

Sūrah 50: Qāf

Period of Revelation

There is no authentic hadith to show as to when exactly this Sūrah was sent down. A study of the subject matter, however, reveals that its period of revelation is the second stage of the Prophet's life at Makkah, which lasted from the third year of the Prophethood till the fifth year.

Theme and Topics

Authentic traditions show that the Prophet used to recite this Sūrah generally in the Prayer on the Eid days. A woman named Umm Hisham bin Harithah, who was a neighbor of the Prophet, says that she was able to commit Sūrah Qaf to memory only because she often heard it from the Prophet in the Friday sermons. According to some other traditions he often recited it in the Fajr (dawn) Prayer. This makes it abundantly clear that this was an important Sūrah in the sight of the Prophet. That is why he made sure that its contents reached as many people as possible over and over again.

The reason for this importance can be easily understood by a careful study of the Sūrah. The theme of the entire Sūrah is the Hereafter. When the Prophet started preaching his message in Makkah what surprised the people most was the news that people would be resurrected after death, and they would have to render an account of their deeds. They said that "that was impossible"; human mind could not believe that, that would happen. After all, how could it be possible that when the body had disintegrated into dust the scattered particles would be reassembled after hundreds of thousands of years to make up the same body once again and raised up as a living body. God in response sent down this discourse. In it, on the one hand, arguments have been given for the possibility and occurrence of the Hereafter in a brief way, in short sentences, and, on the other, the people have been warned, as if to say: "Whether you express wonder and surprise, or you regard it as something remote from reason, or deny it altogether, in any case it cannot change the truth. The absolute, unalterable truth is that God knows the whereabouts of each and every particle of your body that has scattered away in the earth, and knows where and in what state it is. God's one signal is enough to make all the scattered particles gather together again and to make you rise up once again as you had been made in the first instance. Likewise, this idea that you have been created and left free to yourselves in the world and that you have not been made answerable to anyone, is no more than a misunderstanding. The fact is that not only is God Himself directly aware of each act and word of yours, even of the ideas that pass in your mind, but His angels also are attached to each one of you, who are preserving the record of whatever you do and utter. When the time comes, you will come out of your graves at one call just as young shoots of vegetable sprout up from the earth on the first shower of the rain. Then this heedlessness which obstructs your vision will be removed and you will see with your own eyes all that you are denying today. At that time you will realize that you had not been created to be irresponsible in this world but accountable to all your deeds. The meting out of the rewards and punishments, the Hell and Heaven, which you regard as impossible and imaginary things, will at that time become visible realities for you. In consequence of your enmity and opposition to the Truth you will be cast into the same Hell which you regard as remote from reason today and the ones who fear the Merciful God and return to the path of righteousness, will be admitted to the same Paradise at whose mention you now express wonder and surprise.

Sūrah 50: Qāf¹⁴¹⁸

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

1. Qāf.¹⁴¹⁹ By the honoured Qur'ān...¹⁴²⁰
2. But they wonder that there has come to them a warner from among themselves, and the disbelievers say, "This is an amazing thing.
3. When we have died and have become dust, [we will return to life]? That is a distant [i.e., unlikely] return."
4. We know what the earth diminishes [i.e., consumes] of them, and with Us is a retaining record.
5. But they denied the truth when it came to them, so they are in a confused condition.
6. Have they not looked at the heaven above them - how We structured it and adorned it and [how] it has no rifts?
7. And the earth - We spread it out and cast therein firmly set mountains and made grow therein [something] of every beautiful kind,
8. Giving insight and a reminder for every servant who turns [to God].
9. And We have sent down blessed rain from the sky and made grow thereby gardens and grain from the harvest
10. And lofty palm trees having fruit arranged in layers –
11. As provision for the servants, and We have given life thereby to a dead land. Thus is the emergence [i.e., resurrection].
12. The people of Noah denied before them,¹⁴²¹ and the companions of the well¹⁴²² and Thamūd
13. And 'Aad and Pharaoh and the brothers [i.e., people] of Lot
14. And the companions of the thicket and the people of Tubba'. All denied the messengers, so My threat was justly fulfilled.
15. Did We fail in the first creation? But they are in confusion over a new creation.
16. And We have already created man and know what his soul whispers to him, and We are closer¹⁴²³ to him than [his] jugular vein
17. When the two receivers [i.e., recording angels] receive,¹⁴²⁴ seated on the right and on the left.
18. He [i.e., man] does not utter any word except that with him is an observer prepared [to record].
19. And the intoxication of death will bring the truth; that is what you were trying to avoid.
20. And the Horn will be blown. That is the Day of [carrying out] the threat.

¹⁴¹⁸ *Qāf*: (the letter) *qāf*.

¹⁴¹⁹ See footnote to 2:1.

¹⁴²⁰ See footnote to 38:1.

¹⁴²¹ i.e., before the disbelievers of Makkah.

¹⁴²² See footnote to 25:38.

¹⁴²³ In absolute knowledge of everything about him. "We" has also been interpreted to mean the angels who are mentioned in the following verse.

¹⁴²⁴ And record each word and deed.

21. And every soul will come, with it a driver and a witness.¹⁴²⁵
22. [It will be said], “You were certainly in unmindfulness of this, and We have removed from you your cover,¹⁴²⁶ so your sight, this Day, is sharp.”
23. And his companion, [the angel], will say, “This [record] is what is with me, prepared.”
24. [God will say], “Throw into Hell every obstinate disbeliever,
25. Preventer of good, aggressor, and doubter,
26. Who made [as equal] with God another deity; then throw him into the severe punishment.”
27. His [devil] companion will say, “Our Lord, I did not make him transgress, but he [himself] was in extreme error.”
28. [God] will say, “Do not dispute before Me, while I had already presented to you the threat [i.e., warning].
29. The word [i.e., decree] will not be changed with Me, and never will I be unjust to the servants.”
30. On the Day We will say to Hell, “Have you been filled?” and it will say, “Are there some more,”
31. And Paradise will be brought near to the righteous, not far,
32. [It will be said], “This is what you were promised - for every returner [to God] and keeper [of His covenant]
33. Who feared the Most Merciful unseen and came with a heart returning [in repentance].
34. Enter it in peace. This is the Day of Eternity.”
35. They will have whatever they wish therein, and with Us is more.
36. And how many a generation before them did We destroy who were greater than them in [striking] power and had explored throughout the lands. Is there any place of escape?
37. Indeed in that is a reminder for whoever has a heart or who listens while he is present [in mind].
38. And We did certainly create the heavens and earth and what is between them in six days, and there touched Us no weariness.
39. So be patient, [O Muhammad], over what they say and exalt [God] with praise of your Lord before the rising of the sun and before its setting,
40. And [in part] of the night exalt Him and after prostration [i.e., prayer].
41. And listen on the Day when the Caller¹⁴²⁷ will call out from a place that is near -
42. The Day they will hear the blast [of the Horn] in truth. That is the Day of Emergence [from the graves].

¹⁴²⁵ i.e., one angel driving the soul to the Judgment and one to testify as to its deeds.

¹⁴²⁶ Of heedlessness, or that which had sealed your hearing, your vision and your heart from guidance.

¹⁴²⁷ An angel who will call out God's command for the Resurrection.

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43. Indeed, it is We who give life and cause death, and to Us is the destination
44. On the Day the earth breaks away from them [and they emerge] rapidly; that is a gathering easy for Us.
45. We are most knowing of what they say, and you are not over them a tyrant.¹⁴²⁸ But remind by the Qur'ān whoever fears My threat.

¹⁴²⁸ Forcing people to belief or submission.