Summary of Juz 15

Surat al-Isra'- The Ascension

Juz 15 begins with this late Makkan surah, it briefly mentions the Prophet's ﷺ miraculous Ascension. His amazing night journey from Makkah to Jerusalem, and then to the celestial heights, finishing in the Divine Presence. The journey is an announcement of the timeliness of the message of the Prophet ﷺ for the entire world and points to the coming glory of Islam. The Ascension took place on the 27th of Rajab, 17 months before the Hijrah in the year of sorrow. The purpose of this two-phased journey was "To show him Our signs".

This is followed by a passage retelling two historical events that devastated the Jewish community. In 586 BC, the Babylonians destroyed the Temple of Solomon and took the Israelites in captivity. The second event occurred in 70 CE, at the hands of the Roman emperor Titus. He persecuted and expelled the Jews from Jerusalem. Some think this passage hinted to the conquering of Jerusalem in the Khilafat of Omar but not a soul was killed.

The essence of the "Quran" is described as guidance to the straightest path. It reveals an explanation of the divine proofs and the disbeliever's inability to understand them. Life is a test of faith. The Majestic Quran is a recitation at dawn with special effects, providing healing and Divine Kindness. It is, an inimitable masterpiece, full of powerful arguments and the truth, revealed in clear bitesize chunks.

The essence of humanity is described as hasty. That's why we crave instant gratification and want immediate results. It also may explain why people love the now, the fleeting world, instead of the everlasting hereafter? To help humanity overcome this weakness the surah presents a new, just and peaceful way of living. It outlines a new world order: here people are kind, patient and forgiving.

It is summarised in the Ten Commandments announced in this Surah: worship Allah; care for parents; give to the needy; give up the Seven Deadly Sins (wastefulness, miserliness, murder, adultery, dishonesty, blind imitation and arrogance) (23-41).

The Quran warns humanity that Satan will exert his maximum effort to misguide, so be on guard. Though, "Allah's true servants will be protected from his insinuations" (64–65).

The Messenger ﷺ was devout and spiritual so a special night vigil is recommended for him: "Wake up at night to offer voluntary prayer that is only for you. Soon your Lord will raise you to a glorious station of praise" (79).

The mystery of the human soul: "They ask you about the soul; say, "The soul is my Lord's command, and you have been given little knowledge about it" (83). The Surah opened with the miracle of the Prophet and at the end mentions the nine miracles of Musa, witnessed by the Pharaoh and the Israelites.

Surat al-Kahf - The Cave

Juz 15 continues with this Makkan surah, which contrasts the nature of the spiritual and the material world, one permanent, the other temporary, one seen the other unseen. Humanity is

tempted by the attractions of the material world but fails to realise the importance of spiritual life. These contrasts are illustrated by five stories. Each story is followed by a terse and helpful commentary, which instils the love, majesty and grandeur of Allah. The five stories are:

- The story of the sleepers in the cave is about young men of faith, serious believers, unwilling to compromise their faith. They confronted society's evil and abandoned their families to save their faith from an oppressive ruler. The story illustrates Allah's power of resurrection, bringing the dead to life.
- The story of the poor and the rich man reveals the nature of the greedy, self-centred, insensitive and hard-hearted rich man who is ready to pick a fight.
- The Story of Adam عليه السلام and Satan provides a clue to understanding the cause of spiritual sickness.
- The story of Musa عليه السلام and Khidr, the sage who explains serendipity, "making chance discoveries and understanding things which you weren't looking for". The paradox of outward actions and inner meanings. What appears to be harmful turns out to be beneficial, and a loss becomes a gain. The lesson is that we should accept Allah's will since His plan is mysterious and full of wisdom and our understanding only partial.
- The story of Zulqarnayn, the mighty ruler challenges the view that the world must be abandoned for spiritual growth. It shows that is not necessary to gain Paradise. What is needed is Allah-consciousness.

The underlying theme in these stories is major temptations that individuals face with regards to:

1. Faith: the young men feared the Emperor would forcefully convert them. Our faith is always being challenged by society. How well we face those challenges depends on the strength of our faith. The company of righteous people can help to develop a strong faith.
2. Wealth: we are tempted by wealth, we love it and when wealth opposes religious duties, we often prefer wealth. We are unable to sacrifice it and unable to spend it for the good of others. The solution is to avoid such deep attachment to the world.
3. Temptations of Satan: He tempted Adam and Eve. He tempts us all the time. How can we protect ourselves against these temptations?
4. Knowledge, competence and skills often lead to arrogant behaviour. Resistance against this is found in humility and in recognising one's weaknesses and frailties. The example of the humility of Musa عليه السلام is an excellent model for us.
5. Power can corrupt and lead people to commit atrocities and injustices. Protection against corruptive power can be found in being sincere and genuine in one's desire to serve others.

In each story, the conflict between good and evil is clear. The five types of trials are like a thread binding these stories together. The surah also features much travel, moving from place to place. The sleepers of the Cave climb a mountain, the rich man and poor man walk to an orchard. Musa عليه السلام travels by foot and boat and the adventures of Zulqarnayn involve wandering from East to West with his army. All this is hinting that goodness is promised in movement and the search for Allah's gifts.