Summary of Juz 14

Surat Al Hijr - The Rock City

Juz 14 opens with surah Al-Hijr, revealed in the final years of the Prophetic mission. The central theme discusses the Makkans' attitude towards the Prophet ﷺ. They are not serious about spiritual matters, and love worldly life, "Leave them to eat and enjoy themselves, preoccupied with long hopes" (3). They were stubborn and unwilling to listen to reasonable arguments. So, they needed a good dose of moral and spiritual guidance, since their economic success had made them materialistic, selfish and greedy.

The Quran presents the fates of past communities who opposed their prophets. The story of Ibrahim عليه السلام is told. He is given the good news of a son and informed that the people of Lut عليه السلام would be punished. An example of Allah's kindness to his servant and the punishment of the disobedient.

The Divine promise to protect the Quran: "We revealed the Reminder, and We are its Protectors" (9), is a promise that we continue to witness today.

The story of human creation is repeated with emphasis on Satan vowing to mislead them, however, he is told he will not have any control over Allah's servants (26-50).

There are further illustrations of the disastrous fate of the people of the Madyan woodlands, and the cave dwellers of Thamud, after whom the surah gets its name (al-Hijr). The Makkans were familiar with these ancient communities since their ruins were on the trade route to Syria and Yemen.

Surat al-Nahl - The Bee

This surah was revealed in the last months of 622 CE, before the Prophet's ﷺ migration to Madinah. The tension between Makkans and Muslims was high at that time. The Muslims were disheartened, while the disbelievers felt confident Islam was no longer gaining new followers. However, the surah is optimistic and encourages Muslims to keep faith in the promise of a victory. It tells them, "Be patient, your patience is a gift from Allah. Don't be anxious about them nor distress yourself because of their plots" (127).

The Quran often mentions two kinds of books, the revealed Scripture that presents divine instructions, explanations and a set of beliefs. The other is nature, an open book comprising of the universe, the sun and stars, the moon, the flight of birds, the seas, pearls and rubies, ships ploughing through mighty waves, the rivers, mountains, cattle, riding animals, rain, plants, fruit, milk, honey and numerous crops.

This surat is also called al-Nia'mah, meaning, "the gift" because it lists a catalogue of gifts. Thankfulness is the only way to appreciate them. This is the very essence of Islam. Its opposite is un-thankfulness, the meaning of Kufr is that the Kafir fails to acknowledge Allah's gift.

The essence of the Divine Message is captured in this verse, it's recited in every sermon on Friday: "Allah commands justice, being good and generous to relatives, and He forbids indecency, all evil and cruelty" (90).

Allah created the entire universe for a purpose. How can we understand it? It begins by describing Allah's gifts, the domestic animals that were so important not only as food but as a means of transport. This is in the context of the fields of crops, vineyards, date and olive groves, and orchards. "If you were to count the gifts of Allah; you would not be able to count them; Allah is the Forgiver, the Kind" (18). Then we are reminded that the ungrateful were not let off but were punished. On the other hand, those who valued Allah's gifts will live in Paradise. (30-33)

The Messenger of Allah is there to guide you to it, so what are you waiting for? For further evidence investigate the history and see the fate of evildoers! Yet all things submit and obey Him. Allah's gifts are countless, but a baby must be the greatest. Apparently not so for the Idolater who feels ashamed when he gets the news of a baby girl. What a pity, the Quran laments. We are reminded of the patient nature of Allah that He does not rush to punish us no matter how wretched we become.

After this commentary, the Surah returns to the subject of gifts. Milk and honey are two amazing gifts. Milk is pure, nutritious food from the deep bowels of the cow and the honey from the stomach of the tiny bee. Two marvellous ingenious factories. The gift of Children and grandchildren. The disbelievers are chastised for neglecting them. The Quran expresses shock at such thanklessness.

Another list of Allah's gifts follows shelters, shields, and sets of clothes (79-84). We ought to appreciate these gifts because of the primordial pledge that our souls made. Those who break it are likened to "the woman who tears to pieces the cloth she spun" (90), what a waste of time and resources, utterly foolish.

The Quran teaches the equality of the sexes, "Whoever – whether male or female – does good deeds, while being a true believer, We shall bless them with a happy life, and give them reward equal to their beautiful deeds" (97).

Undoubtedly the Quran is the greatest gift! So, we are taught "When you start reading the Majestic Quran seek Allah's protection from the rejected Satan. He has no influence over believers who trust in their Lord" (98-99).

Faith is a valuable gift, what is its nature? We are told it lies deep in the heart. Love of the world can rob one of this gift. It develops by observing the lawful and avoiding the unlawful. To sum up this discussion of gifts, Allah praises Ibrahim, presented here as a model of the thankful person. "Ibrahim was an exemplary leader, obedient to Allah, pure in faith and didn't associate anything with Allah. He was thankful for His gifts, so Allah selected him and guided him on the straight path. Allah Says, We gave him the best in the world, and in the Hereafter, he will be among the righteous and We revealed to you, "Follow Ibrahim's religion, the pure in faith" (12-13).

A final instruction to the Messenger is to continue preaching politely and patiently.