

SPREAD KNOWLEDGE

THE
HOLY QURAN

ENGLISH TAFSEER
CHAPTER 96
SURAH AL-'ALAQ

COMMENTARY & EXPLANATORY

By
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CHAPTER

096

SURAH AL-'ALAQ

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Introduction and Summary

Verses 1-5 of this Surah were the first direct Revelation to the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him). The circumstances, material and psychical, in which they came, are described in C. 28-30, which should be referred to.

After that there was an interval or break (*Fatrah*), extending over some months or perhaps over a year. Surah 68 is usually considered to have been the next revelation in point of time. But the remainder of this Surah (96:6-19) came soon after the *Fatrah*, and that portion is joined on to the first five verses

containing the command to preach, because it explains the chief obstacle to the delivery of the message to man, viz, man's own obstinacy, vanity, and insolence.

C.276 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

*Noble is the mission of Prophet, selected
To proclaim the Message of Allah, the Lord
And Cherisher of all His Creation, Whose measureless
Bounties include the instruction of man
In new and ever new knowledge. But alas
For man! he fancies himself self-sufficient,
Turns away from the Path, and misleads others,
But nothing is hidden from Allah. He will bring
All untruth and sin and rebellion to Judgement,
And subdue all evil. The righteous bow
In adoration to Allah, and draw closer to Him.*

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

اقراً ...

1. Proclaim! (or Read!)

C6203. Iqraa may mean;

"read", or

"recite or rehearse", or

"proclaim aloud",

the object understood being Allah's Message.

In worldly letters he was unversed, but with spiritual knowledge his mind and soul were filled, and now had come the time when he must stand forth to the world and declare his mission.

... بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ (١)

in the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, Who created -

C6204. The declaration or proclamation was to be in the name of Allah the Creator. It was not for any personal benefit to the Prophet: to him there was to come bitter persecution, sorrow, and suffering. It was the call of Allah for the benefit of erring humanity.

Allah is mentioned by his title of "thy Lord and Cherisher", to establish a direct nexus between the source of the Message and the one addressed. The Message was not merely an abstract proposition of philosophy, but the direct concrete message of a personal Allah to the creatures whom He loves and cherishes.

"**Thy**" addressed to the Prophet is appropriate in two ways:

1. he was in direct contact with the divine Messenger (Gabriel) and Him Who sent the Messenger;
2. he represented the whole of humanity, in a fuller sense than that in which Christ Jesus is the "Son of Man".

خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ (٢)

2. Created man, out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood:

C6205. Cf. 23:14,

The lowly origin of the animal in man is contrasted with the high destiny offered to him in his intellectual, moral, and spiritual nature by his "most bountiful" Creator. No knowledge is withheld from man.

On the contrary, through the faculties freely given to him, he acquires it in such measure as outstrips his immediate understanding, and leads him ever to strive for newer and newer meaning.

اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ (٣)

3. Proclaim! And thy Lord is Most Bountiful --

الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ (٤)

4. He Who taught (the use of) the Pen --

C6206. The symbol of a permanent revelation is the mystic Pen and the mystic Record.

See n. 5593 to 68:1.

The Arabic words for "teach" and "knowledge" are from the same root. It is impossible to produce in a Translation the complete orchestral harmony of the words for "read", "teach", "pen" (which implies reading, writing, books, study, research), "knowledge" (including science, self knowledge, spiritual understanding), and "proclaim", an alternative meaning of the word for "to read".

This proclaiming or reading implies not only the duty of blazoning forth Allah's message, as going, with the prophetic office, but also the duty of promulgation and wide dissemination of the Truth by all who read and understand it.

The comprehensive meaning of **qara'** refers not only to a particular person and occasion but also gives a universal direction. And this kind of comprehensive meaning, as we have seen, runs throughout the Quran -for those, who will understand.

عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ (٥)

5. Taught man that which he knew not.

C6207. Allah teaches us new knowledge at every given moment. Individuals learn more and more day by day; nations and humanity at large learn fresh knowledge at every stage.

This is even more noticeable and important in the spiritual world.

كُلًّا إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَيَطْغَى (٦)

6. Nay, but man doth transgress all bounds,

C6208. All our knowledge and capacities come as gifts from Allah. But man, in his inordinate vanity and insolence, mistakes Allah's gifts for his own achievements.

The gifts may be strength or beauty, wealth, position, or power, or the more subtle gifts of knowledge or talents in individuals-or Science, or Art, or Government, or Organisation for mankind in general.

أَنْ رَأَهُ اسْتَعْنَى (٧)

7. In that he looketh upon himself as self-sufficient.

إِنَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ الرُّجْعَى (٨)

8. Verily, to thy Lord is the return (of all).

C6209. Man is not self-sufficient, either as an individual, or in his collective capacity. If he arrogates Allah's gifts to himself, he is reminded-backwards, of his lowly physical origin (from a drop of animal matter), and forwards, of his responsibility and final return to Allah.

أَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي يَنْهَى (٩)

9. Seest thou one who forbids.

C6210. The words, may be applied generally to perverse humanity, which seeks not only to rebel against Allah's Law, but also to prevent others from following it.

There may however be a reference here to Abu Jahl, an inveterate enemy of Islam, who used in its early days to insult and persecute the holy Prophet and those who followed his teaching.

He used, in particular, to use shameful methods to prevent the Prophet from going to the Ka'bah for devotions, and forbid any who came under his influence, from offering prayers or performing devotions.

He was arrogant and purse-proud and met his end in the battle of Badr.

عَبْدًا إِذَا صَلَّى (١٠)

10. A votary when he (turns) to pray?

أَرَأَيْتَ إِنْ كَانَ عَلَى الْهُدَى (١١)

11. Seest thou if He is on (the road of) Guidance? --

C6211. Man's insolence leads to two results:

1. self-destruction through self- misleading;
2. a false example or false guidance to others.

The righteous man must therefore test human example or human guidance by the question,

"Is there Allah's guidance behind it?"

And visible light would be thrown on it by the question.

"Does it lead to righteousness?"

A flouting of Allah and Allah's truth answers the first question in the negative, and conduct which turns back from the eternal principles of Right answers the second.

أَوْ أَمَرَ بِالْتَّقْوَى (١٢)

12. Or enjoins Righteousness?

أَرَأَيْتَ إِنْ كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلَّى (١٣)

13. Seest thou if he denies (Truth) and turns away?

C6212. The usual trick of the ungodly is to refuse to face Truth. If they are placed in a comer, they deny what is obvious to reasonable men, and turn their backs.

أَلَمْ يَعْلَم بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ يَرَى (١٤)

14. Knoweth he not that Allah doth see?

كُلًّا لِّئِنْ لَمْ يَنْتَه لِنَسْفَعًا بِالنَّاصِيَةِ (١٥)

15. Let him beware! If he desist not, We will drag him by the forelock –

C6213. Cf. 11:56, and n. 1551.

The forelock is on the forehead, and is thus symbolical of the summit and crown of the man's power or dignity. To be dragged by it is to suffer the lowest dregs of humiliation.

Nasfa'an is a syncopated form of the emphatic first person plural.

نَاصِيَةٍ كَاذِبَةٍ خَاطِئَةٍ (١٦)

16. A lying, sinful forelock!

فَلْيَدْعُ نَادِيَهُ (١٧)

17. Then, let him call (for help) to his council (of comrades):

C6214. The Pagan Quraysh, who formed an oppressive junta or council to manage the Ka'bah were in sympathy with Abu Jahl, though they did not go to the unbridled lengths to which Abu Jahl went.

But they could not, all combined, resist the onward march of the divine mission, though they did all they could to check it.

سَنَدْعُ الزَّبَانِيَةَ (١٨)

18. We will call on the angels of punishment (to deal with him)!

C6215. All the combined forces of evil, though they may have worldly appearances in their favour, and though they may seem to be successful for a time, cannot stand against Allah.

He has but to command His forces of punishment to exert themselves, and they will subdue evil, protect Allah's votaries and justify the faith for which the votaries suffer.

كُلَّا لَا تُطَعُّهُ وَاسْجُدْ وَاقْتَرِبْ (١٩)

19. Nay, heed him not: but bow down in adoration, and bring thyself the closer (to Allah)!

C6216. The righteous man has no fear. He can disregard all the forces of evil that are brought against him.

But he must learn humility: that is his defence. He will bow down in adoration to Allah. He must have the will to bring himself closer to Allah. For Allah is always close to him,-closer to him than his life blood in the jugular vein (50:16).

Man's humility and adoration remove him from being an insolent rebel on the one hand and, on the other, prepare his will to realise his nearness to Allah.