

## Summary of Juz 4

### Surat Ale-Imran-continued

The fourth Juz opens with the declaration, you will only do well when you give your best. Learn lessons from the stories of the Israelites. Muslims do not invent beliefs and practices that contradict divine teachings nor innovate. Before declaring the pilgrimage as an obligation for anyone who can afford it, the Quran gives the background of the Kaaba, in Makkah, as the first place of worship built on Earth.

A warning is given not to deny Allah's favours. Among them, the Unity of the believers, a sense of belonging to good people. The Ansar of Madinah are reminded of their bloody and bitter past. Sectarianism is condemned, examples from the Jewish infighting are given to stress the destructive nature of disunity. The uniting power of Islam calls Muslim to play a leading role in inviting humanity to goodness and rejecting evil. This is the special calling of Muslims. If they ignore it they will be disgraced.

Despite these criticisms of the Israelites, the Quran cautions against stereotyping people due to religion and race. Allah said: "All of them are not alike; a group among the People of the Book upholds the original teachings of the scripture, reciting Allah's verses throughout the night as they prostrate to Him... Whatever good they do, it will never go unrewarded by Allah, Allah knows the pious." (113-5)

This is followed by two sections full of pearls of wisdom, such as:

- Virtuous deeds without faith in Allah are worthless
- Friends should be chosen wisely

### The story of the Battle of Uhud (121-177)

The next fifty-six verses tell the story of the battle of Uhud. Since the Makkans defeat at the Battle of Badr, they were determined to avenge their dead. So they gathered an army of 3,000 men to attack Madinah. When the Prophet ﷺ learnt of this, he held a war council. The overwhelming opinion was to go out of the city and meet the enemy in the open field. The Muslims numbered about 700.

The Messenger strategically posted fifty archers on the nearby hill, to provide cover against outflanking manoeuvres by the enemy cavalry. They were to stay there under all circumstances. However, when they saw Muslims winning the battle, they left their post and scrambled for the booty. Seeing this opportunity, the Makkan cavalry, veered round in a wide arc and attacked the Muslims from the rear. This unexpected attack resulted in the loss of many lives. Amidst all this mayhem. A rumour quickly spread that the Prophet ﷺ had been killed and this caused some Muslims to flee. However, Omar and some other companions dispelled the rumour and regrouped to defend the Prophet ﷺ. When the other Muslims learnt that the Prophet was alive, they rallied and attacked the enemy. The Quraysh fled to Makkah. The battle ended as a draw and seventy Muslims were martyred.

## **Hard lessons learnt from the Battle of Uhud**

This was a devastating blow due to sloppy discipline and disobedience of the Prophet. The lesson was "Obey your leader." The Quran provided a detailed analysis of what went wrong: "When you were defeating them with His help, suddenly you lost courage, argued about the order you had been given and disobeyed it, even after He had shown you what you desired - the fact is that some of you long for the world, whilst others among you long for the Hereafter" (152). A harsh criticism, but Allah reassures the Muslims, "Do not be disheartened or sad, you will come out on top if you are true believers" (139).

The next sections highlight the reasons for this defeat and the lessons, which must be learnt:

1. The archers' anguish about missing out on the spoils of war. Wars must never be fought for gaining booty.
2. During times of trial 'always stand firmly and never despair'.
3. Never disobey the Prophet's order.
4. Be courageous and overcome your doubts.
5. The defeat in the battle distinguished the hypocrites from the believers.
6. The 70 martyrs are with their Lord, enjoying bliss in paradise.
7. Always put your trust in Allah and get on with the job in hand.

Despite the devastating blow to the morale and reputation of the Muslims, the archers were pardoned by Allah. Consolation follows: "Allah favoured the believers when He sent them a messenger. The hypocrites were happy at the defeat of Muslims, they were warned of a dreadful punishment awaiting them. The conclusion is "tests are a part of a life of faith" and you must be patient to succeed. (185)

The opening of the Surah tells 'those firmly grounded in knowledge' will believe in the Quran without a doubt. These same people are praised in the last ten verses for being reflective and prayerful. The Lord will answer their prayers. What is true success? It isn't material achievements nor military prowess. "Believers, be patient, encourage each other to be patient, be disciplined, and be mindful of Allah so that you may achieve success." (200)

## **Surat An-Nisa - The women**

The fourth Juz continues with Surat An-Nisa, revealed over eighteen months after the Battle of Uhud, in 3 AH/625 CE. A third of the surah discusses family issues. Since seventy Muslim men were martyred, they left behind them orphans and widows, creating families in crisis. There was a dire need for clear guidance on how to deal with this crisis. The surah lays out a series of laws concerning: the status of women, marriage, marital discord, inheritance, capital punishment for murder, the prohibition of praying under the influence of alcohol and the rights of orphans. It provides instructions on settling family disputes arising out of what is nowadays called "post-traumatic stress disorder". It lays out clear rulings to ensure justice is done, but still emphasizes the need to be caring and loving towards orphans and one's family. In this way, a safe space is created for the nurturing of children.

The Surah opens by stressing the need to maintain family ties, as they connect us to each other. The key to this is fairness and taking care of those who are most vulnerable. The seventy martyrs

of Uhud had left behind orphans and widows so it was important to give them legal protection. Trustees of these orphans were advised to look after their property wisely and not to squander it. Similarly, the law of inheritance was announced: different shares for different relatives: the male heirs share is double that of the female. This was revolutionary legislation since it was unheard of giving women inheritance. The inheritance is distributed after the deceased's debts have been paid and any bequest fulfilled. The maximum amount of bequest allowed is a third of the inheritance. The parent's share is one-sixth; wife's one quarter if there are no children, if there are children then it's one eighth. The Quran stresses the reward for adhering to Allah's boundaries and not violating Divine commandments.

The peace and prosperity of family life depends on the chastity of the spouses so the Quran lays down serious penalties for adultery; an evil that can destroy the harmony and success of family life.

Is repentance acceptable? Yes "However, if they repent and reform themselves, then leave them alone. Allah is the Relenting, Most Kind."

The next three sections outline the women that a man cannot marry and thereby ends some terrible unjust customs of pre-Islamic Arabia.

The list of women forbidden as spouses: mothers; daughters; sisters; maternal aunts; paternal aunts; nieces from the brother's or sister's side; foster mothers who have suckled you, foster sisters; your mothers-in-law; the stepdaughters who are in your care from women with whom you have consummated marriage; the wives of your sons; and marrying two sisters at the same time (23).