

SŪRAH AL-BAQARAH

(The Cow)

MADINITE

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

286 VERSES

The name and the number of verses

According to the *aḥadith* of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the reports relating to his blessed Companions, the name of this Sūrah is Al-Baqarah. The *riwayah* or narration which prohibits this name is not authentic (Ibn Kathir). It comprises of 286 verses, 6201 words and 25500 letters (Ibn Kathir).

The period of revelation

The Sūrah is Madinite - that is to say, it was revealed at Madīnah after the Hijrah; some of the verses included here were revealed at Makkah at the time of the last Hajj of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, but, in accordance with the terminology of the commentators, they too are regarded as Madinite. This is the longest Sūrah in the Holy Qur'an. It was the first Sūrah to be revealed at Madīnah, but different verses were revealed at different times, covering quite a long period so much so that the verses with regard to *riba* (interest or usury) were revealed in the last days of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم after the conquest of Makkah. Actually, the verse:

وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا تُرْجَعُونَ فِيهِ إِلَى اللَّهِ

Fear the day when you will return to Allah (2:281),

is the very last verse of the Holy Qur'an to be revealed - this happened on the 10th of Dhu al-Hijjah 10 A.H., when the Holy Prophet ﷺ was

in the course of performing his last Hajj, and only eighty or ninety days later he departed from this world, and the process of Divine Revelation came to an end for ever. (Qurtubi)

The merits of Sūrah Al-Baqarah

It is not only the longest Sūrah in the Holy Qur'ān, but also contains quite a large number of injunctions. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said: "Make a habit of reading the Sūrah Al-Baqarah, for reading it brings down on you the *barakah* or blessings of Allah, and neglecting it is a matter of regret, and a misfortune. And men of falsehood cannot overcome it". Al-Qurtubī cites the blessed Companion Mu'awiyah to the effect that the men of falsehood referred to here are sorcerers, and the implication is that one who keeps reading this Surah becomes immune to the effect of black magic (Qurtubī, from Muslim, as narrated by Abū Umamah Bahili). The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has also said that Satan flees from the house in which this Surah is read or recited. (Ibn Kathir from Hakim). Another *ḥadīth* says that this Sūrah is the apex of the Holy Qur'ān, and that a retinue of eighty angels had accompanied each of its verses when it was revealed (Ibn Kathir from Musnad Ahmad). The blessed Companion Abū Huraira رضى الله عنه reports from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that there is a verse in this Sūrah which enjoys a superiority over all the other verses of the Holy Qur'ān, and that verse is the Verse of the *Kursi* (*Āyat al-Kursī* 2:255) (Ibn Kathir from Tirmidhī). The blessed Companion Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd says that ten verses of this Sūrah have such an efficacy that if one recites them at night, neither Satan nor *jinn* would enter one's house, nor would one and one's family be afflicted with illness or calamity or sorrow that night, and that if they are recited over a man suffering from a fit of madness, his condition will improve. The ten verses are these: the first four verses of the Sūrah, three verses in the middle (that is, the *Āyat al-Kursī*, and the two following verses), and the last three verses of the Sūrah.

This Sūrah enjoys, with regard to its contents as well, a special distinction. Ibn al-'Arabī reports from his elders that in this Sūrah there are one thousand injunctions, one thousand prohibitions, one thousand subtle points of wisdom, and one thousand parables and references to historical events (Qurtubī and Ibn Kathir). That is why the

great Caliph ‘Umar رضى الله عنه spent twelve years in learning and meditating over this Sūrah, and the blessed Companion Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar spent eight years to learn it. (Qurṭubī)

As we have said, the Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah is the gist and the essence of the Holy Qur’ān. It deals with three basic themes - firstly, the affirmation of Allah as the Lord (*Rabb*) of the universe; secondly, the affirmation that Allah alone, and none else, is worthy of being worshipped; thirdly, the prayer for guidance. Thus, the Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah ends with the request for the straight path, and the whole of the Qur’ān is, in fact, an answer to this request - that is to say, the man who seeks the straight path will find it only in the Holy Qur’ān.

Hence it is that the Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah is immediately followed by the Sūrah Al-Baqarah which begins with the words, "That is the Book", indicating that this book is the straight path one has been seeking and praying for. Having defined the nature and function of the Holy Qur’ān, the Sūrah proceeds to state in a very brief manner the basic principles of the Islamic faith - namely, oneness of God, prophethood and hereafter (*Tawḥīd, Risālah, Ākhirah*). These principles have been presented in detail at the end of the Surah. In between, the Sūrah lays down the basic principles, and sometime even secondary rules in detail, for providing guidance to man in all spheres of life, modes of *‘ibādah* (worship), ethics, individual and social behaviour, economic relationships, ways and means of improving oneself externally and internally.

Verses 1 - 5

اَلَمْ ۝ ذٰلِكَ الْكِتٰبُ لَا رَيْبَ ۙ فِيْهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِيْنَ ۝ الَّذِيْنَ
يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيْمُوْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَ مِمَّا رَزَقْنٰهُمْ يُنْفِقُوْنَ ۝
وَالَّذِيْنَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِمَا اُنزِلَ اِلَيْكَ وَمَا اُنزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ وَبِالْآخِرَةِ
هُم يُوقِنُوْنَ ۝ اُولٰٓئِكَ عَلٰى هُدًى مِّنْ رَّبِّهِمْ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُم
الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ ۝

With the name of Allah,

The All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful.

Alif. Lam. Mim. That Book has no doubt in it - a