# Summary of Juz 2

## Surat al-Baqara continued

In Madinah, the Muslims were free to practice Islam in a way they were not able to in Makkah. They are encouraged to develop a civil society defined by a belief system with spiritual and moral values and underscored by legal and political standards. The surah established a clear legal context to support this spiritual and moral social structure and to tackle the sickness of an uncaring society. In addition, political and economic principles were laid down including:

- The change of the direction of prayer from Jerusalem to Makkah (142). This signalled the end of the hegemony of the Jewish people. It heralded the new dawn of Islam; commitment to Allah and service of humanity as a mark of distinction. Furthermore, there is the motivation for everyone to set goals and direction for their lives. This requires patience and spiritual help from Allah.
- The four forbidden foods (172); pork, blood, carcasses and animals slaughtered without invoking Allah's name.
- When questions on alcohol, gambling, charity and short-changing orphans were asked, the Quran disapproved such behaviour.
- Fasting in Ramadan is made obligatory (183).
- Muslims are given permission to fight against others in defence (190).
- The morals and manners of Hajj and Umrah are explained (197).
- Family laws; the law of retribution (178); writing down one's will (180); the prohibition of marriage with non-Muslims (222); divorce and marital discord (228–32).
- Entering Paradise or Hell may be determined by who one marries.
- An answer to a question about menstruation and sexual intimacy.
- The ruling about settling marital disputes.
- The rights and responsibilities of married couples and divorcees.
- Third-time divorce.
- Avoiding injustice when going through a divorce.
- A father has to pay maintenance expenses for his children.
- The waiting period for widows, and encouragement to remarry.
- Divorce ruling before the marriage is consummated.
- Never neglect your prayers under any circumstances.
- Further rulings on maintenance for widows and divorcees.
- Commercial transactions; the prohibition of earning interest (275); business contracts; commercial transactions and guarantees for loans (282–3).

## Salvation lies in submission to Allah

An overview of Juz 2 reveals an important thread that weaves it together "Human salvation lies in complete submission and commitment to the Lord of the Worlds". This is comprised of the following five principles:

1. Firm faith in Allah, the One God.
2. Belief in his Majestic rule and Power.
3. Belief in Allah as the sole creator of the Universe.
4. Belief in His messengers who have been sent to guide humanity and to make clear the straight path that will help creation to achieve the pleasure of the Creator.
5. Belief in life after death.

Such beliefs help us to live a righteous life, a good life pleasing to the Lord and conducive to healthy living and well-being. This is not a mechanical performance of ritual exercises. Instead, it is conscious awareness of and attentiveness to the Divine, in such a way that one feels His presence everywhere. A natural outcome of this way of living is the belief in a resurrection and Judgement Day, signifying that this life is an opportunity to gain the pleasure of Allah, and therefore to secure a place near Him in Paradise.

## Diversity among various faiths and ways of living

The Quran presents diversity in creation as “Allah’s way” and nothing unusual or strange about it. Say, "We believe in Allah and what is revealed to us, and what was revealed to Ibrahim, Ismael, Ishaq, Yaqub and the tribes, as well as what was given to Musa and Isa, and what was given to all the Messengers from their Lord, we make no distinction between any one of them, we are Muslims" (136).

## Some key questions

The new community in Madinah faced many challenges, which were addressed through the following questions:

- How should Muslims relate to the Jews in Madinah?
- What is Ibrahim to Muslims? Ibrahim’s prayer for Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was: "Our Lord raise among them a noble messenger, who will recite your verses unto them and teach them the Book and the Wisdom, and will purify them; you are the Almighty, the Wise" (129). In other words, the religion of Islam is the fulfilment of the prayer of Prophet Ibrahim.
- Should Muslims take up arms against the enemy?
- Fighting is compulsory for you although you dislike it. Sometimes you dislike something that is good for you and sometimes you like something that is bad for you. Only Allah knows the truth, but you do not know (216).
- The Muslims were given permission for the first time to take up arms against the enemy to defend themselves. This contrasted with the policy in Makkah, where they could not physically retaliate against aggression.
- What is the nature of a Muslim’s relationship with Allah?

“When My servants ask you about Me, tell them I am near; I answer the prayer of the prayerful whenever he prays to Me. Therefore, obey Me and believe in Me so that you may be guided” (186).

As we reach the end of the Juz, the Surah returns to the story of the Israelites, the sacred Ark, which contained the relics of Musa and Harun was used by them as a centre of spiritual energy through which they won against their enemies. They are reminded how they sought a king and Allah gave them Talut and later Dawud.