

Summary of Juz 1

1. Surat al-Fatiha

In the name of Allah, the Kind, the Caring.

¹All praises are for Allah the Lord of the worlds. ²The Kind, the Caring. ³The Controller of Judgement Day. ⁴We worship You alone and from You alone we seek help. ⁵Guide us on the straight path: ⁶the path of those You favoured, not those who are condemned or the misguided ones.

2. Surat al-Baqara

The first Juz opens with the Surat al-Baqara revealed over two years in Madinah after the migration of the Prophet ﷺ in 622 CE (Common Era). By now two thirds of the Quran had been revealed in Makkah during a tense situation. In Madinah Muslims faced new challenges: settling down in a new city with Arabs and Jews. The two Arab tribes, the Aus and the Khazraj, both with a long history of rivalry. There were three Jewish tribes, they had moved to Madinah after they were expelled from Jerusalem by the Romans. The Jews were literate, skilled and affluent compared to the Arabs and believed they were "the chosen people".

The surah opens by describing the people of Madinah and dividing them into three groups: the believers, the disbelievers and the hypocrites. The Faithful are described as having firm belief in Allah, the unseen realities and the Hereafter; they pray regularly and give charity generously. The disbelievers have locked minds unwilling to listen. Then follows a section listing the evil habits of hypocrites: deceivers and liars, who mock the believers and make trouble, they are ignorant, misguided, and disorientated.

Worship is a way of being thankful to the Lord who created and sustains and cares for humanity. Those who worship him will have Paradise, an amazing reward.

The creation of Adam and Eve, the first humans, is narrated and Adam is designated the lofty title of Khalifa, the Divine representative on earth. Angels were ordered to prostrate before him, but Satan refused and was expelled from Paradise. Adam is honoured by Allah and educated about all the things in the universe. When he and his wife Eve mistakenly eat from the forbidden tree, they are expelled from paradise and sent down to earth.

The story of the Jews (40 to 141) dominates the rest of the first Juz. The Jews are the children of prophet Yaqub, the grandson of Ibrahim. Allah reminds them of His favours: a special contract with them, gave them faith, law and scripture. They are reminded how Allah saved them from the slavery of Pharaoh. Unfortunately, they did not all fully appreciate this and were ungrateful. Despite their betrayal Allah blessed them with Manna, and Salva, a delicious precooked meat and dessert respectively.

In the middle of the Juz is the story of the cow, from which the Surah takes its name. A man was murdered, but an innocent person sentenced to death. Musa told them to stop

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the execution, and to investigate the truth. They were to sacrifice a cow and swipe the dead body with it, as they did so, the murdered person rose from dead and identified the murderer. As a commentary on the story the Quran laments about people who after seeing such miracles still refused to believe in resurrection. What is the relevance of this story in a surah that lays down many laws? To point out that a human society is not based on laws only, but a civil society must respect moral and social values and spiritual ideals. A legal system is only one part of a flourishing civilisation. The Story of the Cow highlights the idea that attitudes and values lie at the heart of a just society.

Over the next few sections the Quran pours scorn on the Israelites for breaking the contract, killing prophets and being arrogantly stubborn. They are reminded that they disrespected the Angels, Jibreel and Mikeel, and prophet Sulayman. They accused Sulayman of magic and Allah exonerated him from such fraudulent practices.

The Messenger eagerly preached and invited the Jews of Madinah to accept Islam. However, their religious pride, tribal jealousy and economic prowess stopped them. Furthermore, their love of this world blinded them from seeing the truth, it points out their blind pursuit for worldly power. By recalling their worldliness and carefree attitude to Allah the Muslims are being warned to take note.

The supreme status of the Messenger is highlighted in the passage by teaching believers how to address him properly. They are invited to become one community and stop the sectarian bickering. After making sincere and powerful arguments to embrace Islam, the Quran categorically says people are free to worship as they like (114). The vastness of Allah's creation is proof of His existence; the disbeliever's rejection does not diminish His Glory.

The Jewish history began three thousand years ago with their great grandfather Ibrahim. It opens with his prayer for his descendants who he settled in Makkah. The prayer for a Messenger to be raised among them. An Allusion to the Beloved Messenger Muhammad. So, why don't you accept him? Ibrahim's faith was deep, and he had a long-term vision for his children including his children from Ismaeel too. Before ending the story of the Jews, Yaqaob's final advise to his twelve sons is mentioned, "They say to you: "Become Jews...", or: "Become Christians and you will be guided". Tell them: "In fact our religion is the religion of Ibrahim, who was a true Hanif, and was not an idolater". Say: "We believe in Allah and in what is revealed to us, and in what was revealed to Ibrahim ..." (Al-Baqara:139)

These sections describe the unity of the Abrahamic faiths by pointing out that Islam is not a new religion, but verifies, confirms and continues the teachings of Judaism and Christianity. They too accept the belief in one God and of serving humanity. Islam replaces Judaism and Christianity as the final religion of Allah, so the Quran is The Final Revelation.