

## Sūrah 76: al-Insān

### Period of Revelation

Most of the commentators, including Allama Zamakhshari, Imām Razi, Qadi, Baidawi, Allama Nizam ad-Din Nisaburi, Ibn Kathir and many others, regard it as a Makki Sūrah, and, according to Allama Alusi, the same is the opinion of the majority of scholars. However, some commentators hold the view that the Sūrah was revealed at Madinah, and some others say that it was revealed at Makkah but v. 8-10 of it were sent down at Madinah.

As far as the subject matter and the style of the Sūrah are concerned, these are very different from those of the Madani Sūrahs. A little study of it rather shown that it is not only a Makki Sūrah but it was revealed during the earliest period at Makkah, which began just after the revelation of the first seven verses of Sūrah Al-Muddathir.

### Theme and Subject Matter

The theme of this Sūrah is to inform man of his true position in the world and to tell him that if he understood his true position rightly and adopted the attitude of gratefulness, he would meet with such and such good end, and if he adopted the way of disbelief, he would meet with such and such evil ends. In the longer Sūrahs of the Qur'ān this same theme has been presented at length, but a special characteristic of the style of the earliest Sūrahs revealed at Makkah is that the subjects dealt with at length in the later period, "have been presented in a brief but highly effective way in this period in such concise, elegant sentences as may automatically be preserved in the memory of the hearers."

In this Sūrah, first of all man has been reminded that there was a time when he was nothing; then a humble beginning of him was made with a mixed drop of sperm and ovum of which even his mother was not aware; even she did not know that he had been conceived nor anyone else seeing the microscopic cell could say that it was a man, who in future would become the best of creation on the earth. After this, man has been warned, so as to say: "Beginning your creation in this way We have developed and shaped you into what you are today in order to test and try you in the world. That is why, unlike other creatures, you were made intelligent and sensible and were shown both the way of gratitude and the way of ingratitude clearly so that you may show, in the interval that you have been granted here for work, whether you have emerged as a grateful servant from the test or an unbelieving, ungrateful wretch!"

Then, just in one sentence, it has been stated decisively what will be the fate to be met with in the Hereafter by those who emerged as unbelievers from this test.

After this, in v. 5-22 continuously, the blessings with which those who do full justice to servitude in the world, will be favored, have been mentioned in full detail. In these verses, not only have their best rewards been mentioned but they have also been told briefly what are the acts on the basis of which they would become worthy of those rewards. Another special characteristic of the earliest Sūrahs revealed at Makkah is that besides introducing in them briefly the fundamental beliefs and concepts of Islām, here and there, those moral qualities and virtuous acts have been mentioned, which are praiseworthy according to Islām, and also those evils of deed and morality of which Islām strives to cleanse human life. And these two things have not been mentioned with a view to show what good or evil result is entailed by them in the transitory life of the world, but they have been mentioned only to point out what enduring results they will produce in the eternal and everlasting life of the Hereafter, irrespective of whether an evil quality may prove useful or a good quality may prove harmful in the world.

This is the subject matter of the first section (v. 1-22). In the second section, addressing the Prophet, three things have been stated: first, that "it is in fact We Ourselves Who are revealing this Qur'ān gradually to you,

and this is intended to inform the disbelievers, not you, that the Qur'ān is not being fabricated by Muhammad but it is "We Who are revealing it, and it is Our Own wisdom which requires that We should reveal it piece by piece and not all at once." Second, the Prophet has been told: "No matter how long it may take for the decree of your Lord to be enforced and no matter what afflictions may befall you in the meantime, in any case you should continue to perform your mission of Apostleship patiently, and not to yield to the pressure tactics of any of these wicked and unbelieving people." The third thing he has been told is: "Remember God day and night, perform the Prayer and spend your nights in the worship of God, for it is these things which sustain and strengthen those who call to God in the face of iniquity and disbelief."

Then in one single sentence, the actual cause of the disbelievers' wrong attitude has been stated: they have forgotten the Hereafter and are enamored of the world. In the second sentence, they have been warned to the effect: "You have not come into being by yourself: We have created you. You have not made these broad chests, and strong, sturdy hands and feet for yourselves, it is We Who made these for you; and it so lies in Our power to treat you as We please. We can distort your figures, We can destroy you and replace you by some other nation. We can cause you to die and can recreate you in whatever form we like."

In conclusion, it has been said: This is an Admonition: whoever wills may accept it and take a path to his Lord. But man's own will and desire is not everything in the world. No one's will and desire can be fulfilled unless God (also) so wills. And God's willing is not haphazard: whatever He wills, He wills it on the basis of His knowledge and wisdom. He admits into His mercy whomever He regards as worthy of His mercy on the basis of His knowledge and wisdom, and He has prepared a painful torment for those whom He finds unjust and wicked.

**Sūrah 76: al-Insān**<sup>1681</sup>

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

1. Has there [not] come upon man a period of time when he was not a thing [even] mentioned?
2. Indeed, We created man from a sperm-drop mixture<sup>1682</sup> that We may try him; and We made him hearing and seeing.
3. Indeed, We guided him to the way, be he grateful or be he ungrateful.
4. Indeed, We have prepared for the disbelievers chains and shackles and a blaze.
5. Indeed, the righteous will drink from a cup [of wine] whose mixture is of Kāfūr,<sup>1683</sup>
6. A spring of which the [righteous] servants of God will drink; they will make it gush forth in force [and abundance].
7. They [are those who] fulfill [their] vows and fear a Day whose evil will be widespread.
8. And they give food in spite of love for it<sup>1684</sup> to the needy, the orphan, and the captive,
9. [Saying], "We feed you only for the countenance [i.e., approval] of God. We wish not from you reward or gratitude.
10. Indeed, We fear from our Lord a Day austere and distressful."
11. So God will protect them from the evil of that Day and give them radiance and happiness
12. And will reward them for what they patiently endured [with] a garden [in Paradise] and silk [garments].
13. [They will be] reclining therein on adorned couches. They will not see therein any [burning] sun or [freezing] cold.
14. And near above them are its shades, and its [fruit] to be picked will be lowered in compliance.
15. And there will be circulated among them vessels of silver and cups having been [created] clear [as glass],
16. Clear glasses [made] from silver of which they have determined the measure.
17. And they will be given to drink a cup [of wine] whose mixture is of ginger
18. [From] a fountain within it [i.e., Paradise] named Salsabeel.
19. There will circulate among them young boys made eternal. When you see them, you would think them [as beautiful as] scattered pearls.
20. And when you look there [in Paradise], you will see pleasure and great dominion.
21. Upon them [i.e., the inhabitants] will be green garments of fine silk and brocade. And they will be adorned with

<sup>1681</sup> *Al-Insān*: Man. Also entitled *Sūrah ad-Dahr* (Time).

<sup>1682</sup> i.e., a combination of the male and female substance, within the womb.

<sup>1683</sup> A sweet-smelling spring in Paradise.

<sup>1684</sup> The meaning here may also be "out of love for Him," i.e., God.

bracelets of silver, and their Lord will give them a purifying drink.

22. [And it will be said], “Indeed, this is for you a reward, and your effort has been appreciated.”
23. Indeed, it is We who have sent down to you, [O Muhammad], the Qur’ān progressively.
24. So be patient for the decision of your Lord and do not obey from among them a sinner or ungrateful [disbeliever].
25. And mention the name of your Lord [in prayer] morning and evening
26. And during the night prostrate to Him and exalt [i.e., praise] Him a long [part of the] night.
27. Indeed, these [disbelievers] love the immediate and leave behind them<sup>1685</sup> a grave Day.
28. We have created them and strengthened their forms, and when We will, We can change their likenesses with [complete] alteration.
29. Indeed, this is a reminder, so he who wills may take to his Lord a way.
30. And you do not will except that God wills. Indeed, God is ever Knowing and Wise.
31. He admits whom He wills into His mercy; but the wrongdoers - He has prepared for them a painful punishment.

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<sup>1685</sup> i.e., neglect. The meaning may also be “leave ahead of them.”