Summary of Juz 13

Surat Yusuf continued

Once Yusuf's name was cleared, he agreed to accept the prestigious post of the treasurer of Egypt. "Put me in charge of the country's stores," Yusuf said (55), the famine which Yusuf had forecasted affected the whole region, so Yusuf's brothers from Canaan visited Egypt in search of grains. He recognized them but they didn't recognize him. He is generous to them and returns the goods they gave in exchange for the grains. But he demanded that they bring their half-brother with them.

Yaqub reluctantly allows Benjamin to go on the errand. As they leave for Egypt the second time Yaqub gives them advice on how to avoid the evil eye: "My sons, don't enter together through one gate, but enter from different gates. I can't shield you against anything from Allah, as ultimate authority belongs to Him alone. (67) When they meet Yusuf, he takes Benjamin aside and tells him who he is. An interesting turn of events results in Benjamin being allowed to stay with Yusuf (69- 77).

In the next episode, the brothers plead for Benjamin's freedom but in vain. They return home bearing the sad news. Yaqub is devastated "Such grief over Yusuf!" His eyes clouded over, turning white, such was his sadness; yet he controlled his emotions (84).

The great forgiveness

The brothers beg for mercy, Yusuf is touched by their miserable situation and declares his identity to them. "They said, "Yusuf, is that you?" "I am Yusuf," he said, "and this is my brother. Allah has favoured us." (88-91) Finally, the family joins Yusuf in Egypt. His wonderful childhood dream is fulfilled: "As he invited his parents to sit on the throne, they fell before him in prostration" (100).

Surat al-Ra'd - The Thunder

This late Makkan surah teaches the Greatness of Allah, evident in scripture and nature. Nature is an open book, where Allah's creativity can be seen, felt and experienced. The scripture teaches moral values that determine a person's faith and character. Spiritual ideals that fill life with meaning and answer the big questions: who are we? where do we come from? and where are we going?

The Quran insists people must use reason, and not wizardry. The Makkans employed many hostile tactics to oppose the Prophet ﷺ. They started a smear campaign, mocked, ridiculed and even made physical threats. Some Muslims wished that Allah would send a miracle so that their fellow citizens would see and believe. "Even if such a Quran was revealed that could move the mountains or destroy the Earth or make dead speak, they still wouldn't believe" (31). Allah doesn't want to persuade people with miraculous wizardry. Instead, the Quran offers reasons to believe, evidence from nature, physical

phenomena, and human history. These appeals to human intellect and emotions can stir faith in Allah and motivate belief. The Quran wants people to decide for themselves, to accept Allah or reject faith. A moral choice has to be made since change only comes from within. "Allah doesn't change the condition of people until they change what's in themselves" (11).

The Awesome Creation and the Infinite Knowledge of Allah

The surah opened with a list of amazing natural phenomena: the sky without pillars, the rising and setting of the sun and the moon, the vast mountains, running rivers, spectacular groves of palm trees, vast vineyards and fields of maize and wheat. The Quran disapproves of the disbelievers' stubbornness and rejection of the truth. All of this is the creation of a supreme, powerful Lord. What are their idols in comparison? The "intelligent people", believe the Messenger ﷺ.

To illustrate the benefits of the Quranic teachings a parable is told. Heavy rain floods the valleys and on the top froth floats. After the storm, when everything settles down, the froth vanishes but the valuable minerals and the life-giving water stays to nourish the land. The Quran will remain, and their idols perish.

Eight qualities of the believers. They fulfil their contract with Allah and develop good human relationships. The Messenger ﷺ is reassured and continues preaching confidently. Already signs of victory are appearing. "Don't they realise that We are advancing in their land and its boundaries are shrinking?" (41). This is a possible reference to the group from Madinah, who had embraced Islam and were now inviting the Prophet ﷺ to come to their city – a lead up to the Hijrah and the final departure of the Prophet ﷺ from Makkah. The Surah highlights the source of lasting happiness as the remembrance of Allah (28-29).

The third Surah in this Juz is Surat Ibrahim, The Prophet Ibrahim. The Prophet ﷺ visited Taif to call the Banu Thaqif to Islam, only to be shockingly thrown out of the town and pelted with stones. The surah begins and ends with a simple statement of the purpose of revelation: to affirm the Oneness of Allah and to bring people out of the darkness of idolatry into the light of Tawhid.

Why is true belief equated with gratitude, and so deserving of reward (7), while idolatry is associated with ingratitude (kufr)? Because everything we rely on for our existence comes from Allah. To pretend that it belongs to a carved idol is insulting to human dignity. Those who worship idols including the modern materialist are reminded (9–14) of the stories they knew about the disbelievers of Nuh, Ad and Thamud. A graphic account of Hell (15–17) should remind them that punishment in this world will not be the end of it.

The parable of ashes scattered by the wind (18–20), is told to give the ungrateful disbelievers pause for thought and to question the lasting value, if any, of the worldly wealth and power of which they're so proud.

The parable of two trees (24–27), one rooted firmly bearing fruit, and the other uprooted and rotting slowly is told next. "Allah likens a good word to a good tree, whose roots are

fixed and whose branches reach to the sky; every season, it bears fruit by the Lord's permission. Allah gives people parables so they may reflect. Similarly, an evil word can be likened to a rotten tree, lying uprooted on the ground, rootless." (24-6)

The surah ends with an account of the anguished prayer of Ibrahim (35– 41), seeking forgiveness for himself, his parents, and his family. The impact of these words would have been considerable on the pagan Arabs who prided themselves in their forefather Ibrahim عليه السلام.