

Sūrah 71: Nūh

Period of Revelation

This also is one of the earliest Sūrahs to be revealed at Makkah, but the internal evidence of its subject matter shows that it was sent down in the period when opposition to the Prophet's message of Islām by the disbelievers of Makkah had grown very strong and active.

Theme and Subject

In this Sūrah the story of the Prophet Noah has not been related only for the sake of storytelling, but its object is to warn the disbelievers of Makkah, so as to say: "You, O people of Makkah, are adopting towards Muhammad the same attitude as the people of the Prophet Noah had adopted towards him; if you do not change this attitude, you too would meet with the same end." This had not been said in so many words anywhere in the Sūrah, but in the background of the conditions under which this story was narrated to the people of Makkah, this subject itself became obvious.

Verse 2-4 briefly explain how he began his mission and what he preached. Then after suffering hardships and troubles in the way of preaching his mission for ages the report that he made to his Lord has been given in v. 5-20. In it he states how he had been trying to bring his people to the right path and how his people had stubbornly opposed him.

After this, the Prophet Noah's final submission has been recorded in v. 21-24, in which he prays to his Lord, saying: "These people have rejected my invitation: they are blindly following their chiefs, who have devised a tremendous plot of deceit and cunning. Time now has come when these people should be deprived of every grace to accept guidance." This was not an expression of impatience by the Prophet Noah, but when after having preached his message under extremely trying circumstances for centuries he became utterly disappointed with his people, he formed the opinion that no chance whatever was left of their coming to the right path. His opinion fully conformed to God's own decision. Thus, in the next verse (25), it has been said: "The torment of God descended on those people because of their misdeeds."

In the concluding verse, the Prophet Noah's supplication that he made to his Lord, right at the time the torment descended, has been recorded. He prays for his own and for all the believers' forgiveness, and makes a submission to God to the effect: "Do not leave any of the disbelievers alive on the earth, for they have become utterly devoid of every good: they will not beget any but disbelieving and wicked descendent."

While studying this Sūrah one should keep in view the details of the Prophet Noah's story which have been given in the Qur'ān. For this see the following al-A'raf: 59-64 Yunus: 71,73, Hud: 25-49, al-Mu'minun: 23-31, ash-Shua'ra: 105-122, al-Ankabut: 14,15, as-Saffat: 75-82, al-Qamar: 9-16.

Sūrah 71: Nūh¹⁶³²

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

1. Indeed, We sent Noah to his people, [saying], “Warn your people before there comes to them a painful punishment.”
2. He said, “O my people, indeed I am to you a clear warner,
3. [Saying], ‘Worship God, fear Him and obey me.
4. He [i.e., God] will forgive you of your sins and delay you for a specified term. Indeed, the time [set by] God, when it comes, will not be delayed, if you only knew.’”
5. He said, “My Lord, indeed I invited my people [to truth] night and day.
6. But my invitation increased them not except in flight [i.e., aversion].
7. And indeed, every time I invited them that You may forgive them, they put their fingers in their ears, covered themselves with their garments,¹⁶³³ persisted, and were arrogant with [great] arrogance.
8. Then I invited them publicly.
9. Then I announced to them and [also] confided to them secretly
10. And said, ‘Ask forgiveness of your Lord. Indeed, He is ever a Perpetual Forgiver.
11. He will send [rain from] the sky upon you in [continuing] showers
12. And give you increase in wealth and children and provide for you gardens and provide for you rivers.
13. What is [the matter] with you that you do not attribute to God [due] grandeur
14. While He has created you in stages?¹⁶³⁴
15. Do you not consider how God has created seven heavens in layers¹⁶³⁵
16. And made the moon therein a [reflected] light and made the sun a burning lamp?
17. And God has caused you to grow from the earth a [progressive] growth.
18. Then He will return you into it and extract you [another] extraction.
19. And God has made for you the earth an expanse
20. That you may follow therein roads of passage.’”
21. Noah said, “My Lord, indeed they have disobeyed me and followed him whose wealth and children will not increase him except in loss.
22. And they conspired an immense conspiracy.
23. And said, ‘Never leave your gods and never leave Wadd or Suwā’ or Yaghūth and Ya’ūq and Nasr.’¹⁶³⁶

¹⁶³² *Nūh*: (The Prophet) Noah.

¹⁶³³ Refusing to look or listen.

¹⁶³⁴ i.e., in various progressive states and conditions. See 22:5 and 23:12-14.

¹⁶³⁵ See footnote to 67:3.

¹⁶³⁶ These were the names of specific idols named after pious men of earlier generations.

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24. And already they have misled many. And, [my Lord], do not increase the wrongdoers except in error.”
 25. Because of their sins they were drowned and put into the Fire, and they found not for themselves besides God [any] helpers.
 26. And Noah said, “My Lord, do not leave upon the earth from among the disbelievers an inhabitant.
 27. Indeed, if You leave them, they will mislead Your servants and not beget except [every] wicked one and [confirmed] disbeliever.
 28. My Lord, forgive me and my parents and whoever enters my house a believer and the believing men and believing women. And do not increase the wrongdoers except in destruction.”