

Summary of Juz 23

Surat Yasin

Juz 23 begins with Surat Yasin, it's an early Makkan Surah. The Prophet ﷺ called it "The Heart of the Quran". Its central themes are proofs for the doctrines of Tawhid, Risalah and Akhirah. It opens by reassuring the Messenger ﷺ of the importance of his role in guiding humanity and laments the history of human disobedience. The chief reason identified for disbelief is arrogance reflected in human stubbornness. The story of three messengers, who were rejected by the people of their town, is told to warn the disbelievers. The brave supporter in the story, who stands up for the messengers, symbolises the small band of Muslims in Makkah, thereby reassuring them of Divine Help.

The second section of the Surah describes Allah's amazing creative power and invites the reader to reflect on creation: a marvel of incredible complexity and beauty. Attention is drawn to the lifeless earth and how it comes to life after rain, concluding that this is how Allah will bring the dead to life.

The Trumpet will herald the day of Judgement when justice will be done. Evidence of one's good and bad deeds will not come, just from the records but, human limbs will speak out too. Indisputable evidence. A vivid account of the delights of Paradise shows how its residents will see Allah in His Glory and Majesty.

The Surah opened with two claims, the Messenger is divinely appointed to guide humanity and the resurrection is real. Historical, rational and moral evidence is presented to prove this. The conceptual boundaries of the readers' mind are prompted to ponder the paradoxical: sparks of fire that come from rubbing together two fresh twigs. Indeed, "When He wants to do something all He says is 'Be,' and it is! Glory to Him Who controls everything, and you shall be returned to Him" (82-83).

Surat As-Saffat - Arranged in Rows

Juz 23 continues with Surat as-Saffat. Its central theme is also proving the truthfulness of the Islamic doctrines: Tawhid, Risalah, and Akhirah. It opens with three attention-grabbing oaths that describe the perennial heavenly battles between the angels and Satan comparing them with the earthly battles between the Prophets and their communities. Six stories of the Prophets describe their courageous efforts to guide humanity. The dream of Ibrahim and his willingness to sacrifice points to the inner battle between the love of children versus the love of Allah.

Two scenes from Judgement Day are described: leaders and their followers at loggerheads, blaming each other for their dreadful fate. A pious person finds his friend in hell and reminds him of how he tried to misguide him, but failed in doing so. Zaqqum, the food of the people of Hell is a tree that resembles the desert cactus and has a poisonous sap with a foul smell which causes blisters and death. The Surah returns to the angels and how they are organized in Paradise.

Surat Saad

Juz 23 continues with Surat Şaad, an early-Makkan Surah. It opens by describing the role of the Quran as a reminder, creating awareness and consciousness of a greater reality. This is developed by relating the stories of previous communities and the tireless efforts of the Prophets, starting with an account of the excellent qualities of Dawud and his son Sulayman. They were rulers and pious servants of Allah.

The heartbreaking story of the suffering of Prophet Ayyub concludes the Surah. According to Tabari, Satan surmised that Ayyub would not remain faithful if he encountered difficulties. Allah allowed Satan to test him. So, disaster struck Ayyub: his house subsided, his livestock was killed, his family members died in an accident and he became ill with an infectious disease so that people abandoned him. Satan also attempted to shake Ayyub's faith through his wife, when she put forward the idea that he must sacrifice a baby goat for Satan if he wanted to recover. Ayyub refused to do this. In his despair and anguish, he prayed: "Satan has brought hardship and pain" (41). Ayyub is presented as a model of patience and endurance. This is what makes it a lesson, zikra, for those with understanding (43).

At the beginning of the Surah, the arrogance and hostility of the people of Makkah, to the Prophet ﷺ, results in the warning, "How many past generations We destroyed before them! They cried out; there was no time for escape" (3). The Surah also presents the other objections that the disbelievers have, to the message of Muhammad ﷺ. The stories of previous communities who rejected Prophets alternate with passages about the Makkans, facilitating a comparison between the two.

Surat al-Zumar - the Crowds

Juz 23 continues with Surat al-Zumar. It reinforces belief in the Oneness of Allah and the dreadful consequences of denying Him. Professor Sells eloquently captures the mood of that early time, he says: What gives the early Makkan Suras their depth, psychological subtlety, texture and tone is the way the future is collapsed into the present; the way the day of reckoning is transferred from the fear and hope of a moment in the future to a sense of reckoning in the present moment. The centrality of the day of reckoning to the early revelations is based on a prophetic impulse to remind humanity of the moment of truth.

The graphic scenes of the Hereafter are presented in a variety of ways to emphasize the terror of Judgement Day. The severity of Divine punishment is stressed repeatedly, however, the pessimism of the sinners is dispelled, "My servants who have wronged themselves, do not be hopeless of Allah's kindness; Allah forgives all sins. He is the Forgiver, the Kind" (53).

The Surah opened by reference to Allah's Majesty and questions how such a generous Lord could be denied. We receive His gifts day and night: the air we breathe, the delightful foods we enjoy and the spouses that give us friendship and comfort. "If you are unthankful, then Allah has no need of you; He is not pleased with the thanklessness of his servants. But if you are thankful, He will be pleased with you" (7). Such fortunate people are blessed by Allah in an incredible way: "The one whose mind Allah has opened for Islam has received light from His Lord. But ruined are those with closed minds against the remembrance of Allah; they are grossly misguided (22)."

The ability to see, feel and to speak the Truth is a great gift. The next passage compares the man of faith to the idol worshipper i.e. the modern materialist, "Can a servant devoted to many masters who are at odds with each other be the same as the one who is devoted solely to one master?" (29).