

QUR'ĀN SYLLABUS - CLASS 11

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CLASS 11 - LESSON 1

The Writing and Collection of the Holy Qur'ān

From the time of the first revelation, the Muslims began to write down the verses of the Holy Qur'ān. They wrote the verses on animal-skins or parchment or other objects. This is why, in many places the Holy Qur'ān refers to itself as al-Kitāb (the written thing, the book)

In addition, the Prophet (S) appointed special scribes to record the verses. Some of these scribes were °Alī bin Abī Ṭālib (A), Ubayy bin Ka°b, and later, Zaid bin Thābit. The Prophet (S) would immediately inform these companions of the revelation of any new verses. He used to worry that some of the verses might be forgotten, until Allāh assured him:

لَا تُحَرِّكُ بِهِ لِسَانَكَ لِتُجْعَلَ بِهِ ﴿١٦﴾

Do not move your tongue with it (the Qur'an) to hasten it.

إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا جَمْعَهُ وَقُرْآنَهُ ﴿١٧﴾

*Verily, its collection and its recitation is Our responsibility.
(al-Qiyāmah, 75:16, 17)*

At the time of dictation to the scribes, the Prophet (S) would also inform them of the placement of that āyah or āyāt in the sūrahs. It is for this reason that we find Madani āyāt in Makki sūrahs and vice versa.

Unlike the Bible, the Holy Qur'ān was already in book-form by the time the Prophet (S) passed away. A proof of this fact is his famous Hadith of Thaqalayn:

"I am leaving behind among you two weighty (precious) things; the Book of Allāh, and my Ahlul Bayt..."

Authenticity and Completeness of the Holy Qur'ān

The Shi°ah are often accused that they believe in a different Qur'ān, one that contains 40 Parās (instead of 30)! This is, of course, a lie and anyone can visit our mosques anywhere in the world to see for themselves the copies of the Holy Qur'ān that we recite from.

We believe that the Holy Qur'ān that we have in our hands is no more or less than that which was revealed to the Prophet (S). This is for several reasons.

1. Allāh Himself has undertaken the responsibility for preserving it as seen in the verse above. Furthermore, He says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِالذِّكْرِ لَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ وَإِنَّهُ لَكِتَابٌ عَزِيزٌ ﴿٤١﴾

Verily, those who disbelieve in the Qur'ān when it comes to them (should know) that it is a Book of exalted power.

لَا يَأْتِيهِ الْبَاطِلُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَلَا مِنْ خَلْفِهِ تَنْزِيلٌ مِّنْ حَكِيمٍ حَمِيدٍ ﴿٤٢﴾

No falsehood can come at it from before it or from behind it. It is a revelation from the All-Wise, the Praiseworthy. (Hā Mīm, 41:41,42)

2. There are many traditions from the Prophet (S) and our Imāms (A) describing the rewards (thawāb) of reciting individual sūrahs of the Holy Qur'ān. So if the complete Qur'ān did not exist at the time of the Prophet (S), then he or his successors could not have described the thawāb of every sūrah separately.

References

The Qur'ān and Hadith, Syed Akhtar Rizvi, Pages 39-46.
Holy Qur'ān, Tafsīr by S V Mir Ahmed Ali

CLASS 11 - LESSON 2

Du°ā from the Holy Qur'ān

Introduction

Du°ā means a prayer to Allāh. It is different from Ṣalāt, because in Du°ā, you can say the prayer in any language, at any time and in any manner you like.

Imām °Alī (A) has said: "Put your faith in Allāh. Seek His protection. Ask from Him alone. To give as well as to withhold lies in His power. Ask for as much of His favours as you can. Allāh owns the treasures of the heavens and the earth."

Sometimes your Du°ā is not immediately answered. Do not be disappointed, but continue to pray. Be patient and believe sincerely in His help. Acceptance of your prayer does not mean an instant fulfilment of your wish. Perhaps what you have asked for will prove harmful to you and not getting that request may be a blessing in disguise.

Allāh says about Du°ā,

وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ

And when My servants ask you (O Muḥammad) about me, then (say to them that) verily I am very near.

أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ

I answer the prayer of the supplicant when he asks from Me.

فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لِي وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا بِي لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُونَ ﴿١٨٦﴾

So they should hear My call, and believe in Me, so that they may be led aright. (al-Baqarāh, 2:186)

The above should be recited before any other Du°ā, as it increases our faith and reminds us of the close attention of Allāh. From this verse also, we learn that the recital of Du°ā is necessary and Wājib for all Muslims. (Read more detail about verse 2:186 (Agha Pūya's commentary) in the Tafsīr of S V Mir Ahmed Ali, pages 137,138)

The importance of Du^ā is seen in Ṣalāt, where there is a special opportunity to do Du^ā. This is in Qunūt. In this lesson, we will learn the meanings of some Du^ā that are found in the Holy Qur'an.

Du^ā 1

اللَّهُمَّ مَالِكَ الْمُلْكِ تُؤْتِي الْمُلْكَ مَنْ تَشَاءُ

O Allāh, Master of the kingdom! You give the kingdom to whom You like,

وَتَنْزِلُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّنْ تَشَاءُ

and You take away the kingdom from whom You like.

وَتُعِزُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُذِلُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ

You exalt whom You like and abase whom You like;

بِيَدِكَ الْخَيْرُ إِنَّكَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٢٦﴾

in Your hand is the good; verily, You have power over all things.

تُولِجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَتُولِجُ النَّهَارَ فِي اللَّيْلِ

You cause the night to pass into the day, and You cause the day to pass into the night;

وَتُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَتُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتَ مِنَ الْحَيِّ

You bring forth the living from the dead, and You bring forth the dead from the living,

وَتَرْزُقُ مَنْ تَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ ﴿٢٧﴾

and You give sustenance to whom You like, without measure.

(Āli-Imrān, 3:26,27)

The verses emphasise that Authority is Allāh's alone. He can give it to someone or take it away. Similarly, dignity and respect are His to give and take away. His Power is over all things. Life and death and the natural order of day and night all progress by His permission. He is the only Provider and to Him alone we should turn.

The Prophet (S) and the Imāms (A) have encouraged us to constantly read this prayer so that our faith in the Power of Allāh becomes firmly rooted in our hearts and minds. It is highly recommended to recite this Du°ā every morning after Fajr prayers, so that your livelihood is assured.

This Du°ā probably contains “Ismul Azam”, the greatest name of Allāh, and so if it is recited with complete faith and presence of mind, every legitimate desire will be accepted.

Du°ā 2

رَبَّنَا آمِنَّا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا وَارْحَمْنَا وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الرَّاحِمِينَ ﴿١٠٩﴾

O our Lord! We believe, so forgive us and have mercy on us, and You are Most Merciful. (al-Mu'minūn, 23:109)

Allāh says in the preceding verses that, in the midst of all the disbelievers, there was a group of people who always recited this Du°ā. Recite this Du°ā often in Qunūt and at other times to gain the mercy of Allāh, which keeps you safe from the evil of this world and the punishment of the Day of Judgement.

Du°ā 3

أَمَّنْ يُجِيبُ الْمُضْطَرَّ إِذَا دَعَاهُ وَيَكْشِفُ السُّوءَ

Is He not (the best one) who answers the distressed when he calls to Him, and removes the distress? (an-Naml, 27:62)

Allāh asks who can be better than Him to turn to in trouble? Indeed, this prayer is the best one for removing distress and suffering.

References

Qunoot, Peermohamed Ebrahim Trust
Holy Qur'ān, Tafsīr of S V Mir Ahmed Ali

CLASS 11 - LESSON 3

Stories from the Holy Qur'ān

Fir'oun of the Pegs.

Prophet Mūsā rescued the Bani Isrā-īl from Fir'oun. He took them away from Egypt to Palestine.

The kings of Egypt used the title Pharaoh or Fir'oun. The Fir'oun referred to in the Holy Qur'ān is probably Rameses II.

The Holy Qur'ān says:

﴿١٠﴾ وَفِرْعَوْنَ ذِي الْأَوْتَادِ

And Fir'oun, the Owner of the Stakes (pegs).

﴿١١﴾ الَّذِينَ طَغَوْا فِي الْبِلَادِ

Who transgressed in the cities,

﴿١٢﴾ فَكَثُرُوا فِيهَا الْفُسَادَ

And multiplied wickedness therein,

﴿١٣﴾ فَصَبَّ عَلَيْهِمْ رَبُّكَ سَوْطَ عَذَابٍ

So your Lord let fall on them the whip of punishment.

﴿١٤﴾ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَبِالْمُرْصَادِ

Verily, your Lord is (always) watchful. (al-Fajr, 89:10 - 14)

Fir'oun used to kill everyone who refused to believe him as God. His favourite method of killing his victims was to nail them to the ground or a post. Hence he has been called "the owner of the pegs" in the above verse. Among those he killed was his wife Āsiya, who was a believer in Allāh. She has been named as one of the four noblest women ever created.

The punishment of Allāh finally overtook Fir°aun. The Holy Qur'ān says:

وَجَاوَزْنَا بِبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ الْبَحْرَ

And when We caused the Bani Isrā-īl to pass through the sea,

فَاتَّبَعَهُمْ فِرْعَوْنُ وَجُنُودُهُ بَغْيًا وَعَدُوًّا

then Fir°aun and his army chased them in rebellion and hostility;

حَتَّى إِذَا أَدْرَكَهُ الْغَرَقُ قَالَ

And when he began to drown, he cried,

أَمِنْتُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا الَّذِي آمَنَتْ بِهِ بَنُو إِسْرَائِيلَ

"I believe that there is no God but He in Whom the Bani Isrā-īl believe... (Yunus 10:90)

The mummified remains of Rameses II exist today in the Cairo Museum. Medical examination of the mummy reveals that the cause of death was drowning.

Moreover, the examination of the mummy reveals that the body could not have stayed in the water for long, because it does not show signs of deterioration due to prolonged submersion.

The Holy Qur'ān says:

فَالْيَوْمَ نُنَجِّكَ بِبَدَنِكَ لِتَكُونَ لِمَنْ خَلْفَكَ آيَةً

This day We save you in your body so that you may be a sign for those who come after you... (Yunus, 10:92)

References

Commentary Sūra al-Fajr, S V Mir Ahmed Ali
Qur'ān and Modern Science, M Bucaille, Pages 16,17

CLASS 11 - LESSON 4

Sūrah al °Alaq - 1

Introduction

This Sūrah was revealed in Makka. It has nineteen verses. It is Sūrah number 96 in the Holy Qur'ān. "°Alaq" means "Clot of blood"

The first five Āyāt of this Sūrah were the first verses to be revealed to the Holy Prophet (S). After reciting or hearing the last verse, there is a Wājib Sajdah.

Text and Translation

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

In the Name of Allāh, the Beneficent, the Merciful

اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ ﴿١﴾

1. Read (O Muḥammad) in the name of your Lord who created (all things),

خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ ﴿٢﴾

2. He created man from a clot.

اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ ﴿٣﴾

3. Recite (O Muhammad)! Your Lord is the most honourable,

الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ ﴿٤﴾

4. Who taught (to write) with the pen,

عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ ﴿٥﴾

5. (He) taught man what he did not know.

كَلَّا إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لِرَبِّهِ لَكٰفِرٌ ﴿٦﴾

6. Nay, verily man tends to rebel,

CLASS 11 - LESSON 5

Sūrah al °Alaq - 2

أَنْ رَأَاهُ اسْتَغْنَى ﴿٧﴾

7. As he thinks himself self-sufficient.

إِنَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ الرُّجْعَىٰ ﴿٨﴾

8. Verily to your Lord is the return.

أَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي يَنْهَىٰ ﴿٩﴾

9. Have you seen him who forbids

عَبْدًا إِذَا صَلَّىٰ ﴿١٠﴾

10. A servant (of Ours) when he prays?

أَرَأَيْتَ إِنْ كَانَ عَلَىٰ الْهُدَىٰ ﴿١١﴾

11. Have you thought if he (the prayer) is rightly guided,

أَوْ أَمَرَ بِالتَّقْوَىٰ ﴿١٢﴾

12. Or he enjoins piety?

أَرَأَيْتَ إِنْ كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلَّىٰ ﴿١٣﴾

13. Have you thought that if he belies the truth and turns back,

أَلَمْ يَعْلَمْ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ يَرَىٰ ﴿١٤﴾

14. Does he not know that Allāh sees?

كَلَّا لَنْ نَسْفَعًا بِالنَّاصِيَةِ ﴿١٥﴾

15. Nay, (let him beware), if he does not desist We surely drag him by the forelock,

نَاصِيَةٍ كَاذِبَةٍ خَاطِئَةٍ ﴿١٦﴾

16. A forelock, lying, sinning.

فَلْيَدِّ نَادِيَهُ ﴿١٧﴾

17. Then, let him call his council of associates,

سَنَدُ الزُّبَانِيَّةِ ﴿١٨﴾

18. We too shall call the (stern) keepers of hell.

كَلَّا لَا تُطَعُّهُ وَاسْجُدْ وَاقْتَرِبْ ﴿١٩﴾

19. Nay, do not obey him, but prostrate yourself and draw near (to your Lord).

Merits of Reciting Sūratul °Alaq

1. The Holy Prophet (S) has said that whoever recites this Sūrah will be regarded as though he has recited the entire Qur'ān.
2. Imām Ja°far aṣ Ṣādiq (A) is quoted saying that one who recites this Sūrah, then dies that day or night will have died as a martyr and like one who assisted the Holy Prophet (S) with his sword.

Reference

The Holy Qurān, S V Mīr Aḥmad °Alī

CLASS 11 - LESSON 6

The Event of Ghadīr

After performing his farewell Haj, the Prophet (S) was heading back to Madina when the following Āyah was revealed:

يَا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ

O Prophet! Deliver what has been sent down to you from your Lord;

وَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَّغْتَ رِسَالَتَهُ

and if you do not do it, (it will be as if) you have not delivered His message (at all);

وَاللَّهُ يُعْصِمُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ

and Allāh will protect you from (the mischief) of men;

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٦٧﴾

verily Allāh does not guide a disbelieving people. (al Mā'idah, 5:67)

On receiving this command, the Prophet (S) stopped immediately and gathered the Muslims. The date was 18th of Ḍul Ḥijjah, 10AH. The place was Ghadīr Khum. The Prophet (S) delivered a lengthy sermon, recounting and summarising the message of Islām. At the end, he asked the audience if he had conveyed to them the commands of Allāh, enumerating them one after the other. The huge gathering all said in one voice, "Yes!".

At this point, the Prophet (S) asked them, "Do I not have a greater authority over you than your own selves?" They agreed. Then the Prophet (S) called Imām °Alī (A) and raising him high so that everyone could see him, he said, "O people! Allāh is my Mawla (Master) and I am the Mawla of the faithful." Then, he declared:

مَنْ كُنْتُ مَوْلَاهُ فَعَلَيْ مَوْلَاهُ

Of whomever I am the Master, (this) °Alī is his Master.

اللَّهُمَّ وَالِ مَنْ وُلَاهُ وَ عَادِ مَنْ عَادَاهُ

O Allāh! Love those who love him, and be the enemy of his enemies.

وَأَنْصُرْ مَنْ نَصَرَهُ وَأَخْذُلْ مَنْ خَذَلَهُ

Help those who help him, and forsake those who forsake him.

After this, the Prophet (S) descended from the pulpit and the Muslims gathered around Imām °Alī (A) to congratulate him and promise him their allegiance.

With the matter of succession secure, the following verse was revealed at this time:

الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ

This day I have perfected for you your religion,

وَأَتَمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي

and have completed My favour on you,

وَرَضِيْتُ لَكُمْ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا

and have chosen for you Islām (as your) religion. (al Mā'idah, 5:3)

Imam °Alī ar Riḍā (A) has said that the day of Ghadīr is a day of °Īd. It is a blessed day. One should fast and devote the day to the worship of Allāh. Amongst the A°māl are 2 Raka°at Ṣalāt (like Subḥ), after which 100 times "Alḥamdu Lillāh" and 100 times "Shukran Lillāh" should be recited, followed by Ziyārat of Imām °Alī (A).

References

Holy Qur'ān, Tafsīr of S V Mir Ahmed Ali
Ahlul Bait; Their Status, Manner and Course, Al-Balagh Foundation

CLASS 11 - LESSON 7

Sūrah al Inshirah

Introduction

This Sūrah was revealed in Makka. It has eight verses. It is Sūrah number 94 in the Holy Qur'ān. "Inshirah" means "Expansion", and refers to the word "Nashrah" used in the first verse.

This Sūrah is considered as a continuation of the previous Sūrah (aḍ Duḥa).

Text and Translation

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

In the Name of Allāh, the Beneficent, the Merciful

أَلَمْ نَشْرَحْ لَكَ صَدْرَكَ ﴿١﴾

1. *Have We not expanded for you (O Muḥammad) your heart,*

وَوَضَعْنَا عَنْكَ وِزْرَكَ ﴿٢﴾

2. *And taken off from you your burden,*

الَّذِي أَنْقَضَ ظَهْرَكَ ﴿٣﴾

3. *Which weighed down your back,*

وَرَفَعْنَا لَكَ ذِكْرَكَ ﴿٤﴾

4. *And exalted your fame?*

فَإِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا ﴿٥﴾

5. *Verily, with every difficulty there is ease,*

إِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا ﴿٦﴾

6. *Verily, with every difficulty there is ease,*

فَإِذَا فَرَغْتَ فَانصَبْ ﴿٧﴾

7. *So when you have completed (the duties of your ministry), then establish (your successor),*

وَإِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ فَارْغَبُ ﴿٨﴾
8. And to your Lord, return.

Tafsīr

Āyah 1: The term “expanded your breast (or heart)” is an expression used in the Holy Qur’ān to mean increasing the capacity of the person to receive knowledge and guidance from Allāh. The Prophet (S) was specially blessed by Allāh to understand and carry out His commands.

Āyāt 2, 3: The burden is the great responsibility of spreading the message of Islam that the Prophet (S) worked so hard for. The Prophet (S) had prayed for a helper and Allāh had appointed Imām °Alī (A) to help him to lighten the burden.

Āyah 4: The fame of the Holy Prophet (S) was secured for all time when Allāh made Salawāt on him Wājib in every Ṣalāt and in the Adhān.

Āyāt 5,6: After declaring his Prophethood, the life of the Prophet (S) had been filled with struggle and difficulty. At times it seemed that Islam and the Muslims would not survive. He had faced all these trials with patience. Here, Allāh assures him that after hardship there would be ease. The verse is repeated to emphasise the promise of Allāh that the mission of the Prophet (S) would be successful and the whole of °Arabia would come under the fold of Islām.

Āyah 7: This important verse is a command to the Prophet (S) to inform the people of his successor. Now that his mission was coming to an end, the Prophet (S) would soon depart this world. One important task that remained was to nominate his successor. He appointed Imām °Alī (A) at Ghadir Khum on 18th Dhul Ḥijjah in 10 AH.

Āyah 8: An invitation from Allāh to the Prophet (S) to retire from this world of his own will and return to Him.

Merits of Reciting Sūrah al Inshirah

The Prophet (S) has said that whoever recites it will be given a reward as though he had met the Prophet (S) grieved, and had removed the cause of his grief.

References

Holy Qur'ān, Tafsīr of S V Mir Ahmed Ali
Ramadhan, Ahkam and Philosophy, Yasin T. al Jibouri

CLASS 11 - LESSON 8

The Issue of Tahrīf in the Holy Qur'ān

Tahrīf refers to tampering with the letters or words of the verses of the Holy Qur'ān, changing them from the original revealed form. There are many weak Hadith about such changes. Indeed, the Shi'ah are often accused of believing in a different Qur'ān than the one in common use; one that contains many more verses, including some that clearly state the merits of Imām °Alī (A). These accusations are baseless, as we do not and have never had a Qur'ān any different from the one all Muslims use today.

The Holy Qur'ān itself denies that any verses have been changed because Allāh Himself pledges to guard it:

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ ﴿٩﴾

Verily, We have sent down the Reminder (Qur'an) and We will most surely be its guardian (al Hijr, 15:9)

The Holy Qur'ān further says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِالذِّكْرِ لَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ وَإِنَّهُ لَكِتَابٌ عَزِيزٌ ﴿٤١﴾

Verily those who disbelieve in the Reminder (Qur'ān) when it comes to them (should know) that it most surely it is a mighty Book.

لَا يَأْتِيهِ الْبَاطِلُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَلَا مِنْ خَلْفِهِ

Falsehood shall never come to it from before it or from behind it,

تَنْزِيلٌ مِّنْ حَكِيمٍ حَمِيدٍ ﴿٤٢﴾

*a revelation from the Wise, the Praised One.
(Hā Mīm Sajdah, 41:41,42)*

From the above verses we see that the Holy Qur'ān is divinely protected from any tampering.

The issue of Tahrīf is based on the original collection and compilation of the verses of the Holy Qur'ān, because there is no question that after the time of the third Caliph, the verses have been transmitted from Muslim to Muslim with any change. If there was any tampering, it would have occurred just after the passing away of the Prophet (S).

From Hadith we know that this cannot have happened. Here are three proofs.

1. The Hadith of Thaḡalayn is famous and undisputed. The Prophet (S) said, "I am leaving behind "Thaḡalayn" (the two weighty things). The Book of Allāh (Qur'ān) and my Ahlul Bayt...." The fact that he said he was leaving the Qur'ān meant that it was already in a compiled form, and was known to the Muslims.
2. The Prophet (S) said, "Jibrā'īl had placed before me the Qur'ān for review once a year and in the last year of my ministry, he did so twice which indicated that the time of my departure from this world was close at hand." This shows that both Allāh and the Prophet (S) acted to ensure that no alteration in the verses could occur.
3. Various Ahādith from the Prophet (S) describe reciting particular Sūras in certain prayers. If these Sūras were not known to the people, they would not have understood what to do. It therefore follows that the Holy Qur'ān was available already compiled in the lifetime of the Prophet (S).

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CLASS 11 - LESSON 9

Sūrah al Layl

Introduction

This Sūrah was revealed in Makka. It has twenty one verses. It is Sūrah number 92 in the Holy Qur'ān. "Layl" means "Night".

Text and Translation

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

In the Name of Allāh, the Beneficent, the Merciful

وَاللَّیْلِ إِذَا یَغْشَىٰ ﴿١﴾

By the night when it veils (all things with darkness),

وَالنَّهَارِ إِذَا تَجَلَّىٰ ﴿٢﴾

By the day when it appears radiant,

وَمَا خَلَقَ الذَّكَرَ وَالْأُنثَىٰ ﴿٣﴾

By that (power) which created male and female.

إِنَّ سَعِیْكُمْ لَشَتَّىٰ ﴿٤﴾

Verily your striving is for diverse ends.

فَأَمَّا مَنْ أَعْطَىٰ وَاتَّقَىٰ ﴿٥﴾

He who gives (to others) and adopts Taqwā (is mindful of Allāh's laws),

وَصَدَّقَ بِالْحُسْنَىٰ ﴿٦﴾

And believes in the best (Islam),

فَسَيَسِّرُهُ لِّلْيَسْرَىٰ ﴿٧﴾

We shall indeed make smooth the path to bliss for him;

وَأَمَّا مَنْ بَخِلَ وَاسْتَغْنَىٰ ﴿٨﴾

*But he who does not give (is miserly) and thinks himself
self-sufficient,*

وَكَذَّبَ بِالْحُسْنَىٰ ﴿٩﴾

And belies the best (Islam),

فَسَيَسِّرُهُ لِّلْعُسْرَىٰ ﴿١٠﴾

We shall indeed make smooth for him the path to affliction,

وَمَا يُغْنِي عَنْهُ مَالُهُ إِذَا تَرَدَّىٰ ﴿١١﴾

And his riches will not avail him when he perishes.

إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا لَلْهُدَىٰ ﴿١٢﴾

Verily it is for Us to guide (show the right way),

وَإِنَّ لَنَا لَلْآخِرَةَ وَالْأُولَىٰ ﴿١٣﴾

And to Us belong the end (hereafter) and the beginning (the worldly life).

فَأَنْذَرْتُكُمْ نَارًا تَلَظَّىٰ ﴿١٤﴾

So I warn you of the blazing fire

لَا يَصْلَاهَا إِلَّا الْأَشْقَىٰ ﴿١٥﴾

No one will be thrown in it but the most wretched,

الَّذِي كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلَّىٰ ﴿١٦﴾

Who belies the truth and turns his back.

وَسَيَجْنِبُهَا الْاَتَّقَىٰ ﴿١٧﴾

He who safeguards himself against evil shall be removed far from it,

الَّذِي يُؤْتِي مَالَهُ يَتَزَكَّى ﴿١٨﴾

Who gives of his wealth to purify himself,

وَمَا لِأَحَدٍ عِنْدَهُ مِنْ نِعْمَةٍ تُجْزَى ﴿١٩﴾

And (not in return for) any favour done to him by anyone that should be recompensed,

إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ رَبِّهِ الْأَعْلَى ﴿٢٠﴾

Save the seeking of the pleasure of his Lord, the Most High,

وَلَسَوْفَ يَرْضَى ﴿٢١﴾

And soon he shall attain contentment.

Tafsir

Āyāt 1-4: Here Allāh mentions the contrast found in nature. The darkness of night is contrasted with the light of the day. The nature of men is contrasted with that of women. Similarly, the conclusion is found in verse 4, where it is stated that man's aims in life are diverse - either towards good or in contrast, towards evil.

Āyāt 5-11: The righteous Muslim is identified as one who is generous with what he has been blessed with, one who is mindful of the limits set by Allāh and one who sincerely believes in Islām. For such a person, Allāh makes the path easier so that the journey to heaven is smoother. In contrast, the evil ones adopt miserliness, greed, arrogance and they belittle Islām. For them, Allāh makes the path to Hell smoother. And the riches which he was so proud of will be of no use to him in the hereafter.

Āyāt 12-21: Allāh has taken upon Himself the responsibility for the guidance of humanity. To this end He sent books, messengers and guides. After that, man was allowed to use his freedom of choice to decide his own actions. For those who choose to defy and disobey Allāh, a blazing fire awaits. They are described as the most wretched. On the other hand, those who choose the path of obedience and piety, for them awaits eternal bliss in the next life. They will be the content ones.

Merits of Reciting Sūrah al Layl

The Prophet (S) has said that whoever recites this Sūrah will be given so much that he is satisfied, and Allāh will not let him be exposed to hardship and will make life easy for him.

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CLASS 11 - LESSON 10

Prophet Ibrāhīm (A) and Namrūd

When Namrūd claimed to be god, Prophet Ibrāhīm (A) confronted him. He first told the king that Allāh controls life and death, but Namrūd said that he could order the death of any of his subjects at any time, so he too controlled life and death. At that time Prophet Ibrāhīm (A) issued another challenge and Namrūd could not reply.

The Holy Qur'ān says:

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِي حَاجَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ فِي رَبِّهِ أَنْ آتَاهُ اللَّهُ الْمُلْكَ

Did you not see him who disputed with Ibrāhīm about his Lord, because Allāh had given him the kingdom ?

إِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّيَ الَّذِي يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ

When Ibrāhīm said to him: "My Lord is He who gives life and causes to die."

قَالَ أَنَا أُحْيِي وَأُمِيتُ

He said: "I (also) give life and cause to die."

قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْتِي بِالشَّمْسِ مِنَ الْمَشْرِقِ

Then Ibrāhīm said: "Verily, Allāh causes the sun to rise from the east,

فَأْتِ بِهَا مِنَ الْمَغْرِبِ فَبُهِتَ الَّذِي كَفَرَ

so you cause it to rise from the west !" Thus he who disbelieved was made speechless.

وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٢٥٨﴾

And Allāh does not guide the unjust people. (al Baqarah, 2:258)

Prophet Ibrāhīm (A) lived with his uncle Azar, who made and sold idols. While still a young boy of 16, he decided to confront his people.

The Holy Qur'an says:

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ رُشْدَهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَكُنَّا بِهِ عَالِمِينَ ﴿٥١﴾

Verily, We gave Ibrāhīm his uprightness (from) before, and We knew him well.

إِذْ قَالَ لِأَبِيهِ وَقَوْمِهِ مَا هَذِهِ التَّمَاثِيلُ الَّتِي أَنْتُمْ لَهَا عَاكِفُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾

When he said to his father (uncle) and his people, "What are these images to which you cling (as objects of worship)?"

قَالُوا وَجَدْنَا آبَاءَنَا لَهَا عَابِدِينَ ﴿٥٣﴾

They said, "We found our fathers worshippers of them."

قَالَ لَقَدْ كُنْتُمْ أَنْتُمْ وَآبَاؤُكُمْ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ ﴿٥٤﴾

Verily, you and your fathers have been in clear error."

قَالُوا أَجِئْتَنَا بِالْحَقِّ أَمْ أَنْتَ مِنْ اللَّاعِبِينَ ﴿٥٥﴾

They said, "Have you brought us the truth or are you one of those who jest?"

قَالَ بَلْ رَبُّكُمْ رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ الَّذِي فَطَرَهُنَّ

He said, "No! Your Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, who created them;

وَأَنَا عَلَىٰ ذَلِكُمْ مِنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾

and I am one of those who bear witness to this.

وَتَاللَّهِ لَأَكِيدَنَّ أَصْنَامَكُمْ بَعْدَ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا مُدْبِرِينَ ﴿٥٧﴾

And, by Allāh, I shall devise a scheme against your idols after you go away and turn your backs."

فَجَعَلَهُمْ جُذَاذًا إِلَّا كَبِيرًا لَهُمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ إِلَيْهِ يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾

So he broke them into pieces, except the chief of them, that possibly they may return to it.

قَالُوا مَنْ فَعَلَ هَذَا بِآلِهَتِنَا إِنَّهُ لَمِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٥٩﴾

They said, "Who has done this to our gods? Verily, he is of the unjust."

قَالُوا سَمِعْنَا فَتًى يَذُكُرُهُمْ يُقَالُ لَهُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ ﴿٦٠﴾

They said, "We heard a youth speak of them. He is called Ibrāhīm."

قَالُوا فَاتُوا بِهِ عَلَىٰ عَيْنِ النَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَشْهَدُونَ ﴿٦١﴾

They said, "Then bring him before the eyes of the people, that they may bear witness."

قَالُوا أَنْتَ فَعَلْتَ هَذَا بِاللَّهِتِنَا يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ ﴿٦٢﴾

They said, "Did you do this to our gods, O Ibrāhīm?"

قَالَ بَلْ فَعَلَهُ كَبِيرُهُمْ هَذَا فَاسْأَلُوهُمْ إِنْ كَانُوا يَنْطِقُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾

He said, "(No) he did it (who did it). Here is their chief, ask them, if they can speak."

فَرَجَعُوا إِلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ فَقَالُوا إِنَّكُمْ أَنْتُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾

Then they turned to themselves and said, "Verily, you are yourselves unjust."

ثُمَّ نَكَسُوا عَلَىٰ رُءُوسِهِمْ لَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمْ مَا هَؤُلَاءِ يَنْطِقُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾

Then they turned down on their heads (utterly baffled). (They said) "You know full well that these (idols) do not speak!"

قَالَ أَفَتَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُكُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَضُرُّكُمْ ﴿٦٦﴾

He said, "What! Do you worship then beside Allāh that which cannot profit you, or do you harm?"

أَفِ لَكُمْ وَلِمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾

Fie on you and those you worship beside Allāh. What! Do you not understand?"

قَالُوا حَرِّقُوهُ وَانصُرُوا آلِهَتَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ فَاعِلِينَ ﴿٦٨﴾

They said, "Burn him and save your gods, if you do (anything at all)"

قُلْنَا يَا نَارُ كُونِي بَرْدًا وَسَلَامًا عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ ﴿٦٩﴾

We (Allāh) said, "O fire, be cool and safe for Ibrāhīm."

وَأَرَادُوا بِهِ كَيْدًا فَجَعَلْنَاهُمُ الْأَخْسَرِينَ ﴿٧٠﴾

And they intended to entrap him, but We made them the worst losers.

وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ وَلُوطًا إِلَى الْأَرْضِ الَّتِي بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا لِلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٧١﴾

And We delivered him and Lūṭ (and brought them safely) to the land which We have blessed for the universe. (al Anbiyā, 21:51-71)

Reference

The Holy Qurān, S V Mīr Aḥmad °Alī

CLASS 11 - LESSON 11

Prophet Yūsuf (A) and the King's Dream

The adventures of Prophet Yūsuf (A) are recounted in detail in the Sūrah by his name. After arriving in Egypt, he was falsely accused and was put in prison through no fault of his. The Holy Qur'ān says:

ثُمَّ بَدَأَ لَهُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ مَا رَأَوْا الْآيَاتِ لَيْسَجْنَهُ حَتَّىٰ حِينٍ ﴿٣٥﴾

Then it occurred to them (even) after they had seen the signs (of his innocence) that they should put him in prison for a time.

(Yūsuf, 12:35)

In prison Prophet Yūsuf (A) met two men, whose asked him to explain their dreams to them:

وَدَخَلَ مَعَهُ السِّجْنَ فَتَيَانِ

And two young men entered the prison with him.

قَالَ أَحَدُهُمَا إِنِّي أَرَانِي أَعْصِرُ خَمْرًا

One of them said: "Verily I saw myself (in a dream) pressing wine."

وَقَالَ الْآخَرُ إِنِّي أَرَانِي أَحْمِلُ فَوْقَ رَأْسِي خُبْزًا تَأْكُلُ الطَّيْرُ مِنْهُ

And the other said: "I saw myself (in a dream) carrying bread on my head, and birds were eating thereof."

نَبِّنَا بِتَأْوِيلِهِ إِنَّا نَرَاكَ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٣٦﴾

"Tell us" (they said) "the interpretation, verily we see you are one who does good." (Yūsuf, 12:36)

Prophet Yūsuf, (A) after preaching about Allāh, explained the two men's dreams:

يَا صَاحِبِي السِّجْنِ أَمَّا أَحَدُكُمَا فَيَسْقِي رَبَّهُ خَمْرًا

"O my two fellow - prisoners, as to one of you, he will pour out wine for his lord to drink;

وَأَمَّا الْآخَرُ فَيُصَلَّبُ فَتَأْكُلُ الطَّيْرُ مِنْ رَأْسِهِ

as to the other, he shall be crucified, then the birds shall eat from his head.

قُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ الَّذِي فِيهِ تَسْتَفْتِيَانِ ﴿٤١﴾

*The matter that you two have asked has been decreed so.”
(Yūsuf, 12:41)*

Prophet Yūsuf (A) then asked the prisoner that was to survive to mention him to the king, but the prisoner forgot until the king had a dream which no one could interpret:

وَقَالَ لِلَّذِي ظَنَّ أَنَّهُ نَاجٍ مِّنْهُمَا اذْكُرْنِي عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ

And he said to him of the two who he knew would be saved, “Mention me to your lord.”

فَأَنسَاهُ الشَّيْطَانُ ذِكْرَ رَبِّهِ فَلَبِثَ فِي السِّجْنِ بِضْعَ سِنِينَ ﴿٤٢﴾

But Shayṭān caused him to forget to mention it to his lord, so he stayed in prison for some years.

وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ إِنِّي أَرَى سَبْعَ بَقَرَاتٍ سِمَانٍ يَأْكُلُهُنَّ سَبْعٌ عِجَافٌ

And the king said: “Verily I saw in a dream seven fat cows which seven lean ones were devouring,

وَسَبْعَ سُنْبُلَاتٍ خُضْرٍ وَأُخَرَ يَابِسَاتٍ

and seven green ears (of corn) and other (seven) dry.

يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُ أَفْتُونِي فِي رُؤْيَايَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لِلرُّؤْيَا تَعْبُرُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾

O my chiefs, explain to me my dream, if you can interpret dreams.”

قَالُوا أَضْغَاثُ أَحْلَامٍ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِتَأْوِيلِ الْأَحْلَامِ بِعَالَمِينَ ﴿٤٤﴾

They said: “(These are) confused dreams, and we do not know the interpretation of such dreams.”

وَقَالَ الَّذِي نَجَا مِنْهُمَا وَادَّكَرَ بَعْدَ أُمَّةٍ

And he of the two was released, and (now) at length remembered, said:

أَنَا أَنْبِئُكُمْ بِتَأْوِيلِهِ فَأَرْسِلُونِ ﴿٤٥﴾

“I will give you its interpretation, so let me go for it.”

يُوسُفُ أَيُّهَا الصَّادِقُ افْتِنَا فِي سَبْعِ بَقَرَاتٍ سِمَانٍ

“O Yūsuf the truthful, expound for us the seven fat cows

يَأْكُلُهُنَّ سَبْعٌ عِجَافٌ وَسَبْعٌ سُنْبُلَاتٍ خَضِرٌ وَأُخْرَى يَابِسَاتٌ

which seven lean ones are devouring and the seven green ears (of corn) and other (seven) dry,

لَعَلِّي أَرْجِعُ إِلَى النَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤٦﴾

that I may return to the people, so that they may know.”

قَالَ تَزْرَعُونَ سَبْعَ سِنِينَ دَابًّا

He said: “You shall sow seven years as usual,

فَمَا حَصَدْتُمْ فَذَرُوهُ فِي سُنْبُلِهِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِّمَّا تَأْكُلُونَ ﴿٤٧﴾

but that which you reap, leave in its ears, except a little, of which you shall eat.

ثُمَّ يَأْتِي مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ سَبْعٌ شِدَادٌ يَأْكُلْنَ مَا قَدَّمْتُمْ لَهُنَّ

Then, after that, will come seven years of hardship which will consume all that you have laid up beforehand against them,

إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِّمَّا تَحْصِنُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾

except a little which you shall preserve.

ثُمَّ يَأْتِي مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ عَامٌ فِيهِ يُغَاثُ النَّاسُ وَفِيهِ يَعْصُرُونَ ﴿٤٩﴾

Then will come after that a year in which people will have abundant rain, and in which they will press (the grapes). (Yūsuf, 12:42-49)

CLASS 11 - LESSON 12

Signs of Allāh (Recitation Practice)

In many places in the Holy Qur'ān, Allāh recounts His Signs and asks us to think about them. Let us study some of these verses:

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً لَكُمْ مِنْهُ شَرَابٌ

He it is who sends down water from the heavens for you; from it you drink,

وَمِنْهُ شَجَرٌ فِيهِ تُسِيمُونَ ﴿١٠﴾

and out of it (grows) plants which you use as pasture for your cattle.

يُنْبِتُ لَكُمْ بِهِ الزَّرْعَ وَالزَّيْتُونَ

He grows for you thereby corn, olives,

وَالنَّخِيلَ وَالْأَعْنَابَ وَمِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ

dates, grapes and fruits of every kind.

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَةً لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿١١﴾

Verily, in this is a sign for those who reflect. (an Nahl, 16:10,11)

وَمَا ذَرَأَ لَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُخْتَلِفًا أَلْوَانُهُ

And whatever He has produced in the earth of varied colours,

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَةً لِقَوْمٍ يَذْكُرُونَ ﴿١٣﴾

verily, there is a sign in this for those who (gratefully) bear in mind (the favours of Allāh)

وَهُوَ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ الْبَحْرَ لِتَأْكُلُوا مِنْهُ لَحْمًا طَرِيًّا

He it is who has made the sea submissive (to you) that you may eat fresh meat from it,

وَتَسْتَخْرِجُوا مِنْهُ حِلْيَةً تَلْبَسُونَهَا

and obtain ornaments which you wear.

وَتَرَى الْفُلْكَ مَوَاحِرَ فِيهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ

You see the ships cleaving through it that you may seek of His grace,

وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿١٤﴾

and that you may give thanks. (an Nahl, 16:13,14)

وَمِنْ ثَمَرَاتِ النَّخِيلِ وَالْأَعْنَابِ تَتَّخِذُونَ مِنْهُ سَكَرًا

And in the fruits of the date-palm and in the grapes, from which you obtain intoxicant drinks

وَرِزْقًا حَسَنًا

and (other) goodly nourishment.

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾

*Verily, in this is a sign for the people who understand.
(an Nahl, 16:67)*

أَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا جَعَلْنَا اللَّيْلَ لِيَسْكُنُوا فِيهِ وَالنَّهَارَ مُبْصِرًا

What! Do they not see that We have made the night so that they may rest therein, and the day to give them light (to see)?

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٨٦﴾

*Verily, there are signs in this for people who believe.
(an Naml, 27:86)*

Reference

The Holy Qurān, S V Mīr Aḥmad °Alī

CLASS 11 - LESSON 13

Science in The Holy Qur'ān

Embryology

The description of the development of the human baby in the womb of the mother has been described in several places in the Holy Qur'ān. Modern scientists marvel at the accuracy of the process described in its verses.

The Holy Qur'ān says:

يَخْلُقُكُمْ فِي بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ خَلْقًا مِّنْ بَعْدِ خَلْقٍ

He creates you in the womb of your mothers, in stages, one after another,

فِي ظُلُمَاتٍ ثَلَاثٍ

in three (veils of) darkness.

ذَٰلِكُمُ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَأَنَّى تُصْرَفُونَ ﴿٦﴾

He is Allāh, your Lord. His is the kingdom (authority). There is no god but He, where then do you turn away? (az Zumar 39:6)

The stages in the development of human embryos was not described until the 20th century. According to modern scientific knowledge, the three veils of darkness may refer to: (1) the anterior abdominal wall; (2) the uterine wall; and (3) the amniochorionic membrane - see Figure 1.



Figure 1

Drawing of a sagittal section of a female's abdomen and pelvis showing a foetus in utero. Veils of darkness are:

- (1) the anterior abdominal wall;
- (2) the uterine wall, and
- (3) the amnio-chorionic membrane

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ سُلَالَةٍ مِّنْ طِينٍ ﴿١٢﴾

Verily, We created man from an extract of clay,

ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاهُ نُطْفَةً فِي قَرَارٍ مَّكِينٍ ﴿١٣﴾

Then We made him of a drop (Nuṭfah), in a firm resting place;

ثُمَّ خَلَقْنَا النُّطْفَةَ عَلَقَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الْعَلَقَةَ مُضْغَةً

Then We made the drop into a leech-like (clinging) structure (°Alaqah), then we made the leech-like structure into a lump of chewed flesh (Mudghah)

فَخَلَقْنَا الْمُضْغَةَ عِظَامًا فَكَسَوْنَا الْعِظَامَ لَحْمًا

and we made the lump of chewed flesh into bones (°Izama), then We clothed the bones with flesh (Laḥma);

ثُمَّ أَنشَأْنَاهُ خَلْقًا آخَرَ

thereafter We caused it to grow into another creation.

فَتَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنُ الْخَالِقِينَ ﴿١٤﴾

So blessed be Allāh, the best of creators. (al Mu'minūn, 23:12 -14)

The drop or Nuṭfah is usually translated as the sperm, but a more meaningful interpretation would be the zygote which divides to form a blastocyst which is implanted in the uterus (the firm resting place).

The word °Alaqah refers to a leech or bloodsucker. This is an excellent description of the human embryo from days 7-24 when it clings to the wall of the uterus, in the same way that a leech clings to the skin. It is remarkable how much the embryo of 23-24 days resembles a leech - see Figure 2.

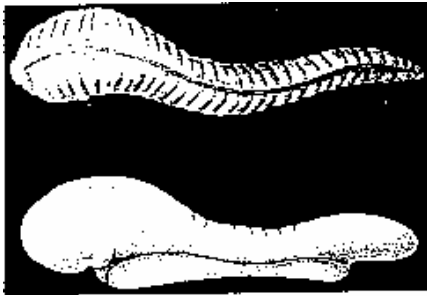


Figure 2

A drawing of a leech or bloodsucker and below a drawing of a 24 day-old human embryo. Note the leech-like appearance of the human embryo at this stage.

The word Muḍghah means chewed substance or chewed lump. Toward the end of the fourth week, the human embryo looks somewhat like a chewed lump of flesh - see Figure 3. The chewed appearance results from the somites which resemble teeth marks. The somites represent the beginnings of the vertebrae.

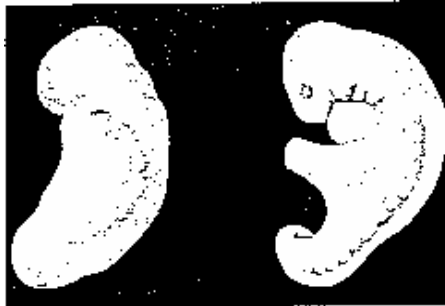


Figure 3

A plasticine model of the human embryo which has the appearance of chewed flesh. Right, a drawing of a 28 day-old human embryo showing bead-like somites which resemble the teeth marks in the model shown to the left.

“And we made the lump of chewed flesh into bones (°Iẓama), then We clothed the bones with flesh (Laḥma)” The verse indicates that out of the chewed lump stage, bones and muscles form. This is in accordance with embryological development. First the bones form as cartilage models and then the muscles (flesh) develop around them.

“Thereafter We caused it to grow into another creation.” This next part of the verse implies that the bones and muscles result in the formation of another creature. This may refer to the human-like embryo that forms by the end of the eighth week. At this stage it has distinctive human characteristics. After the eighth week, the human embryo is called a fetus. This may be the new creature to which the verse refers.

The interpretation of the verses in the Holy Qur'ān referring to human development would not have been possible in the 7th century A.D., or even a hundred years ago. We can interpret them now because the science of modern embryology affords us new understanding. Undoubtedly there are other verses in the Holy Qur'ān that will be better understood in the future as our knowledge increases.

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