

Summary of Juz 8

Surat Al-Anam continued

How the devil misleads?

The idea of believing in one God was too much for the people of Makkah. They thought the Prophet was mad. But it was their leaders, referred to as the human devils who were misguided. Allah tells the messenger not to pay attention to their criticism since their world view was distorted by superstitious practices. These superstitions show their cowardly nature. For example, they wouldn't eat meat on which the name of Allah had been invoked. Why do they do these evil things? Evil works look attractive: "Take for example a dead person who We resurrected and gave him a light to walk among people, can he be like someone who lives in darkness which he never leaves? (122)

This simile explains "The person Allah wishes to guide, He opens his mind to surrender to Allah, and whomever He lets go astray, his mind is closed as if he were struggling to climb skywards: by such means, Allah allows evil to come about on those who do not believe" (124). What influenced the sinners? The lure of the world and its delights.

Pagan superstitions about livestock: they fixed shares for idols and Allah. These misinformed superstitions aren't benign but lead to serious sins including infanticide. Allah's creative power; "He grows gardens, both with and without trellises, date palms, plants of different tastes, olives and pomegranates, some alike and others different. Eat of their fruits when they are ripe, give the needy their due on harvest day, and do not squander; He dislikes spendthrifts" (141).

The next section mentions the four pairs of domestic animals: camel, cow, sheep and goat. Allah created them for transport and food. The idolaters are misled and unreasonable.

The oneness of Allah is evident in nature, human history, conscience, self-evident truths and human interest. The result of this belief in Oneness of Allah is people become devout, honest and well-wishers of humanity. This goodness is summarized in the Ten Commandments.

The ten Commandments are the new contract: reject idolatry: care for parents: don't kill children: never be indecent; Don't kill; don't misappropriate orphans' property; be honest in weights and measures; be just; fulfil Allah's contract; follow the straight path and be responsible representatives of Allah.

The purpose of Allah's revelation is to remove doubts, so why don't you accept the new contract?

The Quran appeals to common sense and repeatedly invites people to see the reality: "You have nothing to do with those who divided their religion and made sects; their case rests with Allah, and He will inform them about what they did." The Prophet is told to make his case decisively by announcing "My prayers, my sacrifices, my life, my death; are for Allah, Lord of all the realms. (162)

Surat al-Araf, The Heights. Juz 8 continues with this late Makkan surah which opens by describing the role of the Quran: guidance and a reminder. Otherwise, the consequences would be devastating. The story of Adam reveals the cause of human failure to follow the path of religion. Satan the arch enemy misleads them. So, we are alerted to his plots. His tools are deception that makes things appear attractive and humans readily fall into his trap. He appeals to the psychological hunger, lust, food, sense of belonging and honour. Satan did this with our father and mother Adam and Eve. He tempted them, and they fell into his trap but they quickly repented.

Dressing smartly can be a defence against indecency and arrogance. By linking clothing with piety, the Quran teaches the relationship of the outer to the inner, the physical to the spiritual, and the connection between words and behaviour.

The Quran is a warning and an authoritative reminder like earlier books. But the Makkans denied it. It instructs them to be righteous to earn reward and reserve a place in Paradise. In the Hereafter, all deeds will be weighed. The Quran persuades everyone to achieve it. But the Satan vows to mislead people, he succeeds with many. Satan said, "I shall wait by their straight path for a chance to lure them; then I will pounce on them from the front, their behind, and from their right and left, You will find most of them are ungrateful to You"(14-7).

How did he trap Adam and Eve? He whispered to the two of them, revealing their nakedness, of which they had until then been unaware"(18). This was the result of following his whisper. However, they quickly recognised their mistake and repented. "Our Lord, we've wronged ourselves. If You don't forgive us and treat us kindly, we'll be the losers" (23).

Modesty and the dress code The covering up of the private parts stops lewdness and reduces attracting the attention of the opposite sex. The Quran recommends dressing well and insists, "Children of Adam, we've revealed to you the idea of clothing for adornment and to cover your nakedness, but the clothing of piety is best of all. (26) So, modesty and shame help to escape Satan's temptations. To dress smartly is piety (29-32).

To show the impact of modesty on human salvation the Quran rules: "My Lord has forbidden acts of indecency, whether openly or in secret; likewise any sin; unlawful rebellion; associating with Allah anything for which He has revealed no authority and saying things that you have no knowledge about Allah" (33).

Shirk is associating idols with Allah and is a serious sin. It deserves harsh punishment. Each successive generation of disbelievers will blame the other. "Whenever a community enters the Fire, it will curse its fellow community, up until each of them has followed all

the others into it, and the last of them will say about the first of them, "Our Lord, here are those who misled us, so double their punishment in the Fire" (38).

After describing the scary fate of the people of Hell, the Quran turns to the righteous who recognised the gifts of Allah and worshipped Him. They shall live in Paradise!

The following sections describe the wretched state of the people of Hell; they plead for water to quench their thirst, but their request is declined. No one can help them, the idols they worshipped won't benefit today.

How can you avoid this horrible state? Be humble in prayer to the Lord Who created the universe and work for peace on earth (56).

The last part of Juz 8 tells the human history of disobedience: the stories of the prophet Nuh, Saleh, Hud, Lut, Shoaib and Musa. The people of Nuh ignored his sincere advice (59-64); The people of Hud rebelled (65-72); the arrogance of people of 'Ad lead them to disobey Salih (73-79); The people of the Prophet Lut rejected him as too puritanical (80-4); Prophet Shu'ayb stopped his people cheating (85-7).

These stories are invitations to Islam and provided reassurance for the Messenger and his followers. These Prophets were rejected, condemned, and some killed. But they continued teaching, preaching and mentoring the people. Finally, divine punishment destroyed them. This is a clear warning to the people of Makkah that if you do not accept my beloved Messenger you will face the same fate.