

## Sūrah 42: ash-Shūrā

### Period of Revelation

Although it could not be known from any authentic traditions, yet one feels after a study of its subject matter that this Sūrah might have been sent down consecutively after Fussilat, for it seems to be, in a way, a supplement to it. This will become clear to every person who first studies Sūrah Fussilat carefully and then goes through this Sūrah. He will see that in that Sūrah the Quraysh chiefs had been taken to task for their deaf and blind opposition so that anyone in Makkah and in its out-skirts, who had any sense of morality and nobility left in him, should know how unreasonably the chiefs of the people were opposing Muhammad (upon whom be God's peace), and as against them, how serious he was in everything he said, how rational was his standpoint and how noble his character and conduct. Immediately after that warning this Sūrah was sent down, which did full justice to teaching and instruction, and made the truth of the Prophet's message plain in such an impressive way that anyone who had any element of the love of the truth in him and who had not been blinded by the errors of ignorance, could not help being influenced by it.

### Theme and Subject Matter

The discourse begins in a way as if to say: "Why are you expressing surprise and amazement at what Our Prophet is presenting before you? What he says is not new or strange, nor anything novel, which might have been presented for the first time in history: that Revelation should come down to a man from God and he should be given instructions for the guidance of mankind. God has been sending similar Revelations with similar instructions to the former Prophets before this. It is not surprising that the Owner of the Universe should be acknowledged as Deity and Ruler, but what is strange is that one should accept another as divine and deity in spite of being His subject and slave. You are being angry with him who is presenting Tawhid (Oneness of God) before you, where as the shirk that you are practicing with regard to the Master of the Universe is such a grave crime as may cause the heavens to break asunder. The angels are amazed at this boldness of yours and fear that the wrath of God might descend on you any moment."

After this the people have been told that a person's being appointed to Prophethood and his presenting himself as a Prophet does not mean that he has been made master of the people's destinies and he has come to the world with that very claim. God has kept the destinies in His own hand. The Prophet has come only to arouse the heedless and guide the strayed ones to the Right Path. To call to account those who do not listen to him and to punish or not to punish them is God's own responsibility, and not part of the Prophet's work. Therefore, they should take it out of their head that the Prophet has come with a claim similar to those that are made by their so called religious guides and saints to the effect that he who would not listen to them, or would behave insolently towards them, would be burnt to death: In this very connection, the people have also been told that the Prophet has not come to condemn them but he is their well wisher; he is warning them that the way they are following will only lead to their own destruction.

Then, an answer has been given to the question: Why didn't God make all human beings righteous by birth, and why did He allow the difference of viewpoint owing to which the people start following each and every way of thought and action? The answer given is this: Owing to this very fact has it become possible for man to attain to the special mercy of God, which is not meant for other dumb creatures, but is only meant for those endowed with power and authority, who should take God as Patron and Guardian not instinctively but consciously by willing choice. God supports the man who adopts this way and guides and helps him to do good and right and admits him into His special mercy. On the contrary, the man who misuses his option and makes his patron those who are not, in fact, the guardians, and cannot be, are deprived of divine mercy. In this connection, it has also been made clear that only God is the Patron of man and of all other creatures. Others are neither the patron nor have the power to do full justice to patronage. Man's success depends only on this that he should make no mistake in choosing a patron for himself by the use of his free choice, and should take only Him his Guide Who, in reality, is the real Patron.

After this, it has been explained what the Faith (Din) being presented by the Prophet Muhammad really is : Its primary basis that as God Almighty is the Creator, Master and real Patron of the Universe and Man, He alone is Man's Ruler, He alone has the right to give Man Faith (Din) and Law (system of belief and practice) and judge the disputes of man and tell what is Truth and what is falsehood. No other being has any right whatever to be man's lawgiver. In other words, like the natural sovereignty, the sovereignty with regard to lawmaking also is vested only in God. No man or creature, apart from God, can be the bearer of this sovereignty. And if a person does not recognize and accept this Divine rule of God, it is merely futile for him to recognize the natural sovereignty of God.

On this very basis has God ordained a Din (True Religion) for Man from the very beginning. It was one and the same Religion that was vouchsafed in every age to all the Prophets. No Prophet ever founded any separate religion of his own. The same one Religion has been enjoined by God for all Mankind since the beginning of creation, and all the Prophets have been following it and inviting others to follow it.

This Religion and Creed was not sent so that man may rest content only with believing in it, but it was sent with the purpose and intention that it alone should be introduced, established and enforced in the world, and no man made religion be made to prevail in God's earth apart from His Religion. The Prophets had not been appointed only to preach this Religion but to establish it particularly in the world.

This same was the original Religion of mankind, but after the death of the Prophets, selfish people created new creeds by creating schisms for vested interests due to self-conceit, vanity and ostentation. All the different religions and creeds found in the world today have resulted from corruption of the original Divine Truth.

Now, the Prophet Muhammad has been sent so that he may present before the people the same and original Religion in place of the various practices and artificial creeds and man made religions, and may try to establish the same. On this, if instead of being grateful, you feel angry and come out to fight him, it is your folly; the Prophet will not abandon his mission only because of your foolishness. He has been enjoined to adhere to his faith at all costs and to carry out the mission to which he has been appointed. Therefore, the people should not cherish any false hope that in order to please them he would cater to the same whims and superstitions of ignorance which has corrupted God's Religion before.

You do not understand how great an impudence it is against God to adopt a man made religion and law instead of the Religion and Law enjoined by God. You think it is an ordinary thing and there is nothing wrong with it. But in the sight of God it is the worst kind of shirk and a grave crime whose punishment will be imposed on all those who enforced their own religion on God's earth and those who adopted and followed their religion.

Thus, after presenting a clear and visible concept of Religion it is said: "The best possible method that could be employed for your instruction and for bringing you to the Right Path has already been employed. On the one hand, God has sent down His Book, which is teaching you the truth in a most impressive way in your own language; and on the other, the lives of the Prophet Muhammad and his Companions are present before you by which you can see for yourselves what kind of men are prepared by the guidance given in this Book. Even then if you do not accept this guidance, nothing else in the world can bring you to the Right Path. The only alternative, therefore, is that you should be allowed to persist in the same error in which you have remained involved in for centuries, and made to meet with the same doom which has been destined by God for such wrongdoers."

While stating these truths, brief arguments have been given, here and there, for Tawhid (Oneness of God) and the Hereafter, the world worshipers have been warned of the evil consequences and their punishment in the life hereafter, and the disbelievers have been criticized for the moral weaknesses, which were the real cause of their deviation from the truth. The Sūrah has been concluded with two important themes.

First, that the Prophet was wholly unaware of this concept of the “Book” or the True Faith during the first forty years of his life and then his sudden appearance before the people with those two things, is a manifest proof of his being a Prophet.

Secondly, his presenting his own teaching as the teaching of God does not mean that he claims to have spoken to God, face to face, but God has conveyed to him this Guidance, as in the case of all other Prophets, in three ways: He speaks to His Prophets either through Revelation, or from behind a veil, or He sends an angel with the message. This thing was clarified so that the opponents did not have an opportunity of accusing the Prophet of claiming to have spoken to God, face to face, and the lovers of the truth should know by what methods God gave instruction to the man whom He had appointed to the mission of Prophethood.

**Sūrah 42: ash-Shūrā**<sup>1306</sup>

In the Name of God, the Most Compassionate,  
the Most Merciful

1. Hā, Meem.
2. ‘Ayn, Seen, Qāf.<sup>1307</sup>
3. Thus has He revealed to you, [O Muhammad], and to those before you - God, the Exalted in Might, the Wise.
4. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth, and He is the Most High, the Most Great.
5. The heavens almost break from above them,<sup>1308</sup> and the angels exalt [God] with praise of their Lord and ask forgiveness for those on earth. Unquestionably, it is God who is the Forgiving, the Merciful.
6. And those who take as allies other than Him - God is [yet] Guardian over them; and you, [O Muhammad], are not over them a manager.
7. And thus We have revealed to you an Arabic Qur’ān that you may warn the Mother of Cities [i.e., Makkah] and those around it<sup>1309</sup> and warn of the Day of Assembly, about which there is no doubt. A party will be in Paradise and a party in the Blaze.
8. And if God willed, He could have made them [of] one religion, but He admits whom He wills<sup>1310</sup> into His mercy. And the wrongdoers have not any protector or helper.
9. Or have they taken protectors [or allies] besides him? But God - He is the Protector, and He gives life to the dead, and He is over all things competent.
10. And in anything over which you disagree - its ruling is [to be referred] to God. [Say], “That is God, my Lord; upon Him I have relied, and to Him I turn back.”<sup>1311</sup>
11. [He is] Creator of the heavens and the earth. He has made for you from yourselves, mates, and among the cattle, mates; He multiplies you thereby. There is nothing like unto Him,<sup>1312</sup> and He is the Hearing, the Seeing.
12. To Him belong the keys of the heavens and the earth. He extends provision for whom He wills and restricts [it]. Indeed He is, of all things, Knowing.
13. He has ordained for you of religion what He enjoined upon Noah and that which We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad], and what We enjoined upon Abraham and Moses and Jesus - to establish the religion and not be divided therein. Difficult for those who associate others with God is that to which you invite them. God chooses for Himself whom He wills and guides to Himself whoever turns back [to Him].
14. And they did not become divided until after knowledge had come to them - out of jealous animosity between them-

<sup>1306</sup> *Asb-Shūrā*: Consultation.

<sup>1307</sup> See footnote to 2:1.

<sup>1308</sup> i.e., from the grandeur of God above them.

<sup>1309</sup> i.e., all other peoples.

<sup>1310</sup> i.e., those who desire His guidance and His acceptance of them.

<sup>1311</sup> In remembrance and repentance.

<sup>1312</sup> There is no similarity whatsoever between the Creator and His creation in essence, in attributes or in deed.

- selves. And if not for a word<sup>1313</sup> that preceded from your Lord [postponing the penalty] until a specified time, it would have been concluded between them. And indeed, those who were granted inheritance of the Scripture after them are, concerning it, in disquieting doubt.
15. So to that [religion of God] invite, [O Muhammad],<sup>1314</sup> and remain on a right course as you are commanded and do not follow their inclinations but say, “I have believed in what God has revealed of scripture [i.e., the Qur’ān], and I have been commanded to do justice among you. God is our Lord and your Lord. For us are our deeds, and for you your deeds.<sup>1315</sup> There is no [need for] argument between us and you.<sup>1316</sup> God will bring us together, and to Him is the [final] destination.”
16. And those who argue concerning God after He has been responded to<sup>1317</sup> - their argument is invalid with their Lord, and upon them is [His] wrath, and for them is a severe punishment.
17. It is God who has sent down the Book in truth and [also] the balance [i.e., justice]. And what will make you perceive? Perhaps the Hour is near.
18. Those who do not believe in it are impatient for it,<sup>1318</sup> but those who believe are fearful of it and know that it is the truth. Unquestionably, those who dispute concerning the Hour are in extreme error.
19. God is Subtle [i.e., gentle] with His servants; He gives provisions to whom He wills. And He is the Powerful, the Exalted in Might.
20. Whoever desires the harvest of the Hereafter - We increase for him in his harvest [i.e., reward]. And whoever desires the harvest [i.e., benefits] of this world - We give him thereof, but there is not for him in the Hereafter any share.
21. Or have they partners [i.e., other deities] who have ordained for them a religion to which God has not consented? But if not for the decisive word,<sup>1319</sup> it would have been concluded between them. And indeed, the wrongdoers will have a painful punishment.
22. You will see the wrongdoers fearful of what they have earned, and it will [certainly] befall them. And those who have believed and done righteous deeds will be in lush regions of the gardens [in Paradise] having whatever they will in the presence of their Lord. That is what is the great bounty.
23. It is that of which God gives good tidings to His servants who believe and do righteous deeds. Say, [O Muhammad], “I do not ask you for it [i.e., this message] any payment [but] only good will through [i.e., due to] kinship.” And

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<sup>1313</sup> Decree. See footnote to 10:19.

<sup>1314</sup> Another meaning understood from the Arabic is “So because of that [division and separation into sects], invite [them back to God]...”

<sup>1315</sup> i.e., the consequences thereof.

<sup>1316</sup> Since the truth has been made clear and since those who refuse it do so only out of stubbornness or worldly interests.

<sup>1317</sup> i.e., after people have accepted the truth from God, in an attempt to turn the believers away from His religion of Islām.

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<sup>1318</sup> They had challenged the Prophet to bring it on immediately.

<sup>1319</sup> Decree. See footnote to 10:19.

- whoever commits a good deed - We will increase for him good therein. Indeed, God is Forgiving and Appreciative.
24. Or do they say, "He has invented about God a lie"? But if God willed, He could seal over your heart.<sup>1320</sup> And God eliminates falsehood and establishes the truth by His words. Indeed, He is Knowing of that within the breasts.
25. And it is He who accepts repentance from his servants and pardons misdeeds, and He knows what you do.
26. And He answers [the supplication of] those who have believed and done righteous deeds and increases [for] them from His bounty. But the disbelievers will have a severe punishment.
27. And if God had extended [excessively] provision for His servants, they would have committed tyranny throughout the earth. But He sends [it] down in an amount which He wills. Indeed He is, of His servants, Acquainted and Seeing.
28. And it is He who sends down the rain after they had despaired and spreads His mercy. And He is the Protector, the Praiseworthy.
29. And of his signs is the creation of the heavens and earth and what He has dispersed throughout them of creatures. And He, for gathering them when He wills, is competent.
30. And whatever strikes you of disaster - it is for what your hands have earned; but He pardons much.
31. And you will not cause failure [to God]<sup>1321</sup> upon the earth. And you have not besides God any protector or helper.
32. And of His signs are the ships in the sea, like mountains.
33. If He willed, He could still the wind, and they would remain motionless on its surface. Indeed in that are signs for everyone patient and grateful.
34. Or He could destroy them<sup>1322</sup> for what they earned; but He pardons much.
35. And [that is so] those who dispute concerning Our signs may know that for them there is no place of escape.
36. So whatever thing you have been given - it is but [for] enjoyment of the worldly life. But what is with God is better and more lasting for those who have believed and upon their Lord rely
37. And those who avoid the major sins and immoralities, and when they are angry, they forgive,
38. And those who have responded to their lord and established prayer and whose affair is [determined by] consultation among themselves, and from what We have provided them, they spend,
39. And those who, when tyranny strikes them, they defend themselves.<sup>1323</sup>
40. And the retribution for an evil act is an evil one like it, but whoever pardons

<sup>1320</sup> i.e., He could make you forget the Qur'ān and deprive you of it.

<sup>1321</sup> i.e., escape from Him.

<sup>1322</sup> Meaning that God could sink the ships by means of violent winds.

<sup>1323</sup> Or avenge themselves in a just manner, restoring their rights and not allowing aggressors to take advantage of them out of weakness.

- and makes reconciliation - his reward is [due] from God. Indeed, He does not like wrongdoers.
41. And whoever avenges himself after having been wronged - those have not upon them any cause [for blame].
42. The cause is only against the ones who wrong the people and tyrannize upon the earth without right. Those will have a painful punishment.
43. And whoever is patient and forgives - indeed, that is of the matters [requiring] determination.<sup>1324</sup>
44. And he whom God sends astray - for him there is no protector beyond Him. And you will see the wrongdoers, when they see the punishment, saying, "Is there for return [to the former world] any way?"
45. And you will see them being exposed to it [i.e., the Fire], humbled from humiliation, looking from [behind] a covert glance. And those who had believed will say, "Indeed, the [true] losers are the ones who lost themselves and their families on the Day of Resurrection. Unquestionably, the wrongdoers are in an enduring punishment."
46. And there will not be for them any allies to aid them other than God. And whoever God sends astray - for him there is no way.
47. Respond to your Lord before a Day comes from God of which there is no repelling. No refuge will you have that
- day, nor for you will there be any denial.<sup>1325</sup>
48. But if they turn away - then We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], over them as a guardian; upon you is only [the duty of] notification. And indeed, when We let man taste mercy from Us, he rejoices in it; but if evil afflicts him for what his hands have put forth, then indeed, man is ungrateful.
49. To God belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth; He creates what he wills. He gives to whom He wills female [children], and He gives to whom He wills males.
50. Or He makes them [both] males and females, and He renders whom He wills barren. Indeed, He is Knowing and Competent.
51. And it is not for any human being that God should speak to him except by revelation or from behind a partition or that He sends a messenger [i.e., angel] to reveal, by His permission, what He wills. Indeed, He is Most High and Wise.
52. And thus We have revealed to you an inspiration of Our command [i.e., the Qur'ān]. You did not know what is the Book or [what is] faith, but We have made it a light by which We guide whom We will of Our servants. And indeed, [O Muhammad], you guide to a straight path -

<sup>1324</sup> On the part of those seeking the reward of God.

<sup>1325</sup> Of your sins or "disapproval" of your punishment.

53. The path of God, to whom belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. Unquestionably, to God do [all] matters evolve [i.e., return].