appreciating His favours on him. The last issue raised is that after every effort or affair, he should still rely on Allah and desire what He has in store for him.

The fifth and sixth verses are comfortable addresses from Allah as balm to the heart of His Prophet. It is indeed a promise that after all he had suffered of poverty, weakness and persecution; he will enjoy richness, strength and triumph. The repetition of these verses implies that the Prophet had really endured hardship for a long time. His life story testifies to this. When he started to invite his people to the way of Allah, they opposed and persecuted him and his followers. The ease eventually came when the people of Madina embraced Islam and sacrificed all their belongings for its cause. Afterwards, the polytheist Meccans were conquered and Islam prevailed.

Teaching the prophet the sense of gratitude for the favour of ease after hardship, the seventh verse exhorts him to worship Allah earnestly. Having struggled for the mission and life endeavours amidst various obstacles, he is enjoined to be constant in worship and seeking Allah's reward and not any other. The fulcrum of the last verse is that he should

desire his Lord more than any other thing. It states, “...turn (all) your attention” (^{^w}A). Naturally, if he does this, he will be closer to his Lord because he will always want to do what can please Him. It can also be inferred that man should have a goal. He lives in a world that is made up of many alluring things. He should not be guided by them as all these things belong to Allah but should sī them as trials and temptations. He should turn His attention to His Lord through whom he will be able to appreciate the value of everything in their original context.

In his commentary, Ibn Kathīr says it means “when you have finished your worldly affairs and from its obligations you have become free, then let you stand for worship, and to the utmost of your zeal, devotion, purified intention and desire for your Lord, let you then perform it.” Turning to his Lord is said to be after prayers. Ibn Mas‘ūd on his own says “when you have finished your obligatory prayers, stand for the night prayer”. Another says let your intention and desire be for your Lord”.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Summarise the above commentary on *Sūrah a`sh-sharḥ*.

Analyse *Sūrah a`sh-sharḥ* highlighting the favours of Allah in the life of Prophet Muhammad.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The *Sūrah a`sh-sharḥ*, recounts some favours of Allah on the Prophet and exhorts him to be grateful. The sixth verse of *a`-Duḥā* says “Did He not find you an orphan and give you a refuge?” while the first verse of *alam nashraḥ* reminds the Prophet that, “Have we not opened your breast for you?”. In both *Sūrahs*, except in just two of their verses each, the tone of the conversation is in the second form. This also shows a kind of intimacy of Prophet Muhammad to Allah. This chapter is an evidence of Allah’s concern for man and manner of selecting people for His mission. He prepares such persons in the best of ways. In the case in question, the heart of the Prophet was in all respects purified and prepared for the task of prophethood. The chapter emphasises the fact that ease will always come after difficulties. This is a principle that makes one think positively as one is encouraged to keep on making effort.

5.0 SUMMARY

At the onset in this unit, explanatory notes of selected words from the *Sūrah a`sh-sharḥ* are given to ease your study of this other important *Sūrah*. The text and translation of the *Sūrah* are then presented. The commentary contains accounts of the circumstances surrounding the revelation of the *Sūrah*, its verse by verse exegesis with their significance in the life of the Prophet Mohammed and lessons to be learnt from them which are of general nature.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Write the text and translation of *Sūrah a`sh-Sharḥ*; comment briefly on it.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

- Ali, A. Y. (1991). *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an*. USA: Amana Corporation.
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UNIT 5 SŪRAH AT - TĪN

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Explanatory Notes, Text and Translation of *Sūrah a`-t-Tīn*
 - 3.2 Commentary
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

2.0 INTRODUCTION

At the onset of this unit, notes on some words from the text of *Sūrah a`-t-Tīn* shall be provided for you to simplify your understanding of the content of the *Sūrah*. Likewise, you will be expected to learn the correct reading and meaning of the *Sūrah*. You will as well be exposed to brief commentary on it. The significance of the *Sūrah* cannot be over-emphasised. This will be clearer to you as we make progress. Therefore, let us proceed.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- recite *Sūrah a`-t-Tīn* correctly and from memory
- explain *Sūrah a`-t-Tīn* in idiomatic English
- comment on *Sūrah a`-t-Tīn*
- highlight the significance of the *Sūrah a`-t-Tīn* perfectly.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Text, Explanatory Notes and Translation

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Explanatory Notes:

﴿٥٤﴾ is a kind of medicinal food fruit. Physicians say it is nutritious, quick in digesting, reduces saliva, cleanses the kidneys and removes sand from bladder, livers and spleen. The Prophet is reported as being presented a plate of *tīn* fruit. After taken it, he encouraged his companions to take out of it saying: he would have wished to say it is fruit from Paradise.

It is said that he who finds *tīn* in his vision will become rich; and he who dreams that he ate it will be blessed with many children.

It is also said that when Adam covered himself with the leaves of *tīn* he looked like other animals. As dears moved closer to him, God made them handsome; and when Adam gave them leaves of *tīn* to eat their bloods turned to perfume.

﴿٥٤﴾ is considered to be one of the best fruits, condiment and medicine. It grows without cultivation in some places. Whoever beholds Olive's leave in his dream is assured of success.

From the ongoing utilities and benefits derived from *tīn* and *zaytūn* we can conclude that they are important fruits; hence their being objects of oath.

In another interpretation, the names *tīn* and *Zaytūn* are for two mountains in the holy land called *Tūr Tīn* and *Tūr Zittīn* in the Syriac tongue; so called because the fruits grow there.

According to Yusuf Ali, *a`l-Tīn*: the fig is a useful nutritious and laxative fruit while *Zaytūn* is a fruit from which oil is extracted, edible and nutritious. Both, he continues, symbolize man in many ways as they can be finest and most delicious fruits while under cultivation; and they can also be nothing but tiny seeds, and insipid and often full of worms and maggots when they are uncultured and in their wild state.

Ibn Kathir says: The two stands for Jerusalem where Prophet Isa was sent with messages from God, while *Tūr Sīnīn* stands for Mount Sīnai of Prophet Musa and *al-Balad al-Amīn* stands for Makkah, the birth-place of Muhammad.

Again according to Muhammad Ali, The Fig and the Olive stand respectively for the law given on Mount Sīnā' and that revealed in the sacred city of Makkah. This means that those revelations were mentioned chronologically but the oaths were taken, first with the great, then the greater, then the greatest.

is Mount Sīnā' on which the Commandments were given to Prophet Musa.(A).

The City of Security is undoubtedly Makkah whose sacred character was respected and no fighting was allowed in its territory even in pagan times.

best form of structure, creation, mould etc, etc.

to the lowest of the low.

a reward that will never be cut off or followed by reproach.

Meaning: Chapter of the Fig,

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful:

1. By the fig and the olive.
2. By mount Sīnā'
3. And by this city which is made safe.
4. Certainly, We created man in the best make.
5. Then We reduced him to the lowest of the low.
6. Except those who believe and do good works.
7. And theirs is a reward never to be cut off.
8. What after this (O disbelievers) causes you to deny the recompense?
9. Is not Allah the best of Judges?

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

- i. Write notes on *at-Tīn*, *Zaytūn*, *Tūr Sīnīn* and *al-Balad al-Amīn*.
- ii. Translate *Sūrah at-Tīn* into English.
- iii. Attempt recitation of *Sūrah at-Tīn* from your memory.

3.2 Commentary

According to M. Bashir Sambo and Muhammad Higab (1983). "At-Tīn means figs and al-zaytūn means olives. However, the circumstances surrounding the revelation of the *Sūrah* do not show that they refer neither to the fig nor to the olives as fruits, but rather as the names of important places. Therefore the oath was referring to the two places in Syria called *Tūr Tīn* and *Tūr Zittīn*. These holy places and the holy land, Makkah, were the places where Prophets Ibrahim, Musa, 'Isa and Muhammad (peace be upon them) received their revelations".

The aforementioned two authors further explain in their interpretation that Allah swears by these holy places which were the ports of revelations to the Prophets Musa, 'Isa and Muhammad (peace be upon them) because from those places sprang up Allah's message of Guidance to mankind. In Syria, prophets Ibrahim and 'Isa appeared; and on mount Sinai Musa talked to his Lord, Allah, and in Mecca appeared the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him).

Allah swears by these particular places showing that He (Allah) had created man in the best structure and bestowed him with the advantages of intellectual faculties which guided him to distinguish between right and wrong. But people are of two types in terms of response to their prophets. Those who misused the privilege of the ability of thought, rejected the message of Allah and disobeyed their prophets, and hence deserved the punishment of Hell. Meanwhile, those who properly used the privilege of ability to think, who acknowledge the message of Allah and obeyed their prophets deserved the reward of Paradise.

In another interpretation, the basic point in this *Sūrah a`-t-Tīn* is that of the upright nature which Allah has given man says (Sayyid Qutb 1979). This upright nature is essentially in perfect harmony with the nature of faith. With faith man nature attains its ultimate perfection. But if man deviates from this upright nature and from the straight path of faith he sinks into the lowest of ranks.

Allah swears to the importance of this by fig "tin", the olive "zaytin", the Mount of Sinai "Tur Sinin" and the secure city of Makka "**al-balad al-amin**" As we have already explained above.

However, both the fig and the olive according to Sayyid Qutb, have a number of interpretations attached to them. It is said that the fig refers to the fig tree in heaven with the leaves of which Adam and his wife, Eve, tried to cover their private parts. Another suggestion is that the reference here is to the place where the fig tree appeared the mountain where Noah's ship embarked.

But as for the olive, it is suggested that it is a reference to the Mount of Tur Zaita in Jerusalem. It is also said that it refers to Jerusalem itself. Another view point says that it refers to the olive branch brought back by the pigeon which Noah (SAW) released from the ship to examine the state of the floods. When the pigeon brought the olive branch, he knew that the land had reappeared and that vegetation growing.

A different opinion also assumes that the fig and olive mentioned in the Surah are simply those two kinds of food with which we are familiar.

Alternatively, it is claimed, they are symbols of growth out of land. Therefore, something definite about this matter cannot be under ruled.

Nevertheless, the essential fact of the Surah is embodied in the following verses:

“Verily, We created man in the best stature (mould) Then We reduced him to the lowest of the low. Save those who believe and do righteous deeds. Then they shall have a reward without end (Paradise)”

The allusion here, is that Allah has perfected all His creation, and the special emphasis laid on man’s being endowed with perfect form shows clearly that this creature, man, has enjoyed extra care is most clearly apparent in the moulding of his highly complicated physical structure and his unique spiritual and mental makeup.

Moreover, the superiority of man’s creation is most clearly apparent in the spiritual qualities. He is made in a way, which enables him to attain a sublime standard, superior to that of the highest-ranking angels. This is illustrated in the story of the Prophet’s ascension to Heaven (*Mi’rāj*). Then, Jibrīl stopped at a certain level of the journey and Muhammad, the human being was elevated much higher.

At the same time, man is given the dubious ability to sink down to levels unreached by any other creature *Qur’ān* says:

“Then we reduced him to the lowest of the low”.

In this latter case, the animals become superior to him and more upright since they do not violate their nature. They praise the Lord and fulfill their function on earth as they are guided to do. But man who has been given the fairest and abilities denies his Lord and sinks right down. On the other hand, we read:

“Save those who believe (in Islamic Monotheism) and do righteous deeds”.

For these are men who stick to the upright nature, combine it with faith and righteous deeds, elevate it towards its destined level of perfection until they finally attain a life of perfection in the world of perfection: Allah says:

“Then they shall have a reward without end in Paradise”.

Thus, the importance of faith in human life becomes clear. Faith is the elevating path through which upright human nature ascends to its ultimate perfection. It is the rope stretched between man and his Maker. It is also the light showing him where to put his feet along the elevating path. When the rope is cut and the light out, the inevitable result is the fall down the sloping path into the lowest of the low. Thus the clay element in man's make-up separates from the spiritual element and man, along with stones, becomes fuel for the hell-fire. In the light of this fact, the Prophet is addressed as follows:

“Then what causes you to deny the Recompense”

What makes you, man, belie this religion after you have known this fact. *Qur'ān* challenges thus:

“Is not Allah the Best of judges?”

This shows that Allah's justice is certainly clear and His wisdom is manifest. Hence, we are taught in the Hadith related by Abu Hurayrah when one reads this *Sūrah* he should answer the rhetorical question of the above verse by saying “Indeed, and I am a witness to that”

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

- i. Give the various opinion of scholars on the objects of oath in *Sūrah a`-t-Tīn*.
- ii. Discuss God's creation of man in the best form and man's attitude towards righteousness.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Sūrah a`-t-Tīn is a Meccan period chapter (*Surah Makiyyah*) containing eight verses. It derives its name from the first verse. Oaths which are usually made to drive home a point into potential doubtful minds of hesitants and brevity of expression are two characteristics of this *Surah* like other Meccan period chapters.

Sūrah a`-t-Tīn means the chapter of fig. Its central theme is the creation of man in the best of form and his eventual fall into the lowest of the low.

According to Traditions' the Prophet used to recite *Sūratu `t-Tin* in *Witr*, (one unit) prayers, while traveling in the best of recitations. He used to recite it in the second Rak'ah of *Salatu `l-Ishāi*.

Surah a`-t-Tin relates to *Sharh* in the sense that while the former mentions Muhammad as the best of mankind the latter makes general reference to man and its ultimate end.

The message of *Sūrah a`-t-Tīn* is that Allah honours man by creating him in the best mould. This is a special design to make him discharge the responsibility of vicegerency. No other creature is better than man, thus the expectation is high that he must maintain and rule the world according to the dictates of Allah. His failure to do this has terrible consequences in this world and the next.

Man's attitude to the favour of Allah in creating him in the best of form is of two types. Some misuse the privilege of the ability to think, deny the message of Allah and disobey their Prophets. They then deserve the punishment of Hell. The other group makes proper use of the privileges, acknowledges the message of Allah and obeys the Prophets. They deserve Paradise as reward.

3.0 SUMMARY

At the onset in this unit, explanatory notes of selected words from *Sūrah a`-t-Tīn* were given to ease your study of this important *Sūrah*. The text and translation of the *Sūrah* were then presented. The commentary contains accounts for the significance of the words, which are figuratively used as oaths in the *Sūrah* and its verse-by-verse exegesis. The main theme of the *Sūrah* is that man is so created that he can rise to the highest degree of eminence if he sets before himself right principles and acts on them; similarly, he can degrade himself to the lowest position in creation, if he is not guided by right principles, or, being so guided, but fails to act upon them.

4.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Write *Sūrah a`-t-Tīn* in its original Arabic, translate it into English and comment briefly on it.

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MODULE**3**

	<i>Sūrah al-‘Alaq</i> and <i>al-Qadr</i>
Unit 1	<i>Sūrah al-Bayyinah</i>
Unit 2	<i>Sūrah az-Zalzalah</i> and <i>Sūrah -al- ‘Ādiyāt</i>
Unit 3	<i>Sūrah al-Qāri‘ah</i> and <i>at-Takāthur</i>
Unit 4	<i>Sūrah al-‘Aşr</i> and <i>al-Humazah</i>
Unit 5	

UNIT 1 SURAH: AL-‘ALAQ AND AL-QADR**CONTENTS**

1.0	Introduction
2.0	Objective
3.0	Main content
3.1	Text, Translation and Commentary on <i>Sūrah al- ‘Alaq</i>
3.2	Text, Translation and Commentary on <i>Sūrah al-Qadr</i>
3.3	Commentary
4.0	Conclusion
5.0	Summary
6.0	Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0	References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

One of the unique characteristics of the *Qur‘ān* is that its arrangement is divine, i.e. through guidance sent by Allah and brought by Angel Jibril to Prophet Muhammad. This unit will focus on the exegesis of chapter 96 whose first five verses were the first revealed passages of the Glorious *Qur‘ān*. In the unit you will learn something about the first five verses, the importance Islam attaches to knowledge right from its inception, and some moral and social issues that can be derived from the *Sūrah*. Furthermore, an exegesis of *Sūrah al-Qadr* which alludes to the moment in which the encounter between the Prophet Muhammad and Angel Jibril occurred will also be taken together with *Sūrah al- ‘Alaq*.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- recite *Sūrahs al-‘Alaq* and *al-Qadr* from memory.
- state the meaning of the *Sūrahs al-‘Alaq* and *al-Qadr*
- comment on the themes of *Sūrahs al-‘Alaq* and *al-Qadr*
- highlight the message and lessons in *Sūrahs al-‘Alaq* and *al-Qadr*.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Text, Translation and Commentary on Sūrah al- 'Alaq . Text

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Translation:

In the Name of Allah the most Gracious, the most Merciful:

- (1) Read in the name of your Lord who created,
- (2) Created man from clots of blood.
- (3) Read: your Lord is the most Bounteous,
- (4) Who has taught the use of the pen,
- (5) Has taught man what he did not know.
- (6) Indeed, man transgresses
- (7) Once he thinks himself self-sufficient
- (8) Surely to your Lord all things return
- (9) Observe the man who prevents?
- (10) A servant of Allah when he prays
- (11) Think: does he not follow the right guidance,
- (12) Or enjoin true piety?
- (13) Think: if he denies the truth and turn his back,
- (14) Does he not realize that Allah sees all?
- (15) Let him desist, or We will drag him by the forelock,
- (16) His lying, sinful forelock
- (17) Then let him call his henchmen.
- (18) We will call the guards of Hell.
- (19) No, never obey him, but prostrate yourself and draw closer to Allah.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

- i. Attempt writing, memorisation and recitation of Sūrah al- 'Alaq.
- ii. Attempt translation of the Surah in idiomatic English

Commentary

Sūrah al- ‘Alaq

To start this commentary we hereby remind you this short account of the prophet’s experience as a background. When the Prophet was close to age 40, he began to frequent cave of Hirā’ in the outskirts of the city of Mecca for seclusion. He would stay there for some days in meditation and reflecting over the happenings in his society and the creation in general; and would then return to his family.

On one of such occasions, Angel Jibril appeared to him, got hold of him, squeezed him, and said: “*Iqra*”, which means “read!”. The Prophet replied! “I cannot read”. The Angel held and squeezed him again. On the third time, the Prophet read along with him. Thereafter the Angel disappeared. Frightened and shivering the Prophet dashed home asking his wife, Khadijah, to cover him up. When he later narrated what he experienced to her, she took him to one Waraqah bn Nawfal, who was her paternal cousin but a Christian. On hearing the story, he said that was Angel of revelation; “the same Angel sent to Moses. I wish I was a young man so that I might be alive when your people will exile you out of this city”. Hearing this, the Prophet exclaimed ‘would they exile me?’ Waraqah replied “Yes! No man has ever preached a message like yours without being met with enmity. If I live till that day, I will certainly give you all my support”.

The word ‘*Iqra*’ is the first in the entire words of the *Qur’ān*. It appears twice in this section and never appears again in any other portion of the sacred Book. The Prophet is so addressed here as if he is standing in the presence of Allah being directed on the first thing he must do to deliver the message of his Lord. The essence and significance of this word again becomes lucid by the time one realises that the Prophet who is asked to read is unlettered. This, without any doubt teaches that the reading is beyond mere reading of letters written on pages of book. It has to do with proper education and enlightenment. It also shows that Islam attaches importance to knowledge and education from its on-set.

The methodology of this knowledge is stated as ‘in the name of your Lord’. The implication of this is that, the concern for Allah should guide our steps in all learning situation. It is only then the pursuit can have value and benefit humanity.

In the remaining portions, Allah describes Himself to man so that he will appreciate why he must read in His name. The first is that it is this Lord who creates all things but He is not created. This means that He is the originator of all things and then singles out man whom He creates

from the clot which sticks to the womb. This is to let man reflect over the grace of Allah in elevating him to the status of being a man that can now learn.

The second directive asking him to read also describes his Lord as being generous. It is out of His bounties that He has favoured man with His glorious book and the ability to read. Also, He has taught the use of pen among men. For without His favour, the pen cannot write anything perceptible to man. Just as people communicate using their tongues; Allah has also made it possible through the use of pen. Only Allah can tell how many letters or books men have written to share their views and feelings with other.

The emphasis in the fifth verse is that whatever knowledge man acquires is a favour Allah has bestowed on him. Thus, when man attains any level in knowledge he should see it as a divine favour.

The sixth verse of this *Sūrah al-Alaq* introduces us to the arrogant nature of man.

When he is reach and sees himself self sufficient he manifests arrogance. He forgets his humble origin and even his Creator who has endowed him with ability to acquire knowledge of things. Warning man of the consequence of this attitude, the eighth verse reminds him of his inevitable return to his Lord to account for all his deeds.

The following verses show that man even sometimes obstructs the path of the servants of Allah by preventing him from praying. That an unbeliever will prevent Allah's messenger from prayer was indeed a terrible crime. It was reported that verses nine - sixteen were revealed when the Prophet was praying and Abu Jahl came to prevent him. The application may however be general as it also enlists all people that obstruct any cause of Islam.

The eleventh verse raises a question that would it not have been better if the arrogant were to be on guidance and invites to piety and righteousness. If he does this, he will rather encourage or support those praying and equally humble himself before his Lord. Instead of doing this, he belies the truth and even turns away from listening to true admonition. It is unto this, he now calls people.

The 14th verse calls him to order that all his plans, steps and thoughts are seen and known by Allah. Thus unbelievers and sinners are threatened so that they will desist and follow the right cause. In the 15th – 18th verse, the stern warning is very clear. A tyrant is advised to desist or else his forelock will hold him. The forelock is mentioned as lying and

sinful because that is the place responsible for the planning of evil thoughts. At this time, when he would have been dragged by his forelock, and while suffering the consequence of his actions, he will be mockingly asked to call on members of his club who used to support him in his evil. He will realise his incapacitation and helplessness. The angels known as Zabāniyyah would be summoned to deal with them. They will drag the unbelievers into hell.

On a final note, the last verse gives three directives. The first is that His servant must never obey the transgressor as regards the call to neglect worship. Rather, he should prostrate and get closer to his Lord because that is best any servant can do on the earth surface.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

- i. What is the attitude of Islam to education from its onset?
- ii. Examine the extent men can go in his intransigence with illustration.
- iii. What are the consequences of intransigence to God and what advice does this divine portion has for the intransigent?

3.2 Text, Translation and Commentary

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Translation: Chapter of the Night of *Al-Qadr*

In the name of Allah the most Gracious, the most Merciful:

- (1) Verily, We have sent it (*Qur'ān*) down in the Night of *al-Qadr*.
- (2) And what will make you know what the Night of *al-Qadr* is?
- (3) The Night of *al-Qadr* is better than a thousand months.
- (4) The angels and the Spirit descend in it, by the permission of their Lord for every affair.
- (5) Peace it is till the rising of the morning.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Attempt writing, memorisation and recitation of self assessment exercise

- i. Attempt writing, memorization and recitation of *Sūrah al-‘Qadr*.
- ii. Attempt translation of the Surah in idiomatic English

Commentary

In the opening of the *Sūrah* “we” is used to describe Allah. This does not in any way connote that He is more than one. It is a royal plural, which is used to denote the magnificence of the One Who sends the *Qur’ān*. His unity is clearly affirmed in the *Qur’ān*. In this first verse, we are also told of the Quranic methodology being through revelation. This signifies that it was revealed by Allah to Prophet Muhammad and not the latter’s thoughts or views. There are several cases of some people claiming that they are inspired which nobody can prove.

The Quranic assertion of revelation that has been subjected to empirical studies has helped to prove its divinity. The third thing this verse establishes is the period this revelation took place. It says it is in the night of majesty which can be any of the five odd nights in the last ten days of Ramadan. The remaining verses shed light on the significance of this night. The other connotation of the verse is that the entire *Qur’ān* was revealed at once, whereas it is often said that the revelation lasted for 23 years. There is no contradiction in the two positions as they have two different contexts.

In his exegesis, Ibn Kathīr says. “Allah sent the *Qur’ān* down all at one time from the preserved tablet (*al-lawh-al-Mahfūz*) to the house of might (*Baytul-Izah*), which is located in the heaven of this world”. This clearly shows that the entire book was revealed there in the month of Ramadān in which we have *laylatul-Qadr*.

As the book is meant to guide humanity, its revelation took this into consideration. So, as events unfold or occasions demand, relevant portions were revealed for guidance. This gradual revelation helps people to assimilate and adjust to the Quranic way of life. This lasted twenty years of the prophet’s mission.

The usual style of the *Qur’ān*, using question forms is employed in the second verse to raise curiosity and emphasise importance of *laylatul-Qadr*. In the third verse, this night is described as better than a thousand months (i.e. eighty three years four months). This means that worshipping of Allah or the reward for any act of righteousness in this night is equal to what one will have to originality engage in for more

than eightythree years. This is indeed a special blessing for the *Ummah* of Muhammad. For one to be able to witness this great moment, one is exhorted to undergo seclusion in the mosque within the last ten days of Ramadān. This is referred to as *I'tikāf*.

Another special moment in this night is that Angel Jibril and other angels will descend by Allah's permission. You should however note that their descent is another show of Allah's might and He only knows the manner in which this will be. They will descend in their multitude because of the abundance of mercy in this night. This conforms to the attendance of angels at circles of Quranic recitation and remembrance of Allah.

In his explanation of the last verse, at-Marāghi says it means that this night that is circumscribed by the revelation of the *Qur'ān* and the presence of the angels is the one wherein peace and security will permeate all through. Everything therein will be mercy. Ibn Kathīr also adds that it is a night when shaytān cannot afflict any harm or evil. It has also been explained that angels will be sending peace on all who are praying in the mosque till the day breaks.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Highlight the main message of *Sūrah al-Qadr*.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The first five verses of the Meccan period *Sūrah al-'Alaq* which contains nineteen verses were the first revelations in the *Qur'ān*. The first five verses of the chapter show the importance Islam attaches to knowledge and education right from the onset. Intransigence, the worst form of which is to put obstacles in the ways of righteous men, is condemned, its consequences being hell fire in the hereafter. The closing words of the *Sūrah* advise that ways of righteousness, worship and seeking nearness to God are better for man. These must accompany education.

Meanwhile, *Sūrah al-Qadr* is also a Meccan period chapter containing five verses only.

It celebrates the momentous occasion of Quranic revelation. The celestial pure creatures are commanded to descend and interact with the true servants of Allah on earth. *Sūrah al-'Alaq* enjoins the prophet to recite the *Qur'ān* in the name of his Lord who creates and teaches man what he does not know. In *Sūrah al-Qadr* the revelation and virtue of

the *Qur'ān* is discussed and that it was revealed by the majestic Lord in the night of majesty.

5.0 SUMMARY

First, this unit gave you some backgrounds about *Sūrah al- 'Alaq* by discussing the incident which preceded prophethood of Muhammad. The text and translation of the *Sūrah* are then presented. The commentary contains exegetical analysis of the verses of the *Sūrah*. Secondly, the text of *Sūrah al-Qadr* is also presented in this unit. This is followed by its idiomatic translation into English. The commentary highlights the significance of the *Sūrah* and how it relates to the *Sūrah* before it.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- i. Highlight the lessons derivable from *Sūrah al- 'Alaq*.
- ii. Write the text of *Sūrah al-Qadr*. Translate it and comment fully on it.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 2 SŪRAH AL-BAYYINAH (CHAPTER 98)

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Text and Translation of *Sūrah al-Bayyinah*
 - 3.2 Commentary on *Sūrah al-Bayyinah*.
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Sūrah al-Bayyinah is a Medina period chapter. It derives its name from the first verse and it contains only eight verses. It correlates with the chapter before it in the sense that when it was said that the *Qur'ān* was revealed in the night of majesty, it gives the reason why it was revealed as the continuity of the unbelievers among the people of the Book in their unbelief and polytheism. One of the virtues of this chapter is that when it was revealed, angel Jibrīl told the Prophet that Allah says he should recite it to one of his Companions by name Ubay bn Ka'b who on hearing that Allah specially mentioned his name burst into tears out of humility and piety for being so honoured.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- recite *Sūrah al-Bayyinah* correctly and from memory
- translate *Sūrah al-Bayyinah* into idiomatic English
- explain exegesis and critical highlight of *Sūrah al-Bayyinah*

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Text and Translation of *Sūrah al-Bayyinah*

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Translation:

Chapter of the Clear Evidence

In the name of Allah the most Gracious, the most Merciful:

- (1) Those who disbelieve among the people of the scripture and the idolaters could not have left off (erring) till the clear proof came unto them,
- (2) A messenger from Allah, reading purified pages.
- (3) Containing correct scriptures.
- (4) Nor were the people of the scripture divided until after the clear proof came unto them.
- (5) And they are ordered not but to serve Allah, keeping religion pure for Him, as men by nature upright, and to establish worship and to pay the poor-due. That is true religion.
- (6) Lo! Those who disbelieve, among the people of the scripture and idolaters, will abide in fire of hell. They are the worst of created being.
- (7) (And) lo! Those who disbelieve and do good works are the best of created beings.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

- i. Attempt a recitation of *Sūrah al-Bayyinah* perfectly and from memory.
- ii. Give the English equivalent of *Sūrah al-Bayyinah*.

3.2 Commentary

At the dawn of Islam, the entire world was deep in one form of corruption or the other. So, there was the dire need for reformation; and the people of the Book were united in the expectation of a messenger. Allah showed His mercy by sending Muhammad to carry out this task. In the wake of this, according to the first part of this chapter, when the clear proof came to them they broke into groups; i. e. those who contest the messengerhood of Muhammad and denied his prophethood amongst the people of the Book (Jews and Christians); and the polytheists who refused to relinquish their disbelief or the path of their forefathers. When the clear poof exposed the falsity of their beliefs and practices instead of

embracing the clear proof, they explained it away that there is no need for what he had brought as it is already contained in the scriptures and that following the way of their forefathers is better. Ibn Kathīr in his exegesis refers to the *Qur'ān* as the clear proof. This does not contradict it being Prophet Muhammad; the former refers to the Messenger while the latter is the message. The two are inseparable.

The next verse goes further to shed light on what this '*bayyinah*' is. It is the messenger from Allah. This is an affirmation of his source being Allah who also sent the previous messengers too. So, he is not speaking his own words but that of his Lord. His mission is to recite and teach the pure message of the *Qur'ān* which is devoid of falsehood and idolatrous belief as laid credence to in Q41:42

The Books which he recites to them is regarded by al-Marāghi as chapters and verses in the *Qur'ān* because each chapter therein is a correct Book or it could mean the legislation entailed in the word of Allah.

Qutb in his own commentary says 'The term "Book" is used for reference to the subject discussed, for example, book of purity, book of prayers, book of destiny and book of resurrection...' The situation of the Jews and the Christians actually changed with the advent Muhammad. Some reverted to Islam while at least; others refrained from their unlimited pursuits of self desire.

In the fourth verse, a historical fact is stated by Allah to expose the folly of the people of the Book and to put Prophet Muhammad on guard about their attitude. It unveils that their doctrinal differences is ancient. Qutb cited several instances in his exegesis, one of which is that:

The most violent of doctrinal divisions was that which erupted between the Byzantine state and the Christians of Syria and the Christians of Egypt, or, in a more accurate definition, the melkites and the monophysites. The main dispute was over the alleged combination of the Divine and the human natures in Jesus. The melkite Christian of Syria held that he was both Divine and human, while the Monophysites of Egypt insisted upon his being truly Divine, the human part of his nature having lost itself in the Divine as a drop of vinegar loses its identity in the ocean..."

By this, the Prophet is pre-informed about their state of affairs so that when they come to him or he encounters them in intellectual

discussions he will not be ignorant of these divisions. The unfortunate thing about the whole thing is that their differences were not due to ignorance but self-desires to contest your clear proof. They have done so to those before you. If they reject your prophethood they have also disbelieved in Allah's signs after they were made clear to them.

The fifth verse of this chapter reproaches their deviation and lack of willingness to change. It states the basis of all divine religions as being sincere worship of Allah, observance of *salāt* and giving of *Zakat*. Instead of pursuing this noble cause, they split into groups and follow selfish desires of their leaders and some individuals worse still, instead of getting closer to the Muslims; they take the polytheists as allies. The verse closes with the fact that the upright nation upholds the sincere devotion to Allah, drawing nearer to Him through prayer and practical demonstration of faith through welfare concern for humanity.

Ahead of the final return to Allah, the sixth verse emphatically informs that the punishment of the disbelievers amongst the people of the Book and the polytheist is eternal stay in hell. The reason for this horrible end is because of their disbelief in the clear proof brought to them by their prophets in their religion and their rejection of the prophethood of Muhammad who stands as the final clear proof. These people are juxtaposed with the polytheists because they ascribed other deities to Allah in worship. The verse then concludes that they are the worst of all creatures because they flagrantly reject the truth after clear knowledge about it. They also fail to abide by the power of discrimination as bestowed on them by Allah. It is like a verdict which does not accommodate any argument.

As a balance Book, having discussed the deviation which the people of the book have fallen into and the ultimate consequence, it talks about those who believe and engage in righteous deeds as the best of creatures. These are those who believe in what Prophet Muhammad had brought and act by them to letter. They uphold the principles of revealed religions as stated earlier. They dedicate all their deeds to Allah alone. They draw closer to Him by all He has instructed. They are also kind to fellow men.

The last verse states that Allah will reward them with an eternal garden of paradise wherein they will enjoy different delicacies. Special rivers shall flow underneath it. They are entitled to this because all their deeds while in the world are pleasing to Allah and are done in conformity with His guidelines. Thus, Allah assures them that they will also be pleased with His recompense for their deeds. The concluding part of the verse clearly asserts that all the enjoyments of the eternal paradise are dependent on the fear of Allah. This implies that the quality of

one's heart in obedience to Allah will determine the extent of one's reward.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Who are the worst of mankind and who are the best according to this chapter?

4.0 CONCLUSION

This chapter addresses four facts relating to history and faith: (1) the necessity of the coming of Prophet Muhammad to reform the people of the earlier scriptures and the polytheists; (2) the fact that the religious discords which the people of the earlier religion fell in were after they have seen clear proof; (3) the third fact is the unity of origin for all religions; and (4) that the worst of people are those who disbelieve after clear proof has come to them. Those righteous in their belief and deeds are the best of the creatures; the quality of their hearts in faith and deeds will determine the extent of their rewards.

5.0 SUMMARY

After the text and translation of *Sūrah al-Bayyinah*, background information about the situation in Arabia opens the commentary on the *Sūrah*. A discourse about the necessity of Prophet Muhammad's coming to reform the people of the Book and their attitude towards his mission when he was chosen for the task is presented. The last issue this unit treated was the consequence of belief or otherwise in Allah.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- i. Write notes on the situation in Arabia at the advent of Islam and the attitude of the various religious groups to its mission.
- ii. Identify and discuss the core of worship as mentioned in *Sūratu 'l-Bayyinah*.
- iii. What does this *Sūrah* regard as common characteristic of both people of the
- iv. Scripture and idolaters?
- v. Briefly, explain the four important facts mentioned in *Sūrah al-Bayyinah*.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

- Abdul, M.O.A. (1986). *The Holy Book of Islam*. Lagos: Islamic Publication Bureau.
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UNIT 3 SURAH AZ-ZALZALAH AND SURAH AL- ‘ĀDIYĀT (CHAPTERS 99 & 100)

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Text, Translation and Commentary on *Sūrah Az-Zalzalah*
 - 3.2 Text, Translation and Commentary on *Sūrah Al-Adiyāt*
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit you will learn the writing, reading and memorization of *Sūrahs Az-Zalzalah* and *Al-‘Ādiyāt* in their original Arabic form. You will also learn the idiomatic translation and comprehensive commentary provided for them. Other relevant information concerning both *Sūrahs*, such as event of hour of judgement and other exegetical interpretations which make the study of this unit important will also be pointed out to you.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- recite *Sūrah Az-Zalzalah* and *Sūrah Al-Adiyāt* correctly
- recall both *Sūrahs* from memory
- translate the two *Sūrahs*
- comment on the *Sūrahs*.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Text, Translation and Commentary on *Sūrah Az-Zalzalah*

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***Sūrah Az-Zalzalah* (The Earthquake ch. 99)**

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful:

1. When the Earth is shaken to her (utmost).
2. And the Earth throws up her burdens (from within)
3. And man cries (distressed). What is the matter with her!
4. On that Day will she declare her tidings.
5. For that your Lord will have given her inspiration
6. On that Day will men proceed in companies sorted out to be shown the Deeds that they (had done)
7. Then shall anyone who has done an atom's weight of good, see it!
8. And anyone who has done an atom's weight of evil shall see it.

COMMENTARY

Sūrah az-Zalzalah contains eight verses and it was revealed in Medina. It correlates with *Sūrah al-Bayyinah* which mentions the reward of the believers and the unbelievers by stating the exact time of reward. There are other reports which say it is a Meccan chapter. Sayyid Qutb in his exegesis supports this last view on the ground that the mode of expression and content conforms to the style and themes of a Meccan chapter. It is said to have been revealed as a response to the frequently asked questions of the unbelievers about the judgement day. According to al-Marāghī, this chapter simply mentions some portents of this day so that they will be able to distinguish the exact day when people will be rewarded accordingly.

In the case of *Sūrah al-‘Ādiyāt*, apart from being a Meccan chapter of 11 verses, it correlates with *az-Zalzalah* in two folds. One, while the latter states the reward for good and evil deeds, it is as if it is trying to say despite this, man still prefers this world to the hereafter by not engaging himself in good deeds. Two, *az-Zalzalah* discusses the earth bring out its burden while *Sūrah al-‘Ādiyāt* talks about resurrection.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Identify and explain how *Sūrah al-‘Ādiyāt* correlates with *az-Zalzalah*.

Sūrah al-‘Ādiyāt

The opening verse of this chapter depicts violence in its wordings and content. An earthquake is known to be a frightening phenomenon that can swallow up high mansions and bury several people underneath the

earth. There has never been a global earthquake. So, when this chapter says the entire earth will shake to its utmost, a thinking mind gets throbbled; and the feet shake as if the moment has come. This is because earthquake or Tsunami has always uprooted the strongest things on the surface and brought forth things underneath to the surface.

The second verse of this chapter says the earth will also throw out its burden. Ibn Kathīr says the burdens are the dead bodies buried therein. This will also include all the treasures that are buried therein as a result of the volcanic shaking. This in itself may be regarded as a way of purifying the earth and returning it to its original state. It also connotes that, if the big earth will cast out all its secrets, the motives, whisperings and secrets of man will be more unveiled for judgement.

It has also been recorded in the Hadith book of Muslim that the Prophet said: “The earth will throw out the pieces of its sliver (what is deposited therein). Gold and silver will come out from it like columns. A murderer will come and say, ‘I killed for this!’ The one who ceased the ties of kinship will say, “for this I severed the ties of kinship!’ The thief will then say, ‘for this I got my hands amputated!’ They will then leave it there without having anything from it.”

Now that man who had hitherto been buried in the earth is cast back on its surface, the third verse says he will be distressed and asked what the matter is. This is because “he will be amazed by its state; for it used to be stable, settled and firm ... it has become feverishly shaking, owing to the quaking to which Allah subjected it, the quake that will make it throw out all of its dead people; the first and the last generation. At this, the people will be confused by the events which dominate it, and the earth will be changed to another earth and so will be the heavens...”

While still in his puzzled state, the fourth verse states that the earth upon which man has lived all his life will give detail information of all actions of man. The earth in this wise is like a recording machine which follows man throughout his life. This role of the earth is another shocker for man. So, “it is not only that all my secrets will be exposed but the earth will testify against me.” This is why the Prophet has forewarned that:

Beware of the earth, for it is your mother (wherein you will be finally entombed; as nothing that the one may do be it good or evil, but that it will openly disclose.”

But why and how will the earth talk? The fifth verse replies that “Because your Lord has inspired it”. This shows the power of the Lord who also granted man power of speech and made some dumb. There is no need for man to be wondering, it is the same Lord who created him

on the earth surface that has commanded and permitted the earth to act as it is doing.

The next event after resurrection is that, when all men return from the judgement ground, they will be sorted out and made to proceed in different directions depending on the reports of their deeds in the world. The ones who do well would be ushered into paradise, while those who perpetrated evil will be led into hell. This verse (6th) corroborates the inner meaning contained in the opening verse that all things in the earth will be exposed and thrown out, so in the same manner, all the deeds perpetrated by men will be shown to them.

The last two verses drive home the point that the nature of reckoning on this day is such that no iota of good or evil deed will be jettisoned. All will be accounted for. It also implies that there shall be reward for all actions no matter how minute or big.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Summarise the points made in this segment of *Sūrah a`z-Zalzalah*.

3.2 Text, Translation and Commentary on *Sūrah Al-Ādiyāt*

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Surah Al-Adiyat (Those that run ch. 100)

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious the Most Merciful:

1. By the (steeds) that run, with (panting) breath.
2. And strike sparks of fire.
3. And push home the charge in the morning.
4. And raise the dust in clouds the while
5. And penetrate forthwith into the midst (of the foe)
6. Truly Man is to his Lord ungrateful
7. And to the (fact) he bears witness (by his deeds)
8. And violent is he in his love of wealth
9. Does he not know when that which is in the graves is scattered abroad.

10. And that which is (locked up) in (human) breasts is made manifest
11. That their Lord had been well-acquainted with them, (even to) that day?

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

- i. Write the two *Sūrahs* in their Arabic form and English translation.
- ii. Try the recitation of the Surahs from memory

Commentary

Sūrah al-Ādiyāt

This chapter opens with oaths like other Meccan period chapters. Then it proceeds to portraying fast manner which steed of war produces in the first five verses. It is like a war situation where horses are used by their riders to press their enemy further. Explaining the first verse, Ibn Kathīr says “Allah, the exalted swears by the horses when galloping into the battle in the path of Allah, wherein they run and make panting sound...” A war horse is like a war plane. It gallops at its top speed to pursue the enemy or make retreat with his master. As it does this, the second verse describes how its hooves cause sparks of fire. The third verse pictures an early morning attack. This is a kind of surprise attack aimed at dealing a big blow at the enemy while still unprepared. The object of the fourth verse is how the horses raise dust at the place of battle. They penetrate the midst of the enemies and make them run helter-skelter.

Thereafter, the subject matter of these oaths is mentioned in the next three verses. Man is said to be ungrateful. He bears witness to this and he is also an ardent lover of wealth. The correlation between this and the reference to the galloping, smiting and neighing of the horses is that man commits this animal or other war steeds to pursue his interest or fight his wars. They risk or sacrifice their lives to please man. But this same man does not dedicate his own life to his Lord as his horses do for him. So, the basic lesson is that man should not be ungrateful. He should take cue from these steeds which he uses to fight his wars and devote himself to the worship of his Creator.

The closing verses (9-10) are like cure for man’s excessive love for wealth. He is beacons upon to ponder over the scenes resurrection. He is informed that all that are buried in the graves will be thrown out. By this, he is asked to realize that death is not the end. All that is concealed in the heart will be brought to light. The heart is used because it is the

seat of all his thoughts. It however means that all he has ever done in life will be exposed and brought to account. The last verse presents a scene of no hiding place. Allah (SWT) Himself will acquaint people with all they have done. He will then reward them accordingly.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

How will you describe man's ungratefulness according to this chapter?

4.0 CONCLUSION

Sūrah a`z-Zalzalah shows that the hour of judgement will come by an earthquake. The Earth will give up her secrets and tell her tale of all man's doings. Men will march in companies and clearly see the inwardness of all their Deeds, no matter how small or big, but will be shown in the final account of men.

Al-Adiyāt also, displays a quick, strong feeling and breathless piece, with a sudden end of meaning, expression and rhythm that reflects a unique *Qur'ān* method expression. It also explains that man shows less gratitude to his most Gracious God while his life bears witness to his greed. However, God's knowledge is all-embracing and all things hidden will be laid bare at judgement.

5.0 SUMMARY

The foregoing two *Sūrahs* (*Az-Zalzalah* and *al-Ādiyāt*) are unanimous that the overwhelming event which will usher in the judgement day or resurrection will be a bigger and more far reaching convulsion than any earthquakes that we know. The narratives about the events are to make man aware of God's knowledge about his deeds on which he will be rewarded accordingly.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- i. Write *Sūrah Az-Zalzalah*; translate it and comment fully on it.
- ii. Write *Sūrah al-Ādiyāt*; translate it and comment fully on it.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Abdul, M.O.A. (1986). *The Holy Book of Islam*. Lagos: Islamic Publication Bureau.

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UNIT 4 SŪRAH AL – QĀRI ‘AH AND SŪRAH AT-TAKĀTHUR (CHAPTERS 101 & 102)

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main content
 - 3.1 Text, Translation and Commentary on *Sūrah al-Qāri‘ah*
 - 3.2 Text, Translation and Commentary on *Sūrah at-Takāthur*
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit you will learn the reading of text of *Sūrah Al-Qāri‘ah* and *Sūrah at-Takāthur* in their original Arabic form, you will also learn their meaning through the translation exercise, more so, you will learn the commentary in order to appreciate the lessons taught by the *Sūrahs*. Above all you are expected to learn both *Sūrahs* by heart and practice transcribing them.

2.0 OBJECTIVE

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- read *Sūrah Al-Qāri ‘ah* and *Sūrah At-Takāthur* correctly
- translate *Sūrah al-Qāri ‘ah* and *Sūrah at-Takāthur*
- explain the themes of the surahs through the commentary
- deduce the lessons from the two *Sūrahs*
- write an error free text of the *Sūrahs*.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Text, Translation and Commentary on *Sūrah Al-Qāri‘ah*

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Chapter of the Striker

In the name of Allah, the most gracious, the most merciful

- (1) The striker!
- (2) What is the striker?
- (3) Would that you knew what the striker is!
- (4) The day when men shall be like scattered moths.
- (5) And the mountains like carded wool
- (6) Then he whose scales are heavy
- (7) Shall enjoy a life of satisfaction
- (8) But he whose scales are light,
- (9) Shall have the abyss for his home.
- (10) Would that you knew what this is like;
- (11) It is a raging fire.

Commentary

The chapter of *al-Qāri‘ah* is Meccan; it contains eleven verses. *al-‘Ādiyāt* which precedes it ends with the description of the last Day while it opens with it and discusses its frights. On the other had, *at-Takāthur* was revealed in Makkah and contains only eight verses. It correlates with *al-Qāri‘ah* in the sense that while the former describes the Hereafter, its frights and rewards for the good and evil people, it mentions a kind of hell (*al-Jahīm*) just like *al-Hāwiyah* in *al-Qāri‘ah*. It also mentions how man will be subjected to interrogation in the the hereafter.

Also, Abu Hāim through Abu Buraydah has narrated *Sūrah al-Takāthur* was revealed in respect of two Ansāri tribes – Bani Hārithah and Bani al-Harth. Both boasted and recounted their worldly acquisitions to the extent that one of them said: “Do you have such and such?” And the other asked similar question. They boasted with all their living great ones until they said: let us go to the graves”. Then each began to point to graves asking if the other has such a great fellow.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

- i. How do *al-Qāri‘ah* and *at-Takāthur* relate?
- ii. What is the occasion of revelation of *Sūrah al-Takāthur* ?

Surah al-Qari ‘ah

Al-Qāri‘ah derives its name from the first verse which is itself one of the names of the last day. Each of the names about the judgement day always has its connotations. In our previous exegesis on *al-Ghāshiyah*,

you will recall that it connotes frights overwhelming all men. In this case *al-Qāri‘ah* is so adopted to show how its horrors will hit and knock hard on the hearts of men. To drive home the horror of the judgement day which the chapter has in focus, *al-Qāri‘ah* is thrice mentioned in a unique style. First, it announces the name in a single word. This represents the central theme of the chapter. It frightens the mind and makes it wondering what it really entails. Secondly, instead of explaining *al-Qāri‘ah* as announced, a question is further posed that what is *al-Qāri‘ah*? This is to further arouse curiosity in the hearer. Third, the answer is still not given as the question is even extended into a second person form saying “And what will explain to you what the (Day) of noise and clamour is?”

By now, the hearer feels uneasy, realising that the *al-Qāri‘ah* is beyond his imagination. Having created the effect of striking tension in the mind, it is then Allah proceeds to explain events that will take place on that day and not the exact nature of *al-Qāri‘ah*. Only three of the events are mentioned. The fourth verse states that men will be scattered like moths. This provides scene of chaos. A familiar sight of frail light insects that are diffused is used to impress the frightening situation on the mind of men. Yusuf Ali explains that: “To see them scattered about in a violent storm gives some idea of the confusion, distress, and helplessness in which men will be at first overwhelmed on the day of account.” Al-Marāghī also explains that due to the dread of the day, people will run helter-skelter not knowing which direction to go or what to do.

Another description given is that mountains will become like carded wool. In contrast to moth which is light object, reference is also made to mountain which is a solid object. It is deeply rooted and even serves as pegs for the earth. This strong object due to the clamour of the day will be dismantled into pieces. How much more then of the feeble mortal like man? The essence of this message is for man to realise that what he may take as substantial in this world will be nothing in the Hereafter. It is thus expected that he will fear this day and reform his character.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Comment fully on the first five verses of *al-Qāri‘ah*.

Verses 6-11(Scale of Deeds)

Having presented the prelude to this Day, the issue of weighing of deeds is highlighted. In this world, man is used to weighing materials for economic reasons but in the court of Allah, the deeds of man shall be weighted. The content of verses 6 –11 make us realize that when it is

weighed, people will fall into two groups. The first sets are those whose deeds after measurement will be heavy. These are people whose good deeds will outweigh their sins. Their reward will be a life of pleasure and satisfaction as mentioned in the seventh verse. The details of this pleasure are not given here as it aims at impressing pure happiness. But in other portions of the *Qur`ān* and *Hadīth* of the Prophet. There are mentions of palatable dishes, sweet drinks, comfortable accommodation, honourable companionship, vision of Allah and the like.

On the other hand, there will be those whose balance of deeds will be light. These are people whose evil deeds outweigh their good deeds. In contrast to those whose scales are heavy, they will live in displeasure in a bottomless pit in hell. The word '*umm*' which means mother as used here means a shelter of pain from which he can never escape. The same questioning style as used in the third verse is employed to emphasise that the '*hāwiyah*' is beyond man's comprehension. Consequently, the exact nature is stated as 'a raging fire'.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Discuss the weighing of man's deeds as depicted in this divine passage.

3.2 Text, Translation and Commentary on *Sūrah At-Takāthur*

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Chapter of The Abundance of Wealth

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful:

- (1) Abundance of wealth distracts you
- (2) Until you visit your graves
- (3) Indeed, you shall know!
- (4) Again, you shall certainly come to know.
- (5) Indeed were you to have certain knowledge,
- (6) You shall certainly see that fire of Hell.
- (7) Yes, you will see it with your very eyes.
- (8) Then, on that day, you shall be questioned about your joys and comforts.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

- i. Write the texts of both Surahs and translate it into diomatic English.
- ii. Attempt their recitation from memory.

Commentary on Surah a`-Takāthur

Al-hākum as an opening signifies a distraction from real business. It is such an engagement which makes one forgets any other thing. In this context, the object of the pre-occupation is rivalry in worldly possession.

This chapter exposes one of the greatest evils that has bedeviled man and distracted him from preparing for the Hereafter. It is the preoccupation with worldly pleasures. This Ibn Kathīr expounds further when he says:

“Are you (o children of Adam) preoccupied by love of the life of this world, its delights and its adornments that you are distracted from seeking and desiring the hereafter, in such a way that you are totally thereby obsessed until you are overtaken by death and thereto the graves you are brought”

The moral decline being witnessed today is largely due to inordinate passion for the pleasures of life at the expense of great concern for the hereafter. People become so engrossed in this till death catches up with them then it will be too late to repent. In the second verse, the issue of visiting the grave is mentioned. This may immediately correlate with the cause of revelation. Aside that it implies that man will die and be buried in the grave. It also shows man’s continuous quest for materialism till the point of death.

Qutb in his exegesis sees this chapter like the voice of one warning, saying at the top of his voice: “You drunken and confused lot! You take delight and indulge in rivaling for wealth, children and the pleasures of this life – from which you are sure to depart!”

Visiting the graves however is part of Islamic practice. The Prophet says: “... visit it for it makes you indifferent to the world and reminds of the hereafter.” The purpose of visiting it is not for any worship, idolatrous practice, oath or boasting but as a way to make one reflect over the transient nature of this life that the people in the grave were once walking on earth as we are doing now. This is aimed at softening the heart so that it will increase in good deeds and stop being beguiled by the glittering of this world.

The third and fourth verses are serious warning against inordinate piling up of wealth which, even in this world leads to nothing but envy, hatred and quarrels.

Heightening the terrible consequence of concern for petty worldly things, the fifth verse laments failure of men to take precaution. Were they to have certainty of knowledge, they will desist from indulging in this worldly pursuit. The inference from this is that true knowledge and logical reasoning are enough to make men know that their pursuits of worldly things is trivial, ephemeral and temporary. The fact that death puts an end to a man who has just amassed wealth is enough to caution others.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 5

Materialism is evil, discuss.

The kernel of the sixth and seventh verses is that, a kind of fire called *al-Jahīm* awaits those who turn away from the truth and wrongfully pile up wealth. Ibn Kathīr explains that “Allah threatens them with this situation, which is what the people of the fire will experience. It is the fire, which if it exhaled one breath, every angel who is near to Allah and every Prophet who was sent would all fall on their knees owing to their encompassing fright, dread and the sight of its horror.” Still in a frightening tone, the chapter concludes that man shall be taken to account for all his joys and comforts. This correlates with the opening that all that men mutually pursue of worldly gains for which they end up boasting shall not go unaccounted for. It is an emphatic statement that accountability is certain and thus there is no arbitrary judgment. The questioning will cover all legitimate or illegitimate things man enjoys and none will go Scot free.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 6

What is the significance of the last verse of this chapter?

4.0 CONCLUSION

The scene portrayed in *Sūrah al-Qāri‘ah* is full of horror, directly affecting man and mountain. Man is likened to carded wool carried away by winds and even by a light breeze. Then, the end of all mankind comes. On the other hand the chapter of abundance of good (*Sūrah At-Takāthur*) refers to the uncontrolled ambition of man to have wealth and more wealth which in the long run keeps him away from his moral duty to God and man while the deeds of everyone will be stored for him

or against him till the Day of Judgement. All these enjoined man to play his role well.

5.0 SUMMARY

This Unit discussed *al-Qāri‘ah* “The striker”, one of the names of resurrection events. It explains the importance of the day of recompense, what takes place in it and what it leads to in the end. *Sūrah At-Takāthur* on the other hand warns that man should neither engross himself in the pursuit of worldly things nor should he forget to prepare for the hereafter.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- i. Explain the term *al-Qāri‘ah* and its importance
- ii. What is the connotation of “scale” in *Sūrah At-Takāthur*.
- iii. Distinguish between he whose scales are heavy and he whose scales are light.

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UNIT 5 SŪRAH AL-‘AŞR AND SURAH AL-HUMAZAH (CHAPTERS 103 & 104)

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Text, Translation and Commentary on *Sūrah al-‘Aşr*
 - 3.2 Text, Translation and Commentary on *Sūrah al-Humazah*
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit you will learn the recitation and memorisation of *Sūrah al-‘Aşr* and *Sūrah al-Humazah*. As usual, try to transcribe the texts of the two *Sūrahs* in your note book by way of practicing Arabic writing. You will also learn the translation of each *Sūrah* and study the commentary written on them. You are expected to know the importance of the *Sūrahs*, particularly the lessons that can be derived from them.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- recite *Sūrah al-‘Aşr* and *Sūrah al-Humazah* perfectly
- recite both *Sūrahs* from memory
- translate each of *Sūrah al-‘Aşr* and *Sūrah al-Humazah*
- comment and state the lessons taught by both *Sūrahs*.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Text, Translation and Commentary

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Chapter of Time through the Ages

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious the Most Merciful:

By the Time (through the Ages);
Verily man is in loss
Except such as have faith, and do righteous deeds and (join together)
In the mutual teaching of truth, and of patience and constancy.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Attempt recitation of *Sūrat al-‘Aṣr* from memory; write the *Sūrah* in its original Arabic text and render it into idiomatic English.

COMMENTARY

Sūrah wa `l-‘Aṣr is chapter 103 of the Glorious *Qur’ān*. It contains three verses and it was revealed in Makkah. It is on record that whenever two companions met each other, they will not depart until one of them has recited this *Sūrah* to the other and one of them says the *taslīm*. Also, Imām Shāfi ‘ī is reported to have said that if people have pondered over this Chapter, it would have sufficed for them. These two references show how important and central the message of this chapter is to the life of a man.

In *Sūratu `t-Takāthur*, we are informed of how men were distracted from the worship of their Lord due to their rivalry for worldly pursuits. This *Sūrah al-‘Asr* emphasises that man by nature prefers doing what will lead him to destruction except those safeguarded by Allah from the evil inclination of their hearts.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

What is the relationship between this chapter and the one before it?

Sūrah wa `l-‘Aṣr like other Meccan *Sūrahs* starts with an oath with *al-‘Aṣr* to emphasize the value of time. There are several interpretations given to the word in the context of this chapter - the evening prayer, a period of the day, a phenomenal time and time in its generic sense. If *al-‘asr* is strictly regarded as evening prayer, this will be restrictive and suggestive that man, at other prayer times, is not in loss. Also, the evening prayer varies from one geographical zone to another. This will mean the prayer being observed at the evening time in one place may fall into morning in another. *Al-‘aṣr* as a period of the day represents when most people are just closing from their official working hours and resorting to various recreations that may be in disobedience to Allah.

This perspective will be restrictive as people also engage in such acts at night. So, it is better that *al-‘Asr* is understood in its generic sense. This will involve all periods and geographical zones across all countries when people involve in acts which are against the law of Allah.

In the second verse, the reason why the oath is made is because man is at a loss. *Al-Insān* (the man) is used in a definite sense but the *khusrin* (loss) is indefinite. The former implies that all men are victims except those referred to in the third verse. The perception of loss as stated here is not economic but that of the soul that is acting against its natural inclination of recognizing Allah as one and obeying all His commandments. However, it depicts the world of man as being at loss in all his life endeavours.

Al- Marāghi explains that man out of other creatures is in loss with regards to his deeds. The deeds of man are the roots of his misfortunes, and not the period or place...An illustration of this is corruption which has eaten deep into the fabrics of our polity, religion, economy, etc. As we all witness most time, man no longer pursue that which will please Allah and this is putting his efforts in jeopardy; and the consequence is that he will be in a state of loss in the Hereafter.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Explain the different meanings given to *al-‘Aşr*.

In verse three, this chapter mentions four qualities that can prevent one from falling into the loss. The first requires that one believes that Allah is one. It is to believe that this world has a Creator who perfectly knows what transpires therein. He creates it for a purpose and will reward those who carry out this purpose which is to worship Him. On the other hand, He will punish those who disobey Him. With genuine faith, man can ward off all evils. It will serve as a shield from all temptations and evil thoughts. According to *Hadīth* two of an-Nawawī it rests on six principles: belief in the oneness of Allah comes first. It will make you know and obey the originator of all things. It will place all human beings on the same pedestal without some group of men enslaving others in whatever form.

The second principle of faith is that you believe in all the angels of Allah. Recognising their different functions will make you conscious of their presence in all your endeavours. The belief in the divine books will guide your steps on the lawful and the unlawful. You will have a book of guidance through which you can be saved from loss. As the fourth principle, you must believe in the messengers and take them as models because they exemplify the will of Allah on earth. This will

save you from following an ordinary mortal whose life pattern may lead to the loss being mentioned in the chapter. The fifth principle requires that you believe firmly in the last day. This makes you conscious of all your actions as there is accountability. The last principle is the belief in destiny. This imbues in you the positive mind of coping with all situations in life without attributing your success or failure to any mortal or object. You are able to understand that life is full of ups and down so, when anything happens, you return to Allah for succour. Faith that will safeguard one from loss should be based on the above principles and their attendant manifestations.

The verse then highlights that it is not just enough to believe as explained, it must be followed with actions. This, the chapter refers to as doing righteous deeds. It signifies practical demonstration of faith. It among many others includes observance of *salāt*, giving of *Zakāt*, fasting in Ramadān, going on pilgrimage, enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil and the like. All these must be done for Allah and should be in conformity with the *sunnah* of the Prophet. Doing righteous deeds is very broad in Islam as it relates with goodness to man and even animals. It helps to instill sense of communal concern, good neighborliness, God conscious leadership, welfare concern and the like.

The third quality which can guarantee safety from the loss is to mutually enjoin the truth. This great task will prevent the society from corruption as everybody will be conscious of what is right or wrong. However, it has always been the nature of every society that it relapses into one form of decline or the other. Hence, it becomes the duty of the rightly guided to keep on reminding them of the virtue of upholding the truth.

The last quality requires mutual exercise of patience and constancy. On one hand, it wants people to be patient in obeying the law of Allah by consciously fighting against their self desires which may debar them from obeying Him. Also, it wants them to be steadfast in case they suffer some trials from Allah which itself is aimed at testing their faith. In another view, those who call to change or reformation of the society must be patient with the people and bear their persecutions. It has always been the nature of people when Allah sends a messenger to them that they resist, oppose, fight or even kill them. The lesson from these Prophets' life is that they always exercise patience and leave their affairs in the hands of Allah. Prophet Nūh preached for almost a century and continued to bear their evils until Allah finally destroyed them with flood. Another case is that of Prophet Muhammad, he invited his countrymen from worship of idols to that of Allah for more than twenty years. They resisted and even victimized his followers and waged war against him. But with patience, he eventually conquered them.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

Explain an individual's way to salvation as can be derived from the above.

3.2 Text, Translation and Commentary

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Chapter of the Scandal-Monger

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful:

- (1) Woe to every kind of scandal-monger and backbiter
- (2) Who piles up wealth and keeps counting it again and again.
- (3) Thinking that his wealth will make him immortal.
- (4) By no means! He will indeed be flung into the crushing one.
- (5) Would that you knew what the crushing one is?
- (6) It is Allah's own kindled fire,
- (7) Which rages over men's hearts
- (8) It is closed on them from every side,
- (9) In towering columns.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 5

Attempt recitation of *Sūrah al-Humazah* from memory.

Write the Arabic text of the *Sūrah* and translate it into English.

Commentary

Sūrah al-Humazah is chapter 104 of the Glorious Qur'an. It is a Meccan chapter containing only nine verses. It connects with *Sūrah al- 'Aşr* in the sense that while Allah says that all men are in loss therein except those who believe and act righteously, some qualities of those who suffer this state of loss are mentioned here.

In his *Asbābu an-Nuzūl*, as-Suyūti through the authority of Uthmān and Ibn Umar who said that they kept on hearing that the chapter was revealed in respect of Ubayy bn Khalaf. Atta'ū and Kalbiy, al-Marāghi, also said it was revealed because of al-Akhnas Ibn Shurayq who used to backbite people especially the Prophet. Other names mentioned for the

cause of revelation are al-Walīd Ibn al-Jumahī. This kind of variance in name is possible in causes of revelation due to either the factor of place, repeated occurrences and non-direct expression by the Prophet. The purpose for which it is revealed is clear. It is because of scandal mongering. Mujāhid however submits that it is a general term which implies that it is applicable to all that engage in the act.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 6

State the backgrounds to this chapter.

The chapter opens with the word *waylun* which connotes curse, disgrace and punishment. This word, *waylun* wherever it is used implies that an action is sinful and punishable. As explained in *Jalālayn*, it denotes punishment or a valley in hell. Al-Marāghī adds that it also connotes ignominy on the day of judgement. It is also said by Alūsi that it means a terrible evil, sadness, destruction, painful punishment, a valley and mountain in hell. It is also a kind of curse which is rained on those that suggest evil of others by any means such as abuse, insult, backbiting slander and the like. The use of *humazah* and *lumazah* in their indefinite forms makes it encompass all that involve in such evil acts.

Distinguishing between the two, Ibn Kathīr says, “*al-humazah* refers to the one who slanders by speech, and *al-lumazah* refers to the one who slanders by action”. These are serious social vices where people pompously degrade and belittle others due to one economic, social or political advantage or another. They are so deceived that that they arrogate things to themselves forgetting that all possessions are Allah’s. Detesting their arrogance and self-conceit, Allah declares that His wrath will befall all that injure people with their tongues, be it in their presence or absence.

The second verse identifies that these fellows are beguiled by their wealth which they keep counting from time to time. It makes them feel on top of the world and that they are better than others. The third verse states how he is obsessed in his possession that he rules out death in his life. By the wealth at his disposal, he believes he has the destiny of men in his hand. He dictates at will with disregard to real value of virtue. He becomes intoxicated that he mocks “other people’s positions and dignity. He taunts and slanders them. He criticises others with his tongue, mocks them with his movements, either by imitating their movements and voices or by ridiculing their looks and features by words and mimicry, by taunts and slander.” Although the chapter captures one of the evils in the early days of Islam when the arrogant rich oppress the poor, it is however an issue which occurs in every environment.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 7

Outline rumour mongering and its consequences as an anti-social behaviour treated in *Sūrah al-Humazah*.

Verses 4-9 of *Sūrah al-Humazah* shatters scandal monger's fantasy and dream of perpetuity in buoyancy saying they will be cast into *al-hu amah*. The scenario of dealing with the culprits depicts immediacy and fury. To compound their psychological trauma, a question is asked.

“And what will make you know what the crushing fire is? Since the brain of man cannot comprehend the nature of the hell called *hu amah*, Allah devotes the last four verses to give some hints.

In his words, Yusuf Ali tries to explain that *al-hu amah* is “that which smashes or breaks to pieces.” Aptly, this unravels how scandal mongering and backbiting break the cord of mutual confidence and the unrestricted hoarding of wealth also prevent any chance for charity. Just as the repercussion of the culprit's antisocial steps break the valuable social pillars, a special hell which also smashes is reserved for him.

The passage explains further that this *hu amah* is a kindled fire of Allah, never to be extinguished. His identification with Allah makes it exceptional and portends unimaginable horrors. Its target is the heart of men who involve in these antisocial vices. Thābit Al-Banāni, in Ibn Kathīr, said: “It will burn them up to their hearts while they are alive”. The *hu amah* is targeted to rage over their hearts because it is the fountain of their ridicule and self-conceit. While his heart is being burnt by fire and languishing therein, the fire will spread and close up on him from all directions and vaults him in so that nobody will even see him or come near to save him. In this agony, he will indeed be choked up, yet he will not have any escape route.

The last verse says He will be in pillars or columns out stretched. Attiyah Al-‘Ūfy says “pillars of iron; As-Saddy says “pillars made of fire.’ Qutb says they will be tied to a column, as animals are tied, without respect. Muqātil explains that they will be locked up and tied up with iron fetters, the door will not be opened and no soul will come to them. The purport of all these is that they will suffer a terrible end in hell for their evils.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 8

Comment on verses 4-9 of *Sūrah al-Humazah*.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Sūratu 'l- 'Aşr puts faith as a starting point for anybody who wants to change from his/her evil way to the way of righteousness and as a method for the reformation of the declined human society in general. The fellow or the society must be models of the faith, and exemplar of ideals of the faith who thereafter call to it. The tool of *sabr* (patience) is indispensable as defending the status –quo has always been natural. So, the need to bear with the people and gradually return them to their Lord is enjoined.

Sūratu 'l-Humazah condemns any behavior or practice which disregards the right and feelings of others like fraudsters, scandal mongers and backbiters. All those who are guilty of anti-social evil deeds mentioned will be consigned to hell in the hereafter.

This is implied in the word *waylun* which could also be viewed as meaning nemesis catching up fraudsters in this world and probably too, in a metaphoric sense, the crushing trying times which the society may undergo due to their evils.

You would have learnt from this unit that a healthy and peaceful society should be free from scandal mongering, backbiting and hoarding as material acquisition can never guarantee peace of mind or eternity except obedience to the law of Allah. You will have also realized that the punishment for social vices are terrible and thus enough a warning for one to shun these evils.

5.0 SUMMARY

The focus of this Unit has been the exegesis of chapter *al- 'Aşr* in the course of which the following were stated and addressed: the background to the chapter, the implications of the different shades of meaning to *al- 'Aşr*, the decline in human society and its solutions.

The unit also focuses *Sūratu 'l-Humazah*, addressed scandal mongering, backbiting and hoarding as three vices prevalent in human society and condemns them in strongest terms by describing the punishment which awaits the perpetrators.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- i. (a) Explain the concept of *al- 'Asr* and man being in a state of loss.
- (b) Identify actions exempting the Faithfuls from the losers in Surah al-Asr and explain them.

2. (a) Outline the anti-social vices condemned in *Sūrah al-Humazah*.
- (b) What is the chapter suggesting as solution to scandal-mongering and evil ways of wealth acquisition?

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