

SŪRAH 106

Al-Quraysh

The Quraysh

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of God, the Lord of Grace, the Ever Merciful.

For the tradition of the Quraysh, (1)

their tradition of travelling in winter and summer.

(2)

Let them worship the Lord of this House, (3)

*who provided them with food against hunger, and
with security against fear. (4)*

لَا يَلْفُ قُرَيْشٍ ۝١

إِلَّا لَفِهُمُ رِحْلَةَ الشِّتَاءِ وَالصَّيْفِ ۝٢

فَلْيَعْبُدُوا رَبَّ هَذَا الْبَيْتِ ۝٣

الَّذِي أَطْعَمَهُم مِّن جُوعٍ وَءَامَنَهُم مِّن

خَوْفٍ ۝٤

Lest They Forget

When Abraham, God's friend, or *khalīl* as he is called in Arabic, completed the building of the House of worship, the Ka`bah, and had purified it he turned to God with the following prayer: "Lord, make this a land of security and make provisions of fruits for those of its people who believe in God and the Last Day." (2: 126) o God made that House one of peace; free from all human authority and from all tyranny. He granted security and peace to anyone seeking shelter in that House, while fear was all around it. Even when the people transgressed, ascribed divinity to beings other than God and worshipped idols, there was peace and security in it; for God had designed a purpose for this sacred House.

When the people of the Elephant marched to destroy the House, there happened to them what is described in the preceding *sūrah*, The Elephant. God preserved for the House its peace, security and sacredness. Of those who lived around it, God said: *“Do they not see that We have made a secure Sanctuary, and that men are being snatched away from all around them?”* (29: 67)

The Elephant incident had an added effect in greatly enhancing the sanctity of the House amongst the Arabs all over the Peninsula. It also strengthened the position of the Quraysh, the custodians of the House, in all Arabia. They were thus able to travel far and wide in peace and security. Wherever they went they met with generosity and high esteem. This encouraged them to establish two great routes for their commercial caravans, to the Yemen in the south and to Syria in the north. They organized two enormous trading expeditions; one to the Yemen in winter and the other to Syria in summer.

In spite of very poor conditions of security in all parts of the Arabian Peninsula at that time, and in spite of all the looting and plundering raids that were common in that land, the sanctity of the House in the eyes of all Arabs guaranteed security and peace in their flourishing business to those who lived near it and were its custodians. It created for the Quraysh a distinct and exclusive position and opened up for them an extensive and guaranteed means of sustenance in peace, security and contentment. The Quraysh became accustomed to these two profitable and peaceful trips, which were soon established among their traditional habits.

This is the specific grace of which God reminds the Quraysh, as He reminded them of the Elephant incident in the previous *sūrah*. It is the grace of their being accustomed to the winter and summer trips, and the abundance with which He endowed them by means of these two fruitful journeys. It is by the grace of God that while their land is desolate and dry, they still live a comfortable life. Out of His grace He secures them from fear whether in their hearths and homes, next to God’s House, or on their journeys. Their security is the result of their being the custodians of the House, the sanctity of which is ordained and preserved by God against any violation.

God reminds them of these graces in order that they may be ashamed of their submission to other beings, while He is the Lord of the House. God says to them in effect: for this tradition of the Quraysh, namely their winter and summer trips, let them submit to the Lord of this House who guaranteed their security and so encouraged them to take such beneficial journeys. *“Let them worship the Lord of this House, who provided them with food against hunger, and with security against fear.”* (Verses 3-4) As their land was infertile, they would have starved had it not been for the sustenance supplied by God. *“And with security against fear.”* Poor as they were, and living in an insecure surroundings, their life would have been one of fear and apprehension. But God granted them security and allayed their fear.

This is a reminder which should have left a profound sense of shame in the hearts of the Quraysh, who were not unaware of the great value of the House and the effect of its sanctity on their lives. At the moment of danger and difficulty, the Quraysh used to appeal only to the Lord of that House and seek only His help. This was the case with `Abd al-Muṭṭalib, who did not confront Abrahah with any army or physical strength. Instead `Abd al-Muṭṭalib addressed himself only to the Lord of the House, because He was the only One who could protect His House. `Abd al-Muṭṭalib did not appeal to any of the idols or craven images for help. He did not even say to Abrahah that these deities would protect their House. He only said to him, "I am only the master of the camels, but the House has its own Lord who is sure to protect it." But ignorance does not listen to any logic, or acknowledge what is right, or accept any reasonable argument.

This *sūrah* seems to be an extension of the preceding one, The Elephant, with regard to its subject matter and general tone. Nevertheless, it is an independent *sūrah* with the usual beginning of the Qur'ānic *sūrahs*, namely, "In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful." Qur'ānic commentators state that nine *sūrahs* were revealed between the revelation of this and the preceding *sūrah*, but that they were placed next to each other in the Qur'ān because of their close similarity of subject.